



WITNESS FOR SIRHAN—Dr. Bernard L. Diamond, UC psychiatrist. Times photo

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Sirhan in Trance on Assassination Night, Psychiatrist Insists

BY LINDA MATHEWS
Times Staff Writer

Under sharp cross-examination, a defense witness for Sirhan B. Sirhan maintained Wednesday that the Palestinian Arab was in a "dissociative state"—a sort of self-induced trance—the night he shot Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

Dep. Dist. Atty. David N. Fitts repeatedly asked Dr. Bernard L. Diamond, a UC psychiatrist, what evidence he had to support his contention that Sirhan had had similar experiences previously.

"There is no one thing," Diamond said. "I'm satisfied from the descriptions offered by other members of his family, from his own descriptions, and from what I observed when I had him under hypnosis that

he had been in that state before."

Statements Questioned

In this state, Diamond testified previously, Sirhan would have been disoriented and incapable of planning his own actions.

Fitts suggested to Diamond that Sirhan's mother, Mrs. Mary Sirhan, and his brother, Munir, might have told defense investigators and psychiatrists "what they wanted to hear" about Sirhan's mental state, believing it would work to his benefit.

"Did you take into consideration (when you interviewed them) the Sirhan family's willingness to be helpful generally . . . to look for excuses for his behavior?" Fitts asked.

Diamond said that, to the contrary, he often found the Sirhans unwilling to discuss many elements of their history, particularly anything related to Sirhan's father.

Fitts pressed the same point.

"Didn't you get the impression that she (Mrs. Sirhan) was laying it on a little bit when she discussed the horrors of war and the effects of the war on her son?" the prosecutor persisted.

The doctor again refused to accept this and said, "I won't let you put words in my mouth and say I said what I didn't say."

"Doctor, I don't know why you're dodging me," Fitts said.

Planned Strategy

The prosecution was expected to attack the contention of Diamond and other psychiatrists called by the defense that Sirhan was incapable of premeditated murder.

One strategy, it is thought, will include introducing a film of Sen. Kennedy's victory speech to rebut claims that Sirhan became enraged by the senator's advocacy of more arms for Israel.

"It would be important to the jury to see that Sen. Kennedy did nothing that night to rekindle the flame," Dep. Dist. Atty. Lynn D. Compton told reporters. "That was an innocuous speech."

Diamond admitted that

Sirhan lied on the witness stand when he denied prosecution witnesses' testimony that he practiced rapid firing with his pistol at a San Gabriel gun range last June 4. Diamond said Sirhan lied because he feared the truth might reveal the depth of his emotional illness.

Fitts, through several questions, sought to elicit from Diamond an admission that Sirhan had "concocted" his story of the assassination to put himself in a favorable light.

But at that suggestion, Diamond smiled and said that if Sirhan had concocted his story, it was a story "that couldn't possibly help him. He was willing to admit he killed Sen. Kennedy, hated him and carried out the assassination to prevent him from becoming President and keeping the bombers from Israel."

Fitts then quoted from Diamond's summation of his own testimony, where Diamond said, "I agree that this is an absurd, preposterous story, unlikely and incredible." Fitts asked Diamond who he "agreed" with.

Diamond smiled again and replied, "I agree with the public and the world."

Defense attorneys indicated they would conduct a brief redirect examination of Diamond today, call two final defense witnesses—two cultural anthropologists from Berkeley — and probably rest their case this afternoon.