

New evidence explodes the cover-up in Martin Luther King assassination case

by Edward Spannaus

On April 4, 1968—30 years ago—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was shot to death in Memphis, Tennessee. On the eve of a series of recent commemorative events in Memphis, Dr. King's widow, Coretta Scott King, called upon President Bill Clinton to appoint a commission to examine the mounting evidence that the imprisoned James Earl Ray was set up as a patsy in the assassination plot. Mrs. King said that she had hoped for a long time that Ray could obtain a trial without her family's intervention. "As new evidence accumulated, we became increasingly convinced that he was in fact innocent of killing my husband," she said. "But the authorities refused to give him a trial."

The most dramatic new evidence was disclosed at a press conference in Atlanta on March 24. James Earl Ray's attorney William F. Pepper was joined in the press conference by former FBI special agent Donald Wilson. Wilson, who was the first person to search Ray's car, six days after the King assassination, announced that he had found an envelope with two pieces of paper in the car—which Wilson had retained ever since.

Both pieces of paper contain the name "Raul." One of the slips contains a list of names, locations, and figures, including the number 450,000, apparently referring to money. The other slip also contains a telephone number in Dallas which, in 1963, was listed to Jack Ruby's Vegas Club. Jack Ruby was the organized crime-linked night-club owner who shot and killed Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, while Oswald was in police custody, two days after the assassination of the President. (In fact, as Pepper suggests in the interview below, the same thing was apparently supposed to happen to Ray.)

Predictably, the FBI immediately denounced Wilson's evidence as a "total fabrication," and said that, according to FBI records, Wilson was not part of the FBI team which had searched Ray's vehicle.

The finding of the name "Raul" is explosive evidence, which strongly supports the claims that have been made by Ray for 30 years. Ray has always asserted that his activities were directed and coordinated by a man named "Raul" (sometimes spelled "Raoul"), whom Ray first met in Montreal in August 1967, and who recruited him into gun-running and smuggling operations, mostly across the U.S.-Mexican border.

Ray subsequently met Raul a number of times at the International Trade Mart in New Orleans, which was run by Clay Shaw. Shaw was a board member of the Montreal-based Permindex, the international assassination bureau which carried out the Kennedy assassination, and attempted to assassinate French President Charles de Gaulle.

In 1995, attorney Pepper located and identified the individual he believes to be Raul, and made him a party in a civil suit, *Ray v. Jowers et al.*, pending in Tennessee. Loyd Jowers, who owned a bar and grill behind the Lorraine Motel in Memphis where Dr. King was shot, has stated that he had been contracted to hire an assassin to kill King. Jowers even offered to testify before a grand jury if granted immunity from prosecution—an offer which has been refused by the Tennessee State Attorney General, who is still insisting that Ray was the lone assassin of King. Raul was only brought into the suit on the condition that his name, and all records, be kept under seal.

Although the FBI and Tennessee officials have gone to elaborate lengths to dismiss and discredit Ray's claims about Raul, Pepper remains convinced that he has correctly identified Raul—and he believes that Raul was the actual assassin who killed Dr. King.

Even more dramatic are the previously undisclosed links to the Kennedy assassination. When Pepper was asked about Jack Ruby, and if he has any other indications of overlaps between the Kennedy and King assassinations, Pepper acknowledged that he does. But Pepper said he had never published it, because he didn't want to get diverted into the Kennedy assassination case. Pepper said that he has three witnesses who had seen Raul and Ruby together. Two of these were strip-tease dancers from Ruby's clubs in the early 1960s. The third is Glenda Grabow, who is identified as "Cheryl" in Pepper's book *Orders to Kill*.

Grabow knew Raul and his circle of friends in Houston in the 1960s and '70s, when she was involved in some of their gun-running and smuggling activities between New Orleans and Houston. Once, in a fit of rage about Martin Luther King, Raul screamed, "I killed that black son of a bitch." Grabow has told Pepper that she saw Raul and Ruby together; she also knew that Raul often met with associates of New Orleans mobster Carlos Marcello.

Cover-up efforts continue

In 1969, under the threat of a certain death sentence, James Earl Ray pleaded guilty to the killing of King, in exchange for a 99-year prison sentence. Three days later, Ray recanted, and he has consistently maintained his innocence ever since. He has never had a trial.

