

Sirhan Sick but Responsible for Act, Doctor Says

State's Chief Psychiatric Witness Disputes Defense Claim of Mental Trance

BY DAVE SMITH
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The prosecution in the murder trial of Sirhan Bishara Sirhan called its chief psychiatric witness Friday to testify that Sirhan, though mentally ill, is nonetheless responsible under the law for killing Robert F. Kennedy.

Dr. Seymour Pollack, professor of psychiatry at the USC school of medicine, said that about 200 hours of study of the case convinced him that Sirhan "developed into a young man with a paranoid personality . . . and is therefore mentally disturbed."

Pollack's description was softened than the portrait of Sirhan drawn by seven psychologists and psychiatrists called by the defense. They painted Sirhan as a paranoid schizophrenic, mentally ill and subject to dissociative states—in one of which, they claimed, he killed Kennedy.

On Stand Tuesday

But Pollack's language did not go that far.

In testimony which will continue when the trial resumes Tuesday, Pollack is expected to contend that despite Sirhan's mental state—whether it be "illness" or "disturbance"—the defendant is liable for a first-degree murder conviction.

In Friday's one-hour prelude to what is expected to be lengthy testimony, Pollack did not term Sirhan a paranoid schizophrenic or even a schizophrenic—simply a paranoid personality.

Further, he stressed that he had found nothing in Sirhan's childhood or early teens hinting at gross abnormality. He did admit that there were some indications of "preparanoid tendencies."

He said that if he had known Sirhan personally before the Kennedy slaying, he would not have been

able to detect signs of what was to come.

Pollack also said that psychiatrists tend to view the batteries of tests administered by clinical psychologists—of which Sirhan has had many—as "materials of significance in the overall evaluation" of a subject, materials which "may or may not be reliable" in the task of determining "how a person has been conducting himself."

'Essentially Political'

He said he believes Sirhan's motives for the assassination were "essentially political reasons, highly emotionally charged." He also said he found no evidence of Sirhan's alleged emotional trances, in which the defense claims Sirhan killed Kennedy.

Pollack said he believes the Palestinian Arab's childhood in war-torn Jerusalem from 1944 to 1956 was emotionally damaging, but he said that neither Sirhan nor his family gave convincing evidence that Sirhan suffered "traumatic trances" alleged earlier by the defense.

He said he also found no evidence to indicate that Sirhan suffered

Please Turn to Back Page, Col. 3

Continued from First Page

episodes more severe or intensely frightening than anyone else in his family.

Pollack said he believed that despite marital difficulties and separation from her husband in 1957, Mrs. Mary Sirhan "provided an emotionally adequate, secure home" for her daughter and five sons.

During his youth in Pasadena, the doctor testified, Sirhan was "a little superstitious" and "vulnerable" because of childhood fright, but "even until the time of the shooting, there were no significant paranoid signs."

Pollack said Mrs. Sirhan's deep religious faith tended to make Sirhan conscientious and compassionate, with a rigid moral and ethical code. Sirhan later came to question his mother's beliefs, Pollack said, when he saw the continuing strife between the Israelis and Arabs in his homeland.

Sirhan lived a relatively

normal childhood in Pasadena, Pollack said, and "had friends and was engaged in the normal activities of the preteen-ager and teen-ager." Pollack described Sirhan as "superficially conforming" and "idealistic," believing his mother's word that the United States promised a bright future for him.

Closer Identity

In junior high school and high school, Pollack said, Sirhan still exhibited "no peculiarities" in his emotional development, but was beginning to identify more and more with the Palestinian Arab cause and to become more skeptical of what he considered American hypocrisy in its policies toward the Middle East.

Sirhan also identified with Mexican-Americans, Negroes and poor people and began to favor a change to an economic system in this country which was a confused blend of Communist and Socialist economic theory, although he still preferred democracy on the whole, Pollack said.

Pollack said the death of Sirhan's only sister, Ayda, on March 20, 1965, was one event that began to precipitate his slide into mental disturbance.

The other, he began to say, was "the arrest of his . . ."

Defense attorney Grant B. Cooper objected before Pollack could finish, and Superior Judge Hebert V. Walker adjourned to Tuesday, after conferring over the objection out of the hearing of the jury.

Sirhan's eldest brother, Sharif, 37, was arrested in 1965 and charged with the attempted murder of a former girlfriend. He was given a year's sentence which was sus-

ended for that conviction.

Friday's testimony was the first day of prosecution rebuttal, which opened amid preoccupations both inside and outside the court.

One juror, Lawrence K. Morgan, 32, was stricken with a bleeding ulcer Thursday night at the Biltmore—where the jury has been sequestered for the last two months—and had to be replaced for the duration of the trial.

Morgan, a computer systems analyst and father of five, was reported in satisfactory condition Friday at Santa Monica Hospital.

He was replaced by alternate Ruth A. Stillman, an insurance company adjuster. Chosen by lot, Miss Stillman changes the

jury's composition to five women and seven men.

The 25-year-old Palestinian Arab defendant appeared worried through morning testimony, not by what was being said on the stand but by the news that one older brother, Saidallah, 36, was seriously injured late Thursday in a car-pedestrian accident and Sharif was arrested in connection with Saidallah's hospitalization. Sharif was charged with disturbing the peace and assault after an incident at the hospital.

Mrs. Mary Sirhan, 55, did not appear in court Friday morning—one of her few absences since Sirhan's trial began. The family was represented only by a brother, Adel, 30.