

# The Accused

## A Loner Who Hated Israel

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Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, the 24-year-old accused assassin of Robert F. Kennedy, is a Jordanian by descent, a Greek Orthodox Christian by religion, a Palestinian by birth, and a resident of the United States by choice. He appears to be a man of no nationality.

Five feet five inches tall, 120 pounds in weight, curly-haired, swarthy, speaking with a slight continental accent, Sirhan was described today by a former employer as "opposed to the Vietnam

war, in favor of riots—but not a member of any group. He was a very proud man. He wanted to be recognized by the world."

The employer, John H. Weidner, owner of the Organic Health Food Store in Pasadena, Calif. for whom Sirhan worked as a \$2-an-hour stockboy from Sept. 24, 1967, to March 7, described

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Los Angeles mayor links Sirhan to Communists, Pg. A8.

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Sirhan as "very ambitious and well-spoken." He said the young immigrant—whom whom he described as a friend, as well as an employer—appeared to have no close friends, either male or female.

None of the legions of journalists and policemen looking into the background of the accused has been able to unearth close friends or associates. Apart from Sirhan's immediate family, Weidner is—to date—the best disinterested witness.

He said Sirhan hated Jews, an apparent legacy from the 1948 Palestine war when Sirhan said he saw Arabs killed by Israelis. Weidner said Sirhan "liked the law—and the courts." He gave this account of a dispute with Sirhan, which ended in termination of employment:

The dispute arose over a delivery schedule, Weidner had one opinion, Sirhan an-

other, and it ended when Sirhan called his boss a "liar." Then he quit. Shortly thereafter, Sirhan demanded \$300 severance pay, which Weidner refused.

Sirhan insisted on taking the matter before a California labor commissioner. Weidner agreed, and on April 24 Los Angeles Labor Commissioner M. A. Myers heard the case. He found for Weidner.

Sirhan's supposed fascination for law and the courts is partially substantiated by his attitude with the Los Angeles police. When first arrested, he steadfastly refused a lawyer—apparently on the assumption that he would make his own defense. He spoke amicably—"very cool, very calm, very stable, and quite lucid," according to Police Chief Thomas Reddin—but would not speak of the shooting, nor of the events that led up to it.

According to Lt. Jack Eberhardt, an aide to Red-

din, Sirhan spoke enthusiastically about a sensational local murder case last year, in which a Los Angeles County deputy district attorney was convicted of killing his wife and her lover. Sirhan brought up the matter several times, according to Eberhardt, and was interested in whether the convicted murderer, Jack Kirshke, would win freedom in his appeal.

Apparently at the urging of Al Wirin, chief counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union in Southern California, Sirhan has now agreed to retain a lawyer.

But the picture that has emerged of Sirhan is far from definitive. The known facts are meager enough:

Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service give his birth date as March 19, 1944, in Jordan. He arrived in New York City, with his father, Bishara Salameh Ghatas Sirhan, and his mother, Mary

Bishara Sirhan, three brothers and a sister, on Jan. 12, 1957.

The family apparently moved shortly thereafter to Pasadena, where Sirhan attended the John Muir High School. He is said to have been a good student, a member of both the junior and senior councils, and a member of the ROTC. A classmate has described him as "polite, clean, and an A-1 student."

The classmate, Christian Ek, 23, a Swede, said in Stockholm that Sirhan "dreamed of being something big in Jordan." in Saigon, another classmate, Lt. William A. Spaniard, 24, of Pasadena, described Sirhana as "brilliant. He was studying Russian while everyone else was barely getting by in Spanish and English."

The charge of pro-Communism has been made, but not proved. Weidner said that Sirhan spoke of America as "not really the place

of freedom." Was it better in Russia or China, Weidner asked? "One day, maybe," Weidner said Sirhan replied. Los Angeles police have said publicly and privately that there is no evidence to support a charge that Sirhan was a Communist.

That he hated Jew there is little doubt. "He was violently pro-Jordan and anti-Israel," said John Shear, who worked with Sirhan at Hollywood Park racetrack (where Sirhan was an exercise boy). "When there was trouble between Jordan and Israel, he would become inflamed." Shear's statement is confirmed by Weidner.

And there is the matter of the now-famous notebooks, quoted by the Los Angeles Mayor, Sam Yorty. Yorty said that Sirhan's diary contained an entry last month that "Kennedy has to be assassinated before June 5, 1968." That is the first anniversary of the Arab-Israeli war.

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