

has its roots in the harsh admiralty laws of the previous centuries, for demonstrating against conditions that existed in the stockade, is, in my opinion, a miscarriage of justice."

By week's end, two more privates had been sentenced. Lawrence W. Reidel, 20, was given 14 years, and Louis S. Osczepinski, 21, got 16—presumably because he had two previous AWOL convictions. Both men had been labeled "sociopaths" by their attorneys, but after three days with Army psychiatrists, they were adjudged sane. During the trial, Osczepinski attempted suicide by slicing both his wrists with a razor blade.

Extremely severe judgments in military courts are common. It is a foregone conclusion that those who have been charged will appeal. The first step of the complicated but fairly liberal review procedure is the staff judge advocate, who can approve the sentence, reduce, or dismiss it. From there it goes to Washington. All this takes time, of course, which the accused must spend in prison, since there is no provision for bail in military law. However, despite the rigmarole of court-martial, there is little likelihood that any of the convicted "mutineers" will spend anything like 15 years in jail.

### The Man Who Loved Kennedy

The opening defense gambit in Sirhan Bishara Sirhan's murder trial was a variant of the tactics often used by those accused of "crimes of passion." But instead of claiming that "everything went black" at the moment of the crime, Sirhan's attorneys contended last week that the defendant was "in a trance" when he fired the shots that killed Senator Robert Kennedy in Los Angeles' Ambassador Hotel.

In his opening statement for the defense, Attorney Emile Zola Berman de-

scribed Sirhan, 24, as an "immature, emotionally disturbed and mentally ill youth." Sirhan's behavior in court sometimes seemed to bear him out. He smirked, grinned and chatted with his attorneys. He gave the impression of enjoying a good story at times; other times he seemed not to be listening at all. When Berman related the Jordanian's long list of failures in school, in work and in life, Sirhan stiffened and angrily whispered protests to his other lawyers. Later, one attorney explained that Sirhan had not read Berman's statement before it was delivered, and "when you're saying unkind things about him, he doesn't like it." Berman later claimed that Sirhan actually "admired and loved" Kennedy until the day the Senator said that he favored sending 50 Phantom jets to Israel. As always, Sirhan's mother, Mary, was in court.

Berman, who is a New Yorker and a Jew, spoke with compassion of the woes of the Palestinian Arabs (he pronounced the word "Ay-rab" and referred to Sirhan as "Saran"). He dramatically underlined the word "intoxicated" ("... while in a disturbed mental state, intoxicated and confused . . ."), an indication that the defense intends to bolster the contention that Sirhan was "out of contact with reality." This condition was induced, Berman said, when Sirhan "concentrated in front of a mirror in his own room" and thought and thought about Senator Kennedy until at last he saw his own face no longer, but that of Senator Kennedy."

**Six-Dollar Chip.** The opening statement for the prosecution by Deputy District Attorney David Fitts was factual and low-keyed. It included the detail that Sirhan had chipped in only \$6 in the purchase by his brother Munir of the \$25 murder weapon. Fitts also noted that the day before the shooting, Sirhan went to the San Gabriel Valley Gun Range for target practice. While on the range, one Mike Soccoman asked Sirhan what he intended to do with the small Iver Johnson .22-cal. pistol. Sirhan said he could use it for hunting, adding: "It could kill a dog." Ballistics evidence revealed that the fatal shot was fired into Kennedy's head from a distance of approximately one inch. Later, one of the prosecutors, Lynn Compton, said that Sirhan had "stalked" Kennedy for days.

With the opening statements out of the way, the prosecution began calling witnesses to prove that Sirhan had killed the Senator. Two Ambassador Hotel employees identified the defendant as the assassin—a fact that is not disputed by the defense. A third, Busboy Juan Romero, when asked if anyone in court resembled the murderer, looked around and said, "No." When Sirhan was pointed out to him, Romero insisted, "No, sir. I don't believe that's him." Surprised, Sirhan leaned toward an aide, Michael McCowan, and asked, "What did he say?" McCowan replied, "He said it wasn't you." Laughing, Sirhan answered, "No kidding!"

June 2/21/69



MUNIR & MARY SIRHAN  
That face in the mirror.