

CONSPIRATOR HINTED IN DR. KING SLAYING

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House Report Tells of Unsupported
Testimony That Ray Was Aided

DEC 25 1976
By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Dec. 24—A report by the House Committee on Assassinations says that its investigators have obtained uncorroborated testimony that James Earl Ray received instructions from a secret conspirator in his flight after the murder of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Walter E. Fauntroy, Democratic Delegate from the District of Columbia, who is chairman of the subcommittee investigating Dr. King's slaying, said that the information had come from "a very reliable source" who had talked with Mr. Ray, currently serving a 99-year prison term. Mr. Fauntroy stressed that the testimony had not been corroborated.

He said in a telephone interview today that the witness had told the investigators "there was someone with whom he [Mr. Ray] was to get in touch in Portugal."

The testimony was cited in a 26-page report that described the incident as follows:

"Ray contacted another person from whom he received further instructions . . . out of the United States."

Mr. Fauntroy confirmed that the location was Portugal but said that investigators did not know the identity of the other person nor whether the meeting had taken place.

The report was approved by the 12-

Continued on Page 27, Column 1

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Continued From Page 1

member committee as one of two examples of leads the panel feels must be pursued in its investigation into the assassinations of Dr. King and President Kennedy, Mr. Fauntroy said.

The other example is the previously reported recollection of former employees of the Central Intelligence Agency regarding the agency's surveillance of Lee Harvey Oswald in Mexico City less than two months before the Kennedy assassination on Nov. 22, 1963.

The report, not yet publicly released, will be presented to the House in January as justification for the committee's proposed one-year \$6.5-million budget.

Speaking of the testimony in the King case, Mr. Fauntroy insisted, "The source is of such reliability we feel confident the lead is worth following."

Origin of Questions

He said that the report identified the source as "a witness who had never previously been interviewed by any investigative agency." Mr. Fauntroy said the source was an American who was neither a relative of Mr. Ray nor an attorney for him, but he refused to give any further identifying information.

James Lesar, who has represented Mr. Ray since 1970, said that the only other persons with whom Mr. Ray had talked had been reporters and his prison guards.

Mr. Lesar added that Mr. Ray had never told him about a secret meeting in Portugal.

Mr. Ray's ability to evade the law enforcement authorities for three months after the April 4, 1968, slaying of Dr. King has often been cited as an indication that he had help from other unknown conspirators. In particular, his ability to obtain three false passports and pay for trips to England and Portugal has been cited as action beyond his intellectual or financial means.

In March 1969, when Mr. Ray pleaded guilty to killing Dr. King, he told the court that he did not agree with a statement by the prosecution and by his own defense attorney that there was no conspiracy involved. However, Mr. Ray has never explained what he meant.

The new lead on the Kennedy assassination cited in the report centers on the C.I.A.'s electronic surveillance of the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City.

The agency tapé-recorded a phone call between Mr. Oswald and the Soviet Embassy and turned transcripts of that recording over to the Warren Commission.

Reliable sources have said that the transcripts show that Mr. Oswald was asking for information about obtaining a visa to travel to the Soviet Union. However, three C.I.A. employees stationed in Mexico City at the time have been quoted as saying that the tape recordings showed Mr. Oswald offering information to the Russians in return for a free trip to Russia.

The committee has sent investigators to Mexico in an effort to explain this discrepancy.

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