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## Ray to Plead Guilty--Paper

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—James Earl Ray's lawyer was granted a Monday appearance in Criminal Court as an Alabama newspaper reported today that Ray plans to plead guilty in the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and will receive a 99-year sentence.

A spokesman for Judge Preston Battle, who is scheduled to preside at Ray's trial next month, said Ray's lawyer had sought and been granted the hearing. There was no indication here what the hearing would concern.

In Huntsville, Ala., however, the Huntsville Times reported Ray will plead guilty to the assassination of King last April 4 and receive a 99-year sentence.

THE TIMES wrote that it learned the State of Tennessee would recommend the 99-year sentence "when Ray pleads guilty."

King was shot to death here last April 4 as he stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, where he was staying after arriving to lead a demonstration in behalf of the city's 1,200 garbage collectors.

The garbage workers at that time were on strike for a union contract and higher wages—issues which were settled soon after King's death.

DIST. ATTY. Gen. Phil Canale had no comment on the Huntsville Times report. State Atty. Gen. George McCanless was not available.

Ray was captured in London last June 8,

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JAMES EARL RAY

—AP WIREPHOTO.

### Ray--

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after a worldwide manhunt, by Scotland Yard detectives and returned after lengthy legal proceedings to face a murder charge in King's death.

He is accused of shooting King from ambush from a rooming house across the street from the motel, but has denied it.

ON HIS RETURN, Ray has been held in a specially armored and air-conditioned cell at the Shelby County Jail under tight security. He first was scheduled to go on trial in November, but fired Arthur Hanes, former Birmingham, Ala., mayor, as his lawyer on the eve of that trial.

He then retained Percy Foreman, nationally known criminal lawyer from Houston, Tex., and the trial was postponed until March 3. Foreman was granted a second postponement until April 7, on grounds that he had not had time to prepare a defense in the complex case.

The Huntsville newspaper quoted a source close to the case as saying the guilty plea "is the only way Ray can escape the death sentence" and win a 99-year term.

THE TIMES said its source reported that such a sentence would have to be imposed by the jury. However, plans are for the jury to be empaneled and each juror will be asked if he would abide by the recommendation of the court, the source was quoted.

After a prime facia case involving only a few witnesses, the court then would accept a plea of guilty and the 99-year sentence would be recommended, the source said.

The jury would be allowed to leave the courtroom and then confirm the sentence, the source added.

MOTHERS TO MEET