

ERDOS
J. ALFRED

1972



DONALD J. LEAHY
... slain last August



ALFRED J. ERDOS
... insanity plea

U.S. Links Murder in Africa To a Homosexual Quarrel

by Paul G. Edwards
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A federal prosecutor charged yesterday that the former American charge d'affaires in Equatorial Guinea, Alfred J. Erdos, murdered his administrative assistant in the U.S. chancery there during a "quarrel over a homosexual act."

The accusation was made in an opening statement by assistant U.S. Attorney Justin

Williams as Erdos went on trial in U.S. District Court in Alexandria on a charge of murder in the death last Aug. 30 of Donald J. Leahy, 47.

William E. McDaniels, an attorney for Erdos, 46, said in his opening statement that the defense does not deny that Erdos killed Leahy, but seeks to prove Erdos was insane at the time of the slaying.

The government cannot prove a homosexual motive,

said McDaniels, adding that Erdos, who is married, suffered from acute paranoid psychosis, manifested in part by a fear that he and his family would become victims in "a wave of arrests, tortures and murders" directed by the Guinean government.

Even if there was a homosexual act, McDaniels said, psychiatric testimony will show that it "would not have been inconsistent with this acute paranoid condition."

When the government's first witness, Dr. William Enos, pathologist at Northern Virginia Doctor's Hospital, testified that Leahy was the victim of a homosexual attack, Erdos's lawyers moved for a mistrial.

Judge Oren R. Lewis denied the motion and said Enos was qualified to form such an opinion from the medical evidence.

Dr. Enos said that Leahy suffered 10 stab wounds on the neck, chest and arms in the attack and bled to death as a result of a wound in the right side of his neck. A pair

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of bloodstained scissors found near the body was identified as the murder weapon.

Traces of sperm were found in the victim's throat, Dr. Enos, testified. He said it was his opinion that the sperm was deposited there within two hours before Leahy's death.

In cross-examination of foreign service officers who were sent to the chancery in Santa Isabel after the slaying, McDaniels sought to show that Leahy's body was in the custody of Guinean rather than American officials for five days after the slaying. He said he will show there were "alterations made in the body" during that period.

He added, "We hope to show you the extent to which the Equatorial Guinean government went to embarrass the United States over this event. On the day after it occurred... the government produced a confession of a dissident minister linking Mr. Erdos to gun running, if you will."

Testimony established that Leahy and Erdos both went to work in the American chancery in Santa Isabel in April, 1971, and were the only American officials in the country. The U.S. ambassador to Cameroon, Lewis Hoffacker, also served as ambassador to Equatorial Guinea but resided in Yaounde, Cameroon.

Santa Isabel is on the island of Fernando Po and is one of two provinces in Equatorial

Guinea, a former Spanish colony. The other province, Rio Muni, is on the African mainland.

McDaniels said that Erdos perceived anti-American feelings on the part of the Guinean government and a tendency of that government to link American policy with the unpopular views of the Spanish government.

Erdos began to develop a fear of a conspiracy against his government and himself, McDaniels said. He said that these feelings were aggravated by the fact that his residence was across the street from the main police station in Santa Isabel, "where he could hear the comings and goings, the sounds of torture inside and see the bodies carried away."

Lanham Walker, deputy chief of the U.S. mission in Yaounde, said that diplomatic messages from Erdos changed markedly in style after about Aug. 15 of last year. "They were frequent and abrupt," he said, "full of bits and snatches without any analysis."

On Aug. 30, the day of the slaying, Walker said, he received a "flash" from Erdos by way of Accra, Ghana, and Washington that contained "unbelievable" information.

"The message warned that the U.S. was the object of a massive conspiracy," Walker testified. "It said that we would be accused by the Guinean government in the U.N. and that the chancery was then surrounded. It said Mr. Erdos was locked in the vault

of the chancery with Mr. Leahy, who Mr. Erdos said was a communist spy."

Walker said he dispatched Leonard Shurtleff, U.S. consul in Douala, Cameroon, to check out the situation.

Shurtleff testified that Erdos allowed him to enter the chancery only after he brought the charge d'affaire's wife and infant son there. When Erdos came out, Shurtleff said, he called the consul aside and said, "I blew my cool and killed Don Leahy."

Shurtleff said that unknown to him Mrs. Leahy followed him into the blood-splattered chancery and was the first to find Leahy's body in the vault. "I heard her screams and found her clutching the body of her husband," he said.

