

The FBI's Search For King's Assassin

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Today's column is by Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson

THE FBI'S FAILURE to apprehend the assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King has led to reports that J. Edgar Hoover is not interested in catching the murderer. The reports are based partly on the fact that Hoover and King were not on good terms, Hoover having publicly branded King as "the most notorious liar in the world."

We have checked into the operations of the FBI in this respect and are convinced that it is conducting perhaps the most painstaking, exhaustive manhunt ever before undertaken in the United States.

Its G-men have checked every bar ever patronized by James Earl Ray, every flophouse he ever stopped at, every cantina in Mexico he ever visited. It has collected an amazing array of evidence, all linking Ray with the murder.

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THAT HE HAS NOT been found may be due, first, to the possibility that he himself was murdered by those who hired him to kill King; or, second, that he is hiding in some remote Mexican village.

If he has money — and apparently he has — Ray might be able to live in a distant part of Mexico indefinitely.

What the FBI has established about King's assassin was that he was a professional killer who had studied the writing of Ian Fleming and Ayn Rand. His pseudonym, Eric Starvo Galt, for instance, was

taken from both authors.

All the evidence we have been able to gather points to the probability that Ray was hired to kill King. He broke out of the Missouri State Penitentiary on April 23, 1967, after boasting to fellow prisoners that he intended to make a big "score" on the outside. He remarked to one inmate that he might try to collect a rumored \$1 million bounty that supposedly had been offered by a "businessmen's group" for the death of King.

Four months later, on Aug. 30, 1967, he opened a safe deposit box in the Birmingham Trust National Bank and suddenly began passing out crisp \$20 bills like a big spender.

All told, Ray spent an estimated \$10,000 in seven months. Yet he never had a job, and committed no crimes following his escape from the Missouri penitentiary that the FBI has discovered.

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IT SEEMS LIKELY that Ray planned the murder of King for several months.

If white extremists put up the blood money it was probably not the Ku Klux Klan or the Minute Men, for they are an impatient lot who would not have waited for several months for Ray to get results.

Black extremists have also not been ruled out. They might have sought to get rid of King in order to remove the prophet of nonviolence.

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