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Yorty-Sirhan 260

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Shortly after Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was arrested last week and accused of the Wednesday assassination of Kennedy, Yorty at a news conference said Sirhan had shown Communist sympathies and had a diary which said Kennedy should be shot by June 5.

The California attorney general, the local district attorney and others criticized the statements as jeopardizing a fair trial.

Yorty told another news conference Tuesday that, "I felt it was a duty of mine to see that this sort of thing violence and rumors didn't happen here. It should be pointed out that in the first hours after the assassination the whole world wanted to know who the suspect was."

He said his statements were necessary "to protect the reputation of Los Angeles."

Yorty said he would have been glad to sit down in chambers with Superior Judge Arthur L. Alarcon, who issued the order about commenting on the case, and discuss it with him. He called it too limited because it did not include news media, saying reporters might dig up material that might affect a fair trial.

He spoke out about Sirhan, he said, because of rumors and violence across the country that followed the Memphis assassination of Martin Luther King.

He noted that first reports indicated the Kennedy gunman was a Latin type, perhaps a Cuban or Mexican-American. Identifying Sirhan as a Jordanian was a "public service" to protect local Latins, he said.

He did not disclose all available information in the case, Yorty said, but "only what was necessary to stop rumors."

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