In 1993, following a series of articles in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* reporting on U.S. Army intelligence surveillance of Dr. King in the late 1960s, Pepper began to receive detailed and specific information pointing to a joint FBI-military conspiracy to kill King, using a team of the Army's 20th Special Forces Group which was based in Alabama and Mississippi. (For more background, see the review of Pepper's book in *EIR*, Dec. 8, 1995, and the feature article in *New Federalist* newspaper, Jan. 15, 1996.)

The head of the special team had been identified to Pepper as Capt. Billy Ray Eidson, who, Pepper was told, had later died. In October 1994, Pepper had a meeting with a former military covert operative whom he calls "Carson." Carson told Pepper what Carson had been told by a member of the special team, J.D. Hill, who was murdered in 1979. Carson provided Pepper with very detailed information on precisely how the special team was trained, and what it did in Memphis on April 4, 1968. Carson said, however, that the team had not actually shot King; they were there as backup in case the designated shooter—the contract killer Raul—failed. Ray was simply set up to be the fall guy, to be caught, and probably quickly killed.

Interview: Dr. William F. Pepper

Dr. Pepper is the attorney for James Earl Ray, and author of Orders to Kill: the Truth Behind the Murder of Martin Luther King. He was interviewed by Edward Spannaus on March 31 and April 1. The following are excerpts from their discussion (some of the questions have been abridged; these are printed in italics).

EIR: Can you give me some more background on Donald Wilson and the new evidence you have?

Pepper: I've known Don Wilson for a little over a year, he came to me about a year ago. He was an FBI agent in 1967; he served with the Bureau for ten years. He was one of two agents that first visited the car in Capitol Homes project. He found in that car, in an envelope, some documentation which indicated that Raul existed. This was the first time there had ever been any indication of this, that this man existed, outside of James's allegations. He [Wilson] did not trust the Bureau to handle the evidence properly, and he retained it for 30 years.

He never had a reason to bring it forward, or an opportu-

nity to bring it forward, until recently, with James's [pending] death, and the Kings seeking a trial, and the shutting down of the case, by the media and the government. So he came forward. . . . We were always trying to save him for court, and trying to get the information into court.

All we ever wanted to do, was to get evidence before a court. And they fought us tooth and nail on that from the beginning. And now, with the firing of Judge Brown—which is what they've done, they fired this judge who wanted to get to the bottom of this—I guess we all feel that the end is near, frankly, in terms of the official activity.

So Don and I talked, and he said, "I'm willing to do what you want," so we then held a press conference in Atlanta, and the rest is history.

EIR: What is the status of the civil suit against the individual you identified as Raul?

Pepper: It is all put on hold, pending the outcome of the petition for a trial, and the setting aside of the guilty plea.

EIR: Are you still pretty confident that it's the right individual?

Pepper: I am. I know the State fights that vigorously. They say they've seen employment records, and they interviewed him in his home, and he worked for this automobile manufacturer for 30 years, and he had no holidays, and he's never been in these places. And they say all of that.

I've never seen any of that, but what I have seen—I have five witnesses who independently have identified him as a person they knew at various times and places, including James.

EIR: They identified him by a photo?

Pepper: A photograph in a spread of six.

EIR: Any comment on the FBI's reaction to Wilson's evidence?

Pepper: Their arrogance and their actions against their own self-interest never cease to amaze me. They say: "Well, agent Wilson never—we don't show any records, he was not part of the team that examined the car." They're talking about a team that examined the car in the Federal garage in Atlanta. He *wasn't*. He saw the car in Capitol Homes project. . . . The distinction is, that after Don saw the car in the projects where it was dropped, it was towed into the Federal garage, and that's where they examined it. They took it apart. He wasn't a part of that team—that's true. And they know that.

Spannaus asks about the phone number found on one of the slips of paper, the number to Jack Ruby's Vegas Club in Dallas, and whether the Vegas Club was still active in 1968.

Pepper: I don't know. That's what's very curious about this whole thing. That was a 1963 number. That's all . . . —that's what we do know.