

Lawyer Says Ray Killed Dr. King To Be 'Champion of White Race'

MEMPHIS, Nov. 1 (UPI)—James Earl Ray killed the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. believing he would be the "champion of the white race," and then readily pleaded guilty because he was confident no prison could hold him, his former attorney testified today.

The comments Percy Foreman, contained in a deposition, were read before United States District Judge Robert McRae Jr., who must decide whether Mr. Ray is entitled to a new trial.

Mr. Ray now contends he did not kill Dr. King and alleges that Mr. Foreman exerted pressure on him to enter the guilty plea.

The 46-year-old convict spent 10 hours on the witness stand during the eight-day hearing, which concluded with the reading of Mr. Foreman's deposition. During his testimony Mr. Ray hinted strongly at a conspiracy in the King killing but stopped short of saying how it allegedly worked.

Mr. Foreman said he was convinced that Mr. Ray had acted alone and had raised the possibility of a conspiracy because he did not understand the law. "He had the idea that a conspiracy was a defense to murder—that you could partici-

pate in a conspiracy and not be responsible for a murder," Mr. Foreman said.

The 73-year-old Texas lawyer, dismissed by Mr. Ray the day after the guilty plea was entered, said that Mr. Ray had killed the civil rights leader because he hated blacks.

"He was a racist," Mr. Foreman explained, "he is a racist and has been one all of his life. He couldn't imagine anybody that was white not thinking like he did. He thought the killing of Martin Luther King would make him the champion of the white race, that he would be the most popular man in America. He never intimated that he expected anybody to believe he was innocent."

Mr. Foreman said that before entering the guilty plea on Mr. Ray's behalf he had tried to explain to him the difference between a 99-year sentence—which Mr. Ray drew—and a life term.

"It doesn't make any difference to me," Mr. Foreman quoted Mr. Ray as saying, "there isn't any jail that could keep me more than two years."

Mr. Ray was a fugitive from a Missouri prison at the time of the King slaying and has tried twice unsuccessfully to escape since being jailed in Tennessee.