

A RHODESIA HAVEN CALLED RAY'S AIM

Safety Sought in Mercenary
Service, British Think

By HOMER BIGART

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LONDON, June 12 — James Ray, accused of killing the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., conceived the idea of joining white mercenaries in Africa while he was still hiding in Canada, British investigators believe.

His preferred destination was Rhodesia, they said, because he felt he would find there a climate sympathetic to his own racist views and would be in no danger of extradition if his real identity were discovered.

He was traveling with a Canadian passport under the name of Ramon George Sneyd.

Ray knew, these Britons think that relations between Rhodesia and Britain were strained and that Rhodesians also regarded the United States as unfriendly.

Services Not Accepted

Ray also knew that Lisbon was a center for the recruitment of mercenaries, and that is why he went there directly, the investigators say. He paused in London, they add, only to cash in the unused part of his British Overseas Airways Corporation ticket from Toronto and take a B.E.A. plane to Lisbon. He had bought a 21-day round trip ticket in Toronto, probably to screen his movements.

But in Lisbon Ray found no recruiters eager for his services. From someone he obtained the name of Maj. Alistair Wicks, a South African who had been second in command of V Commando, an elite mercenary outfit that served Moise Tshombe, deposed Premier of the Congo.

When Ray flew to London from Lisbon on May 17 he tried vainly to reach Major Wicks, now living in London, a British newspaper man has said.

Scotland Yard is convinced that no one in London aided Ray. The thinking here is that Ray got a pay-off in the United States and that he then went to Toronto, where he received help in obtaining a false Canadian passport. The Yard also believes Ray was running out of money and growing desperate during his final weeks of freedom in London.

Extradition Papers Filed

Documentation supporting the American request for the extradition of the 40-year-old Ray was delivered to the Foreign Office today by Jack Herfurt, consul general.

The material included a 300-page indictment returned by a grand jury in Memphis charging Ray with the slaying of Dr. King on April 4, proof of Ray's identification, and material relating to Ray's escape, in April, 1967, from Missouri State Penitentiary where he had been serving a 20-year sentence.

This material, necessary to establish a prima facie case that would warrant Ray's extradition, was sent from the Foreign Office to the Home Office later in the day.

It is possible that a preliminary hearing on the extradition proceedings will be held before the weekend.

British officials are said to prefer deportation to extradition, they note that extradition might take at least four weeks. Ray would have two weeks to appeal a deportation order, assuming the order were issued after the hearing next Tuesday on the charges that Ray entered the country with a false passport and was carrying a pocket revolver.

To the American argument that, under extradition, a person would normally be more strictly guarded than under deportation, the British reply that there is no reason why agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation cannot take Ray under custody here for deportation the moment he is released by the British.

Had Ticket For Brussels

When arrested at Heathrow Airport last Saturday, Ray had a ticket for Brussels and only about 70 pounds (\$168).

The metropolitan police have not revealed where Ray slept from his return to London on May 17 to May 28, when he is known to have turned up at the New Earl's Court Hotel, a small bed - and - breakfast house in West London. The police are convinced that Ray found no ally.

"We are satisfied as to his movements and contacts in London," said Chief Inspector Kenneth Thompson at New Scotland Yard.

Inspector Thompson said that "adequate security measures" surrounded the prisoner. Ray was moved yesterday from Brixton Prison to Wadsworth Prison, a large jail in a working class district of southwest London. The jail is surrounded by high walls, beyond which are the neat brick homes of prison officials, each with a rose garden and a tiny vegetable plot.