

Unusual Order

Ray Defense Gets Hand From Judge

Memphis

Judge W. Preston Battle yesterday ordered the James Earl Ray trial to start March 3 "if humanly possible" and instructed the public defender's office to assist Ray's attorney in preparing the defense.

The attorney, famed trial lawyer Percy Foreman of Houston, Tex., told the court it would be "a miracle" if the case is ready for trial by the march date.

Ray is charged with the sniper slaying last April 4 of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., after the civil rights leader came here to aid the city's striking sanitation workers.

Judge Battle ordered the public defender's office to assign as many members of its 16-man staff as needed in order to help Foreman get ready for trial.

He took the unprecedented action after Foreman said he "works alone" and that it would be impossible for him to duplicate the \$1.4 million investigation made by the FBI.

Foreman said one of the things he wants to investigate is a report that for two years the FBI had a special squad assigned to prevent the assassination of Dr. King.

Foreman sought an indefinite delay in the trial.

Judge Battle called the case an unusual one because the defense was confronted with the problem of questioning "360 witnesses scattered over North America and Europe." But he added, "If it is humanly possible to bring this case to trial on March 3, I think we should do so."

Associated Press