

Ray Asserts He Is Willing To Give the House Inquiry Facts in Dr. King Slaying

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 30—James Earl Ray has made an apparently conditional offer to testify before the House Select Committee on Assassinations about the 1968 killing of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Mr. Ray initially pleaded guilty to the murder of Dr. King but now contends that he was "framed by the F.B.I. and local police and then coerced by his own attorney to plead guilty against his will." This assertion and the tentative offer to testify before the House committee were made in a letter to Anthony Lewis, a columnist for The New York Times.

Virtually all of Mr. Ray's letter, typed on two legal-size pages, was a denunciation of a review by Mr. Lewis of a book about Mr. Ray by George McMillan, "The Making of an Assassin."

In the last paragraph of the rambling letter, Mr. Ray invited Mr. Lewis and Mr. McMillan to testify about the case and then said that he, too, would testify and "we shall let our under-oath testimony determine the facts."

Mr. Ray's unpaid lawyer, James H. Lesar, said in a telephone interview that he had advised his client, now serving a 99-year sentence in the Brush Mountain Penitentiary at Petros, Tenn., not to testify before the committee.

A spokesman for the assassination committee said that its staff attorneys had sought to obtain Mr. Lesar's permission to talk with his client but that "no agreement had been reached."

Mr. Lesar said that he had twice clashed with Richard A. Sprague, the committee's director and chief counsel, over the panel's attempts to interview Mr. Ray and to obtain a waiver of the attorney-client privilege from Mr. Ray so that his first group of attorneys could be questioned.

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