



STATE OF MISSOURI
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
JEFFERSON CITY

GEORGE M. CAMP
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

February 26, 1976

Reverend Emanuel Cleaver
Executive Director
Southern Christian Leadership Conference
St. James Gregory United Methodist Church
3000 East Gregory
Kansas City, Missouri 64132

Dear Reverend Cleaver:

Governor Bond has asked me to respond to your Mailgram dated February 5 concerning the James Earl Ray article which appeared in the January 26 issue of Time Magazine. First of all, I have attached a copy of my letter of January 28 to Time Magazine, the contents of which are self-explanatory. You will note that I take exception to the conclusions drawn by Time Magazine as well as some of those attributed to Mr. McMillan.

In response to your particular questions, I have thoroughly reviewed the file of James Earl Ray when he was an inmate in the Missouri State Penitentiary in the early 1960's. I have also reviewed and studied all reports available to the Division of Corrections that might in any way relate to Ray's activities while an inmate and to the escape itself.

My findings are that there is nothing whatsoever to substantiate any conclusion that James Earl Ray financed either his escape or his activities after his escape through any means while he was an inmate at the Missouri State Penitentiary. During the six years that James Earl Ray was an inmate at the Missouri State Penitentiary, he kept primarily to himself and, other than for the fact that he attempted to escape on more than one occasion, he had only one conduct violation during that entire time and that was for the possession of three packages of cigarettes, a ball point pen and one pound of coffee.

During the entire time that he was an inmate, the total amount of money received or earned was \$903.39. The majority of these funds were spent in the Inmate Canteen during his years in the Penitentiary.


The inmate that Mr. McMillan quotes extensively - Mr. Curtis - was released from the Penitentiary approximately one year prior to James Earl Ray's escape and was later committed to the Georgia Department of Corrections in July of 1967 to serve 888 years for murder. He is still in their custody.

I have been informed that all of the material available to me at this time was made available to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and I am sure that this material, along with probably much more material, was thoroughly studied at the time of James Earl Ray's trial.

In addition, you might be interested to know that prior to the Governor's receiving your Mailgram, I personally discussed the allegations and conclusions in the Time Magazine article with the author himself, Mr. George McMillan. In the course of our conversation, I pressed him for details regarding drug sales or any other illegal activities in which staff and/or inmates might have been involved. He was unable to give me any specifics but just responded that "it was common knowledge."

In conclusion, I find nothing whatsoever to substantiate the hatching of any conspiracy to kill Martin Luther King on the part of James Earl Ray while he was an inmate in the custody of the Missouri Department of Corrections. If I can be of any further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to call upon me.

Very truly yours,


GEORGE M. CAMP
Deputy Director

GMC:mac

attachment

cc: Governor Christopher S. Bond



STATE OF MISSOURI
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Jefferson City

GEORGE M. CAMP
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

February 27, 1976

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: JAMES EARL RAY FILE

FROM: *George M. Camp*
George M. Camp

RE: Investigation of the James Earl Ray escape
and financing of his activities

As well as reviewing James Earl Ray's file and the files of several other inmates and employees, which are listed below, I talked with former Warden Harold R. Swenson and former Senior Correctional Officer Bernard Poiry regarding any knowledge they might have of the activities of James Earl Ray.

On February 26, Mr. Swenson informed me that to his knowledge Ray was not a "merchant" and that he was not involved in any extensive illegal activities within the prison and in fact was a loner. He noted that the only significant point to James Earl Ray's record was his several attempts to escape from the institution.

On that same day, February 26, I had an extensive discussion with the former Chief Yard Officer, Major Bernard Poiry. In essence, he substantiated the conclusions made to me by Warden Swenson and in his opinion, James Earl Ray could not have earned monies while in the prison to support himself after his escape. He was a loner who attempted to escape on several occasions and apparently had little rapport with other inmates. Major Poiry felt that James Earl Ray was able to escape due to the laxity of employees and not due to any dealings between Ray and employees of the institution. The report written at the time of Ray's escape substantiates this conclusion. Major Poiry stated

that there were a great many employees in the institution who frequently were lax in their duties and that a handful of employees had to pick up the slack for the majority of the employees who did not pay enough attention to custodial security.

In my own mind, having reviewed all of the files listed and to the discussions of Warden Swenson and Major Poiry, it seems quite clear to me that we have no information that one could base the conclusion that James Earl Ray planned and executed his escape with the direct assistance of staff nor that he secreted through illegal means money to support himself after his escape while he was still an inmate at the Penitentiary.

Inmate files reviewed:

James Earl Ray 00416	Joseph Siebert 09111
Ronnie Westborg 71859	Robert Lynn Powell 16960
James Esson 73789	Carl Drake 00189
Gary Wayne Harkins 21231	Billy Mac Miles 07206
George Harold Jones 05516	Donald Ray Johnson 10987
Raymond Curtis 04849	

Personnel files reviewed:

Alfred Burkhardt	James F. Stone
Harold John Schaffer	Lafe O. Gove
Ezra Leroy Shelden	Johnnie Francis Petree
Raymond Harold Morgan	Bernard C. Peschang

GMC:mac

5/7/76

AIRTEL

AIRMAIL

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI
FROM: SAC, KANSAS CITY (44-760) -RUC-
SUBJECT: MURKIN

Re Bureau airtel to Kansas City, 4/26/76.

Enclosed are six copies of a self-explanatory LHM.
One copy of the LHM is enclosed for Memphis.

Mr. CAMP was advised on contact that all of the information he furnished would be furnished to the Civil Rights Division (CRD), U. S. Department of Justice (USDJ), for its consideration as to whether or not any additional Federal action is warranted. He was told that if he had any further questions, he might consider communicating directly with the CRD, USDJ, Washington, D. C.

2 - Bureau (Enc. 6)
1 - Memphis (44-1987) (Enc. 1) (Info)
1 - Kansas City

THW/jb

(4)

Searched _____
Serialized CB
Indexed _____
Filed JP

Weaver ad
Tom - summary being
filed had not included
in 4/20/76
JP
44-760-1351