

Study Shows Would-Be Assassins Are 'Loners'

Research Disclosed by
Sirhan Trial

3/24/69
By FRANK CAREY

WASHINGTON (AP) — A psychiatrist who studied 137 persons linked with threats to U.S. presidents says the would-be assassins generally are social misfits and loners unconsciously trying to gate-crash into immortality.

And, adds the researcher, they view the threatened act as a "stroke of national policy or patriotic heroism."

Dr. Edwin A. Weinstein's just completed study came to light when it was mentioned last week by another psychiatrist testifying at the Los Angeles trial of Sirhan Sirhan, accused of killing Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

The witness, Dr. Eric Marcus of Los Angeles, said Weinstein's study was commissioned by the Secret Service. Weinstein, contacted at his New York office, refused to say who requested or financed the survey. But he referred a reporter to a scientific journal "Psychiatry," where results of the study were recently published.

137 SUBJECTS STUDIED

The report is based on material "from 137 male subjects who, over the period 1945-1965, had made threats or gestures of assassination serious enough to lead to arrest and-or psychiatric evaluation."

Some of the threateners "tried persistently or forcibly to enter the White House to confront the president," the article said. It added that one man "threatened to kill both the president and Fidel Castro" and another "threatened to kill the president and throw his heart to the pigs" because "he wanted the president to have a new heart so he could have more feeling for the misery of poor people."

One young man "who planned to shoot President Johnson in the manner of the Dallas assassination" exhibited a prime example of "a lifetime of frustra-

tion and unhappiness," the report said.

Still another who had made "a highly dangerous gesture of assassination" against a president told interviewing psychiatrists later "he had done so in order to save the country because the president was suffering from an incurable disease."

MOST IN LETTERS

Most of the threats were in letters to the presidents or members of their families, it said, but some were made verbally—apparently at close range

during public appearances of the presidents.

The major conclusion of the report, co-authored by Weinstein, a neurology professor at New York's Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, and Mrs. Olga G. Lyerly of the Washington School of Psychiatry, was this:

"The study . . . indicates that the individuals most dangerous to the safety of the president are those socially isolated persons who adapt to stress by symbolizing their problems in political idiom and who identify with the president in terms of violence and death.

"In the context of such an identification, the act becomes institutionalized and is perceived as a stroke of national policy or patriotic heroism."

The researchers added that "in a society where power and violence are esteemed by so many, the name of Booth is inseparably linked with that of Lincoln and Lee Harvey Oswald lives on with John F. Kennedy."

The would-be assassins seek to be identified with "pseudo-communities" whose members include the president and national or international figures such as "Fidel Castro, Robert Kennedy, Nikita Khrushchev, Martin Luther King, Madame Nhu . . ." the report said.

ELEMENTS LISTED

Here are some other elements in the report's profile of a potential assassin:

—His age can range from 14

to 76, with the median age around 36.

—He's more likely to have come from a broken home and chances are high that he either never married or has been divorced or separated.

—There's at least one chance in ten that he has a record of sexual offenses or deviations; and an even far greater chance he never established satisfactory man-and-woman sexual relationships.

—There's an 8 per cent chance he was dishonorably discharged from military service; and more than likely he's unem-

ployed.

—His target may be a high-placed politician, but he himself never took part in politics, and any religious affiliation is vague.

—If having a record of previous mental illness, more than

likely he's a schizophrenic; there's a 32 per cent chance he's a chronic alcoholic or other addict; and he's likely preoccupied with death and suicide.

"Threats against the president are not, in themselves, evidence of mental illness and only

a small proportion of threats eventuate into serious assassination attempts," the researchers said.

But they added that the record of presidential assassinations shows that "Most of them have been made by mentally disturbed persons and have been preceded by threats and gestures."