

Put to HW

U.S. Aide Says Fear of Plot Led to Killing

By Paul G. Edwards
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Alfred J. Erdos, former American charge d'affaires in Equatorial Guinea, testified yesterday that delusions of a communist plot led him to stab fatally his administrative assistant in the U.S. chancery in Santa Isable last Aug. 30.

Erdos, 47, was the only witness to take the stand during the second day of his trial in U.S. District Court in Alexandria. For more than four hours he told the jury how his awareness of anti-American feelings in Equatorial Guinea eventually gave way to "ravings" that led him to suspect all his diplomatic colleagues his wife, a priest and lawyer as being part of a communist plot to destroy him and the U.S.

Erdos is charged with the murder of Donald J. Leahy, 47. His attorneys said in their opening statement that they will show he was legally insane at the time of the killing.

The government prosecutor, who rested his case on Monday, charged that Erdos killed Leahy in a quarrel over a homosexual act. A pathologist testified that Leahy was killed in a homosexual attack and said he found traces of sperm

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in the victim's throat, implanted in his opinion within two hours before the slaying.

In a low but even voice often drowned out by passing aircraft, Erdos described the last hours that he and Leahy spent alone together in the American chancery while the charge composed a diplomatic cable warning of plots in the West African country and Leahy typed them in an adjoining office.

"I finally added one more warning to the cable," Erdos said, "telling them to disregard all previous information I had given them because I now suspected all my sources in the diplomatic community. When I handed it to Don, I said, 'Well, here goes my diplomatic career.'"

He said Leahy persuaded him to put off sending additional warning until the next day and that the two of them then began to close down the chancery.

While they were doing so, Erdos said, he began to imagine that Leahy was a "communist agent" and read suspicions into a number of inconsequential things the aide had done recently.

On the pretext of showing him something, Erdos said, he lured his assistant back into the chancery vault, a radio equipped, six-foot by six-foot steel lined room.

Once there, Erdos testified, he pushed Leahy, a small man, into a chair, accused him of being a communist agent and finally tied him with electrical cord cut with a pair of scissors in the vault. Erdos said he then radioed American officials in Accra, Ghana, giving them the warnings in the uncut cable and telling them he held Leahy prisoner.

As he tried to improve Leahy's bindings with a cord looped around his prisoner's neck, Erdos said, Leahy jumped up and pushed his way out the vault door.

"I grabbed him," Erdos said. "He was just a little guy, half my size. We went around in the vault by the scissor. There was a battle going on inside me. I said to myself that I had to stop him from escaping.

"I stabbed him rather gin-

gerly at first. I remember thinking that his skin was as tough as leather and that if I were going to do a good job I would have to use a lot of force.

"I stabbed him again and he lurched out into the reception area. I stabbed him again and he just touched the front door and collapsed.

"Then I got the idea that this was all a prearranged part of the plot, that I was supposed to suspect him and try to stop him.

"I leaned over and said, 'Don, is this the way it was supposed to be?'

"His last words were, 'No, not like this.'"

Erdos said that later "I felt good. I felt that I and my family had escaped a plot, that good had triumphed over evil."

He said, however, that during the next few days before he was ferried back to the U.S., he began to suspect that all members of the diplomatic mission in Cameroon, including U.S. Ambassador Lewis Hoffacker, also ambassador to Equatorial Guinea were in on the plot.

He said he first suspected his wife of plotting against him during the flight back to the U.S. because she woke him from a needed sleep to put a pillow under his head.