

Psychiatrist Says Sirhan Saw Himself as 'Savior of Society'

3/21/69

By DOUGLAS ROBINSON

Special to The New York Times

LOS ANGELES, March 20—A court-appointed psychiatrist testifying in behalf of the defense said today that Sirhan B. Sirhan saw himself as the "savior of society" when he killed Senator Robert F. Kennedy last year.

The psychiatrist, Dr. Eric H. Marcus, said that Sirhan was so mentally ill that "he planned to destroy the current political leaders of the country and even start World War III."

"He decided he 'knew' what was best for the country," the psychiatrist added.

Dr. Marcus said that because of these feelings, Sirhan was "not capable" of having malice aforethought, as defined by California law as a prerequisite for first degree murder.

The psychiatrist, the first to be called in defense of the self-admitted killer, said that he had examined the defendant four times in his cell, once while Sirhan was under the influence of alcohol.

Examined Notebooks

He said he had also carefully examined the defendant's notebooks and had interviewed his mother, Mrs. Mary Sirhan, and his 30-year-old brother, Adel.

"As a result," Dr. Marcus said, "I decided that Sirhan was mentally disturbed and had become increasingly disturbed during May of last year."

In discussing the examination of Sirhan after the consumption of alcohol, the psychiatrist said he had given the defendant six ounces of whiskey over an 18-minute period in an effort to simulate his condition on the night of the shooting.

After a conference at the bench between the lawyers and Superior Court Judge Herbert V. Walker, however, it was decided that testimony about the alcohol test would not be admitted to evidence. The lawyers and the judge agreed that the simulation was invalid because Sirhan had had only three drinks over a two- or three-hour period before killing Senator Kennedy.

Dr. Marcus said his diagnosis of Sirhan was reinforced at a meeting last Feb. 2 in the office of Grant B. Cooper, the chief defense attorney, when all of the defense and prosecution psychiatrists met to exchange notes on the defendant.

"We all agreed Sirhan showed substantial mental ill-

ness," Dr. Marcus said, adding that his diagnosis of the defendant was "especially influenced" by the views of Dr. Seymour Pollack, the prosecution psychiatrist who, Dr. Marcus said, had found Sirhan to be "severely mentally ill."

Thus far, Dr. Pollack has not been called as a witness by the prosecution, which finished its case against Sirhan several weeks ago. There are now some indications that he will be called by the defense.

Dr. Marcus, who described the writings in Sirhan's voluminous notebooks as "irrational and erratic ramblings," likened them to letters written "by insane people threatening Presidents" and said they were also similar to the writing of "insane murderers."

Earlier in the day, the defendant was described as not having the mental capacity to act as a "cool, calculating, skillful assassin" by Dr. Derrick Richardson, a clinical

psychologist who had previously testified that Sirhan was a "schizophrenic paranoid."

Under cross-examination today, Dr. Richardson denied a suggestion by the prosecution that Sirhan had plotted to kill Senator Kennedy because he felt strongly about the conflict between Arabs and Israelis.

Asked if it was possible that Sirhan wanted to "get out" as a hero in the eyes of the Arab world, the psychologist replied:

"That doesn't square as an argument. He doesn't consciously want to make a grand-stand play. He has a deeply felt, spiritual feeling that he is righting the wrong done his people."

'Awareness It Was Wrong'

Dr. Richardson went on to say that the defendant was not capable of making a rational decision about the killing of Senator Kennedy although he conceded that "he might have the intellectual awareness that it was wrong."

The defense in the Sirhan case is trying to convince the jury that the 25-year-old Jordanian immigrant was not capable of premeditating the shooting of Senator Kennedy under a California law allowing "diminished capacity" as a defense in murder cases. The

prosecution, on the other hand, has contended that Sirhan carefully planned the assassination.

Dr. Richardson was followed to the witness stand by two other clinical psychologists who had been asked to review independently Dr. Richardson's findings on the battery of tests given Sirhan. Both agreed that the defendant was mentally ill.

The first of these psychologists, Dr. Stephen Howard of Los Angeles, described Sirhan as a "borderline psychotic who can go in and out of psychosis depending on rather minor stresses."

He said the defendant possessed a "definite possibility" of suicide and "some possibility" of a homicidal intent.

Kamikaze Pilots Cited

Asked by David N. Fitts, an assistant district attorney, whether soldiers in a war or Japanese kamikaze pilots were "necessarily psychotic" because they believed so much in a cause that they would die for it, Dr. Howard answered: "I would have some doubts" that a person volunteering for a suicide mission knowing that he is going to die was a normal person.

Dr. Howard contended that most soldiers killed because they were ordered to do so, although he conceded that some might kill because they felt strongly about a cause.

He also agreed to a hypothetical argument advanced by the prosecution that it was possible for an Arab immigrant to feel so strongly about conditions in the Middle East that he would buy a pistol, practice at a gun range and then kill a United States Senator who had voiced support of Israel.

Also testifying today was Dr. William Crane, another psychologist, who agreed in the diagnosis of Sirhan as a "schizophrenic of the paranoid type."

Thieves Strike at Bowlers

Thieves struck while five Jackson, Mich., men were bowling, and rifled their automobiles, parked outside the bowling alley, The Jackson Citizen Patriot reports.