

LONDON EVENING STANDARD

June 13, 1968 - Jon Kimche

Startling new evidence about the identity of the man charged with killing Robert Kennedy has been produced by an Arab government.

The government has been making an intensive investigation into the background of Sirhan Bishara.

The new information, which is being communicated to the United States authorities, may open up an entirely new line of inquiry into the motivation and organisation of the attack on Kennedy.

It also indicates considerable variation in the accounts so far given of Sirhan's past and movements.

His full name is given as Sirhan Bishara Sirhan Abu Khatar. He was first brought to the United States as a four-year-old child in 1948--not in 1957.

He returned to Jordan in 1957 and the records show that he was married in the Orthodox Church at Es Salt, 15 miles west of Amman on June 27, 1957, when he was only 13, to Leila Yussef Mikhael from Es Salt.

Later that year Sirhan returned to the United States and three months later his wife was brought to him. The records of his journey are not very precise and probably not very important, as both husband and wife were little more than children.

Rather more interest centres on three later journeys which Sirhan made especially on the last two which according to this investigation, were made in 1964 and 1966.

In 1964, Sirhan, according to these records, returned to the Middle East for seven months, four of which he spent in Damascus. Where he was for the rest of the time is not stated.

In 1966, he is said to have spent an even longer period in the Middle East, including a stretch of five months in Cairo. He returned to the United States, according to this report at the beginning of 1967.

The Arab Government is convinced that its records are accurate but they are being sent to the United States so that they can be checked with the information assembled by the FBI.

There is an evident and increasing disinclination, however, for witnesses to talk and even those who spoke at first--such as Sirhan's father--have now adjusted their responses.

Last week Sirhan's father cursed his son. Yesterday, he was denouncing Kennedy and preparing to go to Los Angeles to stand by his son.

Meanwhile in Beirut, the Lebanese sûreté has foiled an attempt last weekend to kill the man they have charged with the attempted murder of former President Chamoun, Nabil Aqqar, who has been talking freely. Aqqar, incidentally, is a Lebanese citizen--not a Libyan as at first reported.



June 17, 1968 - Jon Kimche

The Federal Bureau of Investigation at home and United States officials abroad have been active over the weekend in seeking to penetrate the sickening smoke screen which is settling on the Robert Kennedy assassination--especially over Sirhan Bishara Sirhan's immediate past.

They have been probing new information covering at least four foreign countries concerning Sirhan's movements. In doing so they are satisfied that Sirhan's constitutional rights for a fair trial will not be jeopardised.

On the contrary, it is thought that timely action and revelation may protect his life more effectively than formalistic silence--especially if Sirhan shows any inclination to talk freely.

New information which has reached the U. S. Government claims to give details of Sirhan's journey to Syria in 1964, the time he went, where he went, how he went, and what he did.

July 18, 1968 - Jon Kimche

Curious moves have taken place before the trial of Robert Kennedy's alleged assassin starts in Los Angeles tomorrow. Extracts from Sirhan Bishara Sirhan's diaries have been circulated to interested and important politicians and others.

Apparently their aim is to show that the young man was mentally unbalanced and not responsible for his action.

This is indicated, it is claimed, by names of other prominent American statesmen who were listed in the diary for assassination after Kennedy.

A closer inspection, however, shows that these were all men directly involved in Middle East politics and accused by the Arab spokesmen of being pro-Israel.

But more important has been the attempt to blanket the information about Sirhan's own earlier movements. Though these are now known and recorded in detail by at least three Arab governments--and presumably must be known by the FBI--there appears to be a desire not to bring this part of the case into court.

Earlier details of Sirhan's journeys to the Middle East have now been fully investigated by the Arab governments concerned and they have filled in the missing details in the earlier report.

These show that: Sirhan left the United States at the end of January, 1964, and travelled via Canada. From February 5 to February 21, he lived in the al Hamra suburb of Beirut with a Christian Arab family called Alguas al Mouishi.



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He then went to Damascus and from February 23 to March 5, 1964, he lodged with Halim al Halibi in Ghouta. From there he went to the training camp at Qataneh, outside Damascus.

With him at the camp were 10 other Palestinian and some Iraqis and others. The two officers in charge of the camp at the time were Lieut. Colonel Aziz al Marouf and an Algerian major known as Ahmed Belcasim.

There are no details about the way he returned to the U.S. But the records show that Sirhan left again in April, 1966. This time he signed on as a member of the crew of a ship going to Alexandria. He is reported as arriving in Alexandria on May 22, 1966, and living for a week in Cairo in a small hotel.

After that he moved to the house of a Lebanese family known as the Karam family. He stayed with them until he was taken to a training camp in the Ma'adi district of Cairo.

On August 3, he was again moved to a camp in Gaza. There he stayed until the end of September before returning to the United States--again there are no details about the return journey.

Again developments last week in the parallel case of the man who shot the former Lebanese President Chamoun just before Robert Kennedy was shot are not without special interest.

Maitre Raymond Baridi, the Government attorney who had been charged with examining the accused Nabil Aqqari, and who had obtained from him a confession showing very similar travels and training as those shown in these Sirhan records, has handed his resignation to the Lebanese Minister of Justice.

In his letter of resignation, he says bluntly that outside interference has become such as to make serious investigation impossible.

