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Black Plot' Defense Hinted in Ray's Case

By Karl E. Meyer
Washington Post Foreign Service

LONDON, July 6—Defense lawyers for James Earl Ray may contend in America that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed by political conspirators—but that the conspiracy was master-minded by black instead of white extremist groups.

This became known today as Alabama attorney Arthur J. Hanes had a second prison visit with the 40-year-old Ray, who is facing extradition to the United States on charges of murdering Dr. King in Memphis, Tenn.

Hanes agreed to discuss his client's state of mind with reporters but declined to say anything about the precise line of defense he might argue in the event that Ray is returned for trial in Memphis.

But it can be stated reliably that a likely contention will be that Dr. King was as much hated by Black Nationalists who regarded him as an "Uncle Tom" as he was by white supremacist groups. Such a line of argument would not necessarily preclude an admission that a white gunman could have been hired to execute the murder.

Hanes will only say that he intends to enter a "not guilty" plea if Ray is extradited and that he now has the names of some witnesses he plans to see in America. He intends to go to Memphis, where the murder occurred on April 4, the latter part of next week.

Hanes, a former Mayor of Birmingham, flew to London yesterday for a first visit with his client. He is due to depart Sunday. He spent 70 minutes with Ray at London's Wandsworth prison today, speaking with his client through a glass partition while two guards stood by.

Hanes and Ray exchanged several written notes, since

the guards could overhear their conversation.

Hanes said the prison restrictions were "austere and severe," but added, "I find this rather good. There have been people hurt in other cases like this and I didn't like that.

He said he had been frisked for possible guns but that this precaution was "fine with me."

According to the Alabaman, Ray is "quite pleased and satisfied with the treatment accorded him" by British authorities.

"The only thing he was slightly perturbed about," Hanes told a news conference, "was Mr. Butler's testimony about his alleged behavior. He said to me, 'You might expect a 10-year-old girl to make that remark but certainly not a man.'"

This referred to court testimony by Chief Superintendent Thomas Butler of Scotland Yard that Ray had allegedly said "Oh God, I feel so trapped" when he was informed that British police believed he was the man wanted for the murder of Dr. King.

Hanes said he has received about 100 letters from all over the United States about his accepting Ray's defense. The only money sent to him, he said, was a check for \$5 from "a sweet dear lady in Columbus, Ohio."

Hanes was Mayor of Birmingham from 1961 to 1963 during the period when Dr. King's protest marchers came into dramatic confrontation with former City Police Commissioner Bull Connor. As a result, Hanes also had encounters with President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, giving him the mordant distinction of personal acquaintance with all three victims of assassination.

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THE WASHINGTON POST & TIMES HERALD

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WASHINGTON-AFRO AMERICAN

44-703-71

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