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By HARRY F. ROSENTHAL  
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES AP - "He was gradually programming himself exactly like a computer is programmed by its magnetic tape, programming himself for the coming assassination. . . . He was confused, bewildered and partially intoxicated. The mirrors in the hotel lobby, the flashing lights, the general confusion--this was like pressing the button which starts the computer."

In this setting, a psychiatrist says, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy came under the gun of Sirhan Bishara Sirhan--a robot killer in a self-induced trance; an unknowing instrument of assassination.

"It is my opinion that through chance, circumstances, and a succession of unrelated events, Sirhan found himself in the physical situation in which the assassination occurred," Dr. Bernard L. Diamond said Monday at Sirhan's murder trial.

The shooting was in a pantry of the Ambassador Hotel. The portrayal of a computerized killer was a stunning summary of Diamond's eight examinations of Sirhan in his jail cell--including a frenetic re-enactment by a hypnotized Sirhan of the moment he shot the senator from New York.

Diamond, 66, a professor of psychiatry, law and criminology at the University of California at Berkeley, was to return to the stand today.

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LOS ANGELES Sirhan Bjt A018 to update insert after 6th graf: stand today.

When he did, however, he testified for only eight minutes, responding to questions about the awards he has won and the posts he has held in professional societies.

Then the prosecution asked for the rest of the day off to study his testimony and court was adjourned until Wednesday.

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"I agree that this is an absurd and preposterous story, unlikely and incredible," Diamond said, his face turned to the jury. "The crime itself was a tragically absurd, and preposterous event, unlikely and incredible."

The tragedy was ordained, Diamond said, with Sirhan's exposure to violence and death in Jerusalem in 1948 when his family--Arabs--became refugees in the partition of Palestine and establishment of Israel as a Jewish homeland.

His mental illness developed as he grew older "and his fanatical hatred and fear of the Jews increased with each radio and television broadcast concerning the tension in the Middle East."

Sirhan began courses in self hypnosis and mind power, practiced diligently.

"He actually believed," Diamond said, "that he could stop the bombers from reaching Israel and thereby save the Arabs-- simply by willing the death of all who would help the Jews." Kennedy, campaigning for the democratic presidential nomination, had promised fighter bombers to Israel if elected.

Sirhan became convinced he was losing his mind, Diamond said.

"He sought the remedy in his books on mysticism and the occult and he daydreamed of the power of his gun, taking every opportunity on many different days to shoot it, firing hundreds and hundreds of shots as if each shot would somehow make up for his ever growing sense of helplessness, impotence and fear of loss of self control."

Sirhan wrote his murderous thoughts into his diaries while under self-hypnosis, Diamond said, and was in the same kind of trance that night in the Ambassador.

"Only this time it was for real, and this time there was no pencil in his hand. This time there was only the loaded gun."

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Without knowing what was happening he was "programming himself for the coming assassination," Diamond said, adding:

"In his unconscious mind there existed a plan for the total fulfillment of his sick, paranoid hatred of Kennedy and all who might want to help the Jews. In his conscious mind there was no awareness of such a plan or that he, Sirhan, was to be the instrument of assassination.

"It is my opinion that through chance, circumstances, and a succession of unrelated events, Sirhan found himself in the physical situation in which the assassination occurred.

"I am satisfied that he had not consciously planned to be in that situation. I am satisfied that if he had been fully conscious and in his usual mental state he would have been quite harmless, despite his paranoid hatreds and despite his loaded gun."

As the gray-haired psychiatrist testified, Sirhan doodled on paper in front of him—but obviously paying attention. At one point, the pale young defendant hit his head with his hand—as if to evoke a memory.

Sirhan, the psychiatrist said, does not believe he is mentally ill. He would "rather believe that he is the fanatical martyr who by his noble act of self-sacrifice has saved his people and become a great hero. He claims to be ready to die in the gas chamber for the glory of the Arab people."

But, Diamond said, Sirhan is "small and helpless, pitifully ill with a demented psychotic rage, out of control of his own consciousness and his own actions, subject to bizarre dissociated trances in some of which he programmed himself to be the instrument of assassination, and then, in an almost accidentally induced twilight state he actually executed the crime, knowing next to nothing as to what was happening."

Then Diamond leaned back in his chair, glanced at Sirhan, and said: "I am satisfied that this is how Sirhan Bishara Sirhan came to kill Sen. Robert F. Kennedy on June 5, 1968."