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Study Finds Likely Assassins Share 'Social Isolation' Trait

By PETER KIHSS

An Army-financed study of 137 men who have threatened to kill Presidents has concluded that they tend to be "socially isolated persons" who symbolize their problems in political terms and regard their act as heroism.

The study by Dr. Edwin A. Weinstein, professor of neurology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, and Mrs. Olga G. Lyerly, a research assistant at the Washington School of Psychiatry, was cited last week in the Los Angeles trial of Sirhan Bishara Sirhan in the killing of Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

Dr. Eric H. Marcus, a court-appointed psychiatrist, testified that Sirhan was mentally ill and "decided he knew what was best for the country" in a way similar to the cases studied by Dr. Weinstein.

Dr. Weinstein said here yesterday that his study had been commissioned by the President's Office of Science and Technology, and aided by a grant from the Army Research and Development Command.

2 Years of Interviews

It was published in the current issue of *Psychiatry, Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes*, a Washington quarterly put out by the William Allanson White Psychiatric Foundation.

Based on two years of interviews and analyses of records of men arrested or submitted to psychiatric evaluation for threats to Presidents from 1945 to 1965, it found "the outstanding aspect of the background data was the degree of social disorganization."

Thus, 38 per cent of the men came from broken homes,

against a general population rate of 17.4 to 32 per cent for "parental deprivation." Only 26 per cent were married and living with their wives.

Only 26 per cent were employed "in a period of relative economic prosperity." Their ages ranged from 14 to 76, with the median being 36.2 years. Half had less than 10.9 years of education. Eighty-three — 60.5 per cent — had been mental hospital patients.

Few belonged to organized political groups, and the great bulk of those interviewed "had little knowledge of political processes." But the great majority of threats were coupled with some political view of the President — some men contending they were "Communists" or demanding action against Communists, Negroes, Catholics or Jews.

Dr. Weinstein and Mrs. Lyerly wrote:

"The study of our subjects indicate that the individuals most dangerous to the safety of the President are those socially isolated persons who adapt to stress by symbolizing their problems in a political idiom and who identify with the President in terms of violence and death.

"In the context of such an identification, the act becomes institutionalized and is perceived as a stroke of national policy or patriotic heroism. In a society where power and violence are esteemed by so many, the name of Booth is inseparably linked with that of Lincoln and Lee Harvey Oswald lives on with John F. Kennedy."