

SIRHAN WANTED TO SLAY KENNEDY WEEKS BEFORE ASSASSINATION

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LOS ANGELES, March 4—Sirhan Bishara Sirhan testified today that several weeks before the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy he saw the Senator on television helping Israelis to celebrate their independence and became so enraged he wanted to kill him.

"I became burned up," he told the stunned courtroom. And it was then, he added, that he wrote over and over in his notebooks, "R.F.K. must die, R.F.K. must die."

"At that time, sir, if he had been standing in front of me, so help me God, sir, he would die," the 24-year-old Jordanian immigrant said to his defense counsel, Grant B. Cooper.

His admiration and respect for the New York Senator was changed to hatred by another incident on or about that same day in May, said Sirhan, who is on trial for the murder of Mr. Kennedy.

One night he was in his bedroom staring at two candles in front of a mirror as part of a mystical experiment when he heard a radio in an adjacent room announce that Senator Kennedy had formally committed himself to sending 50 jet bombers to Israel.

"I recognized that Robert F. Kennedy was the good guy he was made out to be," Sirhan said. "I boiled up again. It bugged me so much that when I looked in the mirror I saw his face rather than my own."

"You must remember, sir," he said, looking up at his tall, graying 65-year-old attorney, "Zionism is more inimical to me than Communism is to you."

Sirhan's passionate reference to the man he later killed came near the end of his second day on the witness stand.

During his questioning of Sirhan, Mr. Cooper asked him to remember why he had written such things as "a declaration of war against American humanity."

He referred to a rambling

paper in Sirhan's notebook written June 2, 1967, in which he advocated a war against the President and Vice President and "down the ladder."

'Must Have Been Maniac'

In the declaration, Sirhan said, "the author wants to be remembered as the man who triggered off the last war."

Asked if he remembered writing this, Sirhan said that he did not and added, "I must have been a maniac at the time."

Earlier, leaning forward eagerly in his chair, he told the crowded courtroom his version of the long, involved Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East.

One minute shy and boyish, the next intense and angry, he described the impact that the hates and the bombings, the killings and the national striving continued to have on his "life ad thought and being," eve after migrating to the United States in 1956.

"I was sick and tired of being a foreigner, of being alone," he said. "I wanted a place of my own, where they speak my own language, where they eat my own food, share my own politics."

"I wanted to have something I could identify with as a Palestinian and an Arab. I wanted my own country. I wanted my own land, my own city, my own business. I wanted my own everything, sir."

Second Day on Stand

Beginning at 9:30 this morning, Mr. Cooper gently guided the defendant through this second day on the witness stand.

Like a student obediently and eagerly answering his teacher's questions, Sirhan described his childhood in the war-torn Middle East and his adolescence in Southern California. He told of his interest in horses and diplomacy and his prolonged experimentation with mysticism.

However, running through the testimony of the defendant was his intense interest in the Arab-Israeli situation.

With his long, bony hands gripping the wooden railing around the witness box, he said the six-day war in the Middle East in June, 1967, affected him "very deeply."

It was American sympathy for the Israeli cause, he said, that upset him the most.

"I didn't like it a bit," he said. "Where is justice? Where is the [American] love for fighting for the underdog? Israel is not the underdog in the Middle East. The Palestinians are. It burned the hell out of me."

One aspect of this American sympathy that particularly enraged him, he said, was that Jews in this country had "donated \$370-million to revitalize the Israeli economy," when people were poor and out of work here.

"The Goddamn Zionist picked up millions of dollars and sent it out the back door to another country," he said.

A few minutes later, Mr. Cooper reminded him of a photograph of joyous Israeli soldiers that he had seen and asked him "how he felt about it."

"At the time, sir," he replied fiercely, "if I saw those guys in person, I would have blasted them. I'd have killed them, the God damn Zionists."

The Defense's Goal

On the first anniversary of the six-day Arab-Israeli war, Sirhan entered the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel here and shot Senator Kennedy, who several weeks earlier expressed support for the Israeli cause.

Using the California defense of "diminished capacity," the defense hopes to prove that he did not have the mental strength necessary to plan and premeditate maturely and rationally a first-degree murder.

The Sirhan family moved to California when Sirhan was 12. Years later his continued emotional attachment to the Middle East made him want to be a diplomat.

"With the attitude I had toward the Palestine problem," he explained, "I thought I had the capacity to be a diplomat. I thought with my understanding I could help solve the problem."

"By peaceful means?" Mr. Cooper asked.

"Yes, sir, definitely," he answered.

Sirhan told the court that he

had been dismissed from college "for poor grades and absences" following the death of his older sister, Aida, on March 20, 1965, "one day after my birthday."

Fell Off Horse

After working at a race track and a private ranch for several months exercising horses, his dream of becoming a jockey ended when in 1965 he fell off a horse and injured his head.

During the next year he was unemployed. In the privacy of his bedroom, he said he spent long hours reading about the Middle East and the occult.

For almost half an hour he described various experiments he had practiced to prove to himself that "you can do anything you want if you instill the idea in your mind."

In one experiment he said, "I put my hand in boiling hot water and thought cool."

"I know it sounds unbelievable, weird," he said, "but it happened. Believe me, the water was cold."

After describing about 20 books he read during that year concerning metaphysics and the power of the mind, he was asked by Mr. Cooper, "Why were you doing all this, Sirhan?"

"I've always asked myself, 'What is this life? What is this reality all about?'" he answered. "I thought it would lead me to be a better person, a better human being."