

## New Appeal by Ray In King Shooting

Cincinnati

James Earl Ray contends he did not shoot Dr. Martin Luther King, claims his guilty plea was illegally coerced and wants a trial, an attorney for Ray argued before a U.S. Court of Appeals here yesterday.

A three-judge panel, which questioned Ray's attorney in unusually long, 76-minute oral arguments, is expected to take several weeks before deciding if Ray will get the trial.

Should a trial be ordered, it would reopen the investigation into the April 4, 1968, assassination of King and possibly provide answers to the widely debated question of whether there was a conspiracy to murder the civil rights leader.

Ray, now serving a 99-year sentence at the Tennessee state prison in Nashville, has been trying to get his plea changed and win a trial since almost the day after he pleaded guilty of first degree murder on March 10, 1969.

"Ray contends he did not shoot King," attorney James H. Lesar said after court yesterday. "He claims he was framed."

Lesar, who called the Ray case "unique and bizarre almost beyond belief," argued that Ray was coerced by his former attorney, Percy Foreman, to plead guilty. Lesar contended Foreman was interested in getting the case closed to make money from magazine, book and movie rights to Ray's story.

Ray's hope for a trial hinges on whether the court decides Foreman's actions violated Ray's right to responsible counsel. A lower federal court in Tennessee already has ruled against Ray on this issue, and yesterday's hearing was an appeal of that decision.

William J. Haynes Jr., of the Tennessee attorney general's office, argued that Ray should not get a trial because Foreman did make an "extensive and exhaustive" investigation into the case.

"But he found nothing to refute the state's case, and if Foreman was to save his client's life, it required a guilty plea," said Haynes.

United Press