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THE COURT: All right, is there any-
thing anyone would want to say at this time?

1 MR. FOREMAN: No, Your Honor.

2 THE COURT: All right, gentlemen.

3 All of you who can do as you said you would
4 do and accept this compromise settlement
5 on a guilty plea and punishment of 99 years
6 in the State penitentiary, hold up your
7 right hand.

8 (Thereupon, the jury complied
9 with the request of the Court.)

10 THE COURT: I believe that is every-
11 one. All right, you can have someone
12 sign the verdict, Mr. Blackwell.

13 (Thereupon, the verdict was signed.)

14 THE COURT: James Earl Ray, stand.

15 (Thereupon, the Defendant complied
16 with the request of the Court.)

17 THE COURT: On your plea of guilty to
18 murder in the first degree, as charged in
19 the indictment, it is the judgment of the
20 Court that you be confined for 99 years in
21 the State penitentiary.

22 You may be seated.

23 (Thereupon, the Defendant complied
24 with the request of the Court.)

1 THE COURT: Now, we have been here
2 for some time and I don't propose to keep
3 us here much longer, but I think that the
4 Court should make a few remarks at this
5 place in the proceedings.

6 The fact was recognized soon after
7 this tragic murder took place that there
8 was no possible conclusion to the case
9 which would satisfy everybody. And it
10 was decided at that time that the only
11 thing that the Judge who drew the unlucky
12 number, which was me, could do was to try
13 this case as nearly as possible like all
14 other cases and to scrupulously follow
15 the law and the dictates of his own con-
16 science. I feel that I have done this.

17 Memphis has been blamed for the death
18 of Dr. King, to me, wrongfully and ir-
19 rationally. Neither the decedent nor his
20 killer lived here and their orbits merely
21 intersected here.

22 The State has made out a case of first
23 degree murder by lying in wait. And the
24 question might arise in many minds, "Why

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accept any plea at all? Why not try him,
try to give him the electric chair?"

Well, I have been a Judge since 1959,
and I myself have sentenced at least
seven men to the electric chair, maybe a
few more. My fellow Judges in this County
have sentenced several others to execution.

There has been no execution of any
prisoners from Shelby County in this State
since I took the Bench in 1959.

All the trends in this country are
in the direction of doing away with capital
punishment altogether.

Then how about the conspiracy angle
of this case and the punishment of any co-
conspirator?

It has been established by the prose-
cution that at this time they are not in
possession of any evidence to indict any-
one as a co-conspirator in this case. Of
course, this is not conclusive evidence
that there was no conspiracy. It merely
means as of this time there is not suf-
ficient evidence available to make out a

1 case of probable cause against anybody.

2 However, if this Defendant was a
3 member of a conspiracy to kill the de-
4 cedent, no member of such conspiracy can
5 ever live in peace or security or lie
6 down to pleasant dreams, because in this
7 State there is no statute of limitations
8 in capital cases such as this. And while
9 it is not always the case, my 35 years in
10 these criminal courts have convinced me
11 that in the great majority of cases, Hamlet
12 was right when he said, "Murder, though it
13 hath no tongue, will speak with most mi-
14 raculous organ."

15 I believe the settlement of this
16 case is a just one to both the Defendant
17 and the State. I have accepted and ap-
18 proved the settlement. The Defendant is
19 represented by able and eminent counsel.
20 All his rights and all the safeguards sur-
21 rounding him have been zealously and con-
22 scientiously observed and adhered to.

23 I cannot let this occasion pass with-
24 out paying tribute to Tennessee, Southern,

1 American and Western free world justice
2 and security which was truly a team ef-
3 fort involving scores and even hundreds
4 of persons.

5 You have heard from stipulation here
6 the police departments of Canada, of
7 Mexico, of Portugal, of England, of the
8 F.B.I., the local police, the State of
9 Tennessee, the Sheriff's office here has
10 had the onus of this prisoner's security.
11 I highly praise them all. I think that
12 it took the team effort to bring this
13 case to a just conclusion.

14 I must also mention Mr. Charles Holmes,
15 the Sheriff's liaison with the news media,
16 and finally, my amici curiae committee,
17 whose efforts have been of inestimable
18 value to me.

19 I wish all these people to know
20 officially and personally that I appreciate
21 their efforts in bringing this case to a
22 just conclusion, and if I have overlooked
23 anyone I want to especially thank them too.

24 Defendant in open court has voluntarily

1 admitted his guilt to first degree murder,
2 this in the presence of the Court and this
3 company, and he has pled guilty before
4 this jury and accepted his punishment.

5 This Court, nor no one else, knows
6 what the future will bring, but I submit
7 that up to now we have not done too badly
8 here for a "decadent river town".

9 If I may be permitted to add a light
10 touch to a solemn occasion, I would like
11 to paraphrase the great and eloquent
12 Winston Churchill, who, in defiant reply
13 to an Axis threat that they were going to
14 wring England's neck like a chicken, said,
15 "Some chicken, some neck."

16 I would like to reply to our Memphis
17 critic, "Some river, some town."

18 Is there anything else?

19 GEN. CANALE: Yes, sir. Your Honor,
20 we have this dangerous weapons indictment,
21 and I would like for the Court to -- I
22 recommend a nol pros on that without cause.

23 As Your Honor knows, he was indicted
24 for this before he was apprehended in

1 London. Carrying a dangerous weapon is
2 not an extraditable offense under our
3 treaty with England, and the treaty also
4 says that whatever he wasn't brought back
5 on, he cannot be held to try it on, and
6 as far as carrying a dangerous weapon,
7 I recommend a nol pros without cause on
8 it, Your Honor.

9 THE COURT: I have already ruled that
10 we couldn't travel ---

11 GEN. CANALE: Your Honor has already
12 said we couldn't travel on that, didn't
13 you?

14 Just one more thing for the record,
15 Your Honor.

16 It was stipulated and agreed between
17 the defense and myself that these mock-ups
18 we have in the courtroom, the two mock-ups
19 of the scene, were accurate replicas of
20 the scene down there. We have referred to
21 them quite a bit, but I just thought I
22 better put it in the record, that it was
23 stipulated and agreed that they were ac-
24 curate mock-ups to scale.

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THE COURT: All right, sir. Now,
I believe that I have been told that
lunch has been prepared for the jury.

DEPUTY: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: All right, gentlemen,
you have spent a long morning, so you
will get a lunch out of it anyway.

All right, is there anything else
before we recess?

All right, you can adjourn the Court.

(ADJOURNMENT)