

SIRHAN IS HOPEFUL HE WILL BE FREED

Tells of Gratitude for Calls
That Case Be Reopened

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LOS ANGELES, Dec. 25 (UPI)—Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, serving life term for the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy on June 5, 1968, hopes that he may be cleared of the murder conviction and given his freedom soon.

Mr. Sirhan issued a Christmas message from San Quentin Prison through his attorney, expressing his gratitude for recent calls for an investigation of the theory that a "second gun" fired the bullet that killed Mr. Kennedy.

"If I had any consciousness of the events of June, 1968, it would not have taken this long to develop evidence pointing toward my innocence of killing Senator Kennedy," Mr. Sirhan said.

The Jordanian testified at his trial that he could not remember firing the shots, although dozens of eyewitnesses said they saw him shooting at Mr. Kennedy from a distance of a few feet. A .22-caliber pistol was wrested from his hand.

Mr. Sirhan testified that he had several drinks and had been looking at himself in a mirror when he went into a trance. He said he came back to reality after Senator Kennedy had been shot and found himself holding a gun in the kitchen of the Hotel Ambassador in Los Angeles.

'Hope and Humility'

"I am filled with feelings of hope and humility that I may some day soon have my freedom," Mr. Sirhan said in the message released by his attorney, Godfrey Isaac. "At this season, I wish peace for the entire world."

Mr. Isaac said he would file a writ of error with the California Supreme Court next month, asking for a reopening of the case.

Former Representative Allard K. Lowenstein of Long Island and others have called for refiring of Mr. Sirhan's gun and ballistics tests to determine whether the bullet removed from Senator Kennedy's head came from the .22-caliber pistol.

The demands for reopening the case are based mainly on a report made in 1970 by William H. Harper, a retired criminologist from Pasadena, who chal-

lenged the ballistics work performed by the Los Angeles Police Department.

Mr. Harper said in an interview last week, however, that the condition of the bullets was so poor that it was not possible to say one way or another whether the one that killed Mr. Kennedy came from another gun.