

New Use of Courts



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While a recently formed Committee to Investigate Assassinations is moving into action and thousands of troubled Americans continue to wonder about conspiracies to kill men in high places, the difference in developments in the cases of the slayers of Dr. Martin Luther King and Senator Robert F. Kennedy cries for more public consideration.

James Earl Ray, who has admitted killing Dr. King, was in and out of court and on his way to prison so fast that the racial aspects and conspiratorial possibilities of the case got short shrift. Sirhan B. Sirhan, who has boasted about killing Senator Kennedy, stayed in the public eye so long that any hint of conspiracy seems well washed out while, by contrast, the opportunity to use the courtroom as a forum for assailing Israel is unlimited.

The late Judge W. Preston Battle, who helped save the state of Tennessee and other parts of America's southland the agony of long exposure to the importance of hatred of Blacks as the key factor in the King assassination, admitted he found many questions unanswered. How did Ray know exactly where to fire the death bullet? How could he get away so smoothly in that highly-visible white Mustang with all those police alarm bells going? Who financed this small-time executioner in his international game of hide and seek with the authorities?

Well, leave those questions for later solution. "My conscience told me that it better served the ends of justice to accept the agreement (to have Ray plead guilty and take a 99-year sentence)," said Judge Battle. Meanwhile, a Negro-hating lawyer, J. B. Stoner, with a flair for organizing minor anti-Jewish political movements, has been retained by Ray to try to reopen his case.

Meanwhile, also, the youthful Sirhan, who was born in Jordan, found the luxury of days upon end to spin out his anti-Israel fantasies in a Los Angeles courtroom. Confused, unstable, distrustful, the boy-man who ended Kennedy's career after gun practice on the range, strikes many as an Arab terrorist operating in the United States. Lacking compassion, he killed one for whom compassion was lodestar in a brief life.

One of Sirhan's witnesses insisted that the accused, in killing Senator Kennedy, was actually doing away with his own father. Beyond the courtroom, many concerned people will be more inclined to believe that in slaying Kennedy, Sirhan convinced himself he was demolishing the State of Israel. Where biographical conflicts end and international politics take over, it is hard to say in such a bizarre drama.

If one turns back now to certain segments of world opinion expressed in June, 1968, at

the time of the Kennedy shooting, the propaganda uses of Sirhan's act are clearly seen. Three days after the killing, El Fatah terrorists in Amman were openly collecting funds to defend Sirhan. In Los Angeles, Mahmoud Abdel Hadi, a correspondent for a Cairo newspaper, asserted Sirhan would go in silence to the gas chamber unless he could turn his trial into an anti-Israel campaign. In Paris, "Le Monde" (of all newspapers) editorialized in such a way as to excuse Sirhan as "one of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians forced to leave their homes and find refuge in a strange land," thus growing incensed by Kennedy's friendly attitude toward Israel. And the Moscow press was busy criticizing Americans for identifying Sirhan as one of Arab birth.

There was still another propaganda approach worth recalling: the most audacious of the pro-Arab forces insisted that Zionists had hired Sirhan to kill Kennedy, thus sullyng the Arab cause.

As time went by, Sirhan sold the rights to his infamous murder story to a west coast writer. James Earl Ray made a similar move. There's money in pulling the triggers.

And as time has moved on, the Tennessee court has succeeded in keeping the racist angle bottled up through speedy action while Sirhan Sirhan has had his orgy of denigrating Israel day after day after day.