

Sirhan Amnesia Termed Possible Lie

PM 3/21/69

LOS ANGELES, March 21 (UPI)—Sirhan Bishara Sirhan may be lying when he says he cannot remember shooting Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, a psychiatrist testified today.

Dr. Eric Marcus told the murder trial jury the 25-year-old Arab also may have been faking amnesia at the police station afterwards when he chatted with officers but never once asked why he was being held.

Marcus said, however, that he believes Sirhan's story of blacking out at the time Kennedy was fatally wounded last June 5 in the Ambassador Hotel and having no memory

until he came to "being choked."

Dep. District Attorney David Fitts put Marcus through meticulous cross-examination seeking to shake the defense claim that Sirhan had a "diminished capacity" and was not mentally capable of the deliberate and careful plotting of Kennedy's assassination.

Marcus conceded that all the evidence shows that Sirhan had an intent to kill Kennedy, that he premeditated it, practiced with a gun, went to the Hotel intending to kill and did so.

The psychiatrist made the

distinction that Sirhan could not "maturely and meaningfully" deliberate and premeditate the assassination because of his mental condition of paranoid schizophrenia.

"Wasn't he weighing the pros and cons?" Fitts asked.

"His notebooks are all pros, I would say," Marcus replied.

Marcus said that almost all assassins pick some reasonable cause as the rationale for their paranoid behavior.

Fitts asked if it was paranoid to write down that Kennedy must die.

"I know a lot of people who didn't like Kennedy but they didn't write down Kennedy must fall," Marcus said.

The doctor said he believes Sirhan suffered retrograde amnesia—a loss of memory about an act so serious and causing so much anxiety that it is blocked out. He said few murderers actually remembered the act of killing.

"Could he be malingering when he says he doesn't remember?"

"That is possible."

"He was very evasive in custody. But if he actually had amnesia with regard to the shooting wouldn't he have asked why he was being held?"

"It would seem so."

"In your interview with him isn't it possible he lied to you?"

"That's quite possible."

In Jordan, meantime, Sirhan's father said his son shot and killed Kennedy because of Kennedy's endorsement of Israel.

Sirhan Sirhan Sr., an olive grower, rejected testimony that the youth may have been mentally upset.

"There is nothing wrong with Sirhan," his father said. "He tries to tell the court why he killed Sen. Kennedy, but they won't let him . . . If Sen. Kennedy had not said he would send Phantoms (planes), tanks and other military equipment to Israel, Sirhan would not have done it."