

Sirhan Summation Terms Him 'Sick'

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LOS ANGELES, April 10—

Sirhan Bishara Sirhan's oldest counselor and confidant today called him a "poor, sick wretch" who deserves neither the death penalty nor life imprisonment.

"We haven't offered a word of phony testimony here," attorney Russell E. Parsons told the jurors at Sirhan's murder trial here for the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. "This man is more than sick. He is not a candidate for first-degree murder."

It was a brief but heartfelt summation, opening the defense's final effort to show that Kennedy's assassin was, in reality, an immature, irresponsible psychotic.

A wrinkle-faced man well into his 70s, Parsons nodded at the defendant sitting behind him.

'Like a Baby'

"I've sat here and had him reach up and hold my hand—like a baby," he told the jurors. "One minute he appears to be as smart as a whip. The next minute, he can't tell right from wrong."

Dwelling on Sirhan's war-torn childhood in Jerusalem in

the late 1940s, Parsons said the youth already "had the scars on him" when he came to America with his family in 1957.

The defense lawyer, whom Sirhan has come to regard as a sort of second father, insisted that he was not trying to suggest which side was right in the Arab-Israeli conflict. But his own rhetoric contradicted him.

"There was bitter conflict," he said, "between the Zionists who are somewhat warlike and the Arabs."

In any event, Sirhan and his family, Parsons went on, "had to leave their homes. They're not immigrants. They're refugees."

Bitter at Senator

Sirhan has said that he grew bitter at Kennedy over the Democratic presidential candidate's support of Israel in the Middle Eastern turmoil and particularly over his endorsement of plans to sell Israel 50 U.S. Phantom jets.

The 25-year-old Palestinian claims to have gunned down Kennedy last June 5 in what defense psychiatrists and psychologists have described as a "schizophrenic

rage. Pleading for acceptance of

the story, Parsons protested: "We conceded he shot Sen. Kennedy. We're not trying to pull the wool over your eyes."

Then he told the jurors: "Let your verdict spell out in every hamlet in the Arab republic, and in Europe that a man can get justice in America. And that is neither life imprisonment nor the death penalty because this case doesn't warrant it. Not for this poor sick wretch, no matter what he did."

Defense counsel Emile Zola Berman had the next turn. His delivery was halting, and at times confused.

Refers to Family Quarrel

Starting with Sirhan's arrival in America, the balding, 66-year-old Berman ticked off the traumas that he said the slender assassin suffered here. The first, Berman said, was a family quarrel that ended with Sirhan's father packing his bags and leaving for Jordan with every penny the family had.

The fight was over Sirhan who, Berman said, had carelessly interfered with his father's tending out a sidewalk home. The father, Bishara, wanted to hit the boy, was

stopped by an older son, and he heard. The New York Senator stalked into the house to demand that his wife, Mary, choose "between him and the children."

The father walked out and, Berman said, "Sirhan felt guilty. Trauma No. 1 in the U.S.A."

The others came years later, the New York attorney said. They included the death in 1965 of Sirhan's sister, Aida, despite his attempts to nurse her back to health; his dismissal from Pasadena City College because of absences from class when he was caring for her; his fall from a horse the next year that dashed his hopes of being a jockey.

Increasing Irritability

Berman went on to review Sirhan's experiments with self-hypnosis, his growing testiness and irritability. At times, however, the attorney simply repeated word for word lines from his opening statement back in February.

At another point, Berman declared that Sirhan flew into a rage on hearing Kennedy last May 18 support the sale of Phantom jets to Israel.

According to Sirhan's own testimony, it was a television documentary on Kennedy that

for first stumped for the jets deal on a campaign stop at the Neveh Shalom Temple in Portland, Ore., on May 26.