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ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN.

MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

*A report of George H. Sharpe relative to the assassination of President Lincoln.*

DECEMBER 19, 1867.—Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary and ordered to be printed.

*To the House of Representatives :*

I transmit, for the information of the House of Representatives, a report from the Secretary of State, with an accompanying paper.

ANDREW JOHNSON.

WASHINGTON, *December 17, 1867.*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,  
*Washington, December 17, 1867.*

I have the honor to lay before you, with a view to its communication to the House of Representatives, a transcript of the report made to this department by Mr. George H. Sharpe, who, under its instructions, visited Europe in the early part of the present year to ascertain, if possible, whether any citizens of the United States in that quarter, other than those who have heretofore been suspected and charged with the offence, were instigators of, or concerned in, the assassination of the late President Lincoln, and the attempted assassination of the Secretary of State.

Respectfully submitted:

WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

The PRESIDENT.

*Mr. Sharpe to Mr. Seward.*

KINGSTON, NEW YORK, *July, 1867.*

SIR: In the month of January last I left for Europe pursuant to instructions from the State Department, in which I was told that there might be reason to

apprehend that "citizens of the United States in Europe, other than those who have heretofore been suspected or charged with the offence, were instigators of, or concerned in, the assassination of the late President Lincoln, and the attempted assassination of the Secretary of State." It was deemed proper, in connection with the anticipated trial of John H. Surratt, to make an effort to identify those persons, and it was made my duty to examine any evidence existing abroad, so that government might judge whether or not it ought to demand the surrender of any persons in Europe.

My attention was drawn to the circumstances, already developed, that the conspirators had made use of considerable sums of money in travelling to and from Canada and elsewhere, in the pay of the confederates, in providing means for retreat and refuge, in the hire of horses and boats, and in liberal expenditures through the long preparation and execution of the plot.

These moneys, which must have amounted, in the aggregate, to large sums, were furnished to them in gold, at a time when it was very difficult for private individuals to obtain it, and when even official personages omitted its employment unless imperatively demanded for the uses of government.

It was further hoped that upon the indictment of Surratt, such papers and evidence might be brought forward as would tend to direct inquiries in Europe.

On my arrival in England, I thought best to make an effort to learn if Surratt had communicated with leading rebels there or on the continent on his way to the Papal States.

Surratt reached Liverpool September 27, 1865, and on Saturday morning, September 30, he left for London in the nine o'clock train, arriving at the Euston Square station about two o'clock p. m.

After following out the working of a municipal regulation which controls a portion of the London cabs, it was thought that a clue was obtained to the particular cab which took Surratt as a passenger on the arrival of the train.

The driver of the cab referred to was found, but he was an old man, prostrated with a serious and lingering disease, from which he did not recover during my stay in London, and incapacitated from recalling incidents to promote the inquiries.

A patient investigation was given to all circumstances tending to throw light on Surratt's connection with rebels known to be in London at that time, and through letters from Mr. Adams I was brought into communication with our consuls at London and Liverpool, from whom, as well as from Mr. Moran, secretary of legation, and some American gentlemen, long resident abroad, every assistance was received, so that, it is believed, every fact was inquired into which had any significance under my instructions.

This examination failing to disclose any state of facts deemed sufficiently well established or of sufficient importance to bring to the knowledge of the department, attention was turned to the manner in which Surratt entered the Papal States, in order to learn whether his flight there was through the procurement of any persons, citizens of the United States.

An inquiry having been made at the British foreign office, it was learned that on October 12, 1865, application was there made for a passport for John Watson, of Edinburgh, over the signature of the country manager of a banking institution in London, and on the following day, October 13, 1865, the passport was issued.

There were several circumstances about this which led me to inquire into it.

The date was soon after Surratt's arrival in London; the name was the one under which he had enlisted in the Papal Zouaves; and the direction of the bank under whose auspices the application was made, included some of the most notorious rebel sympathizers in England.

It was fair to suppose that, although Surratt had gone under other names, he would have less facility for changing one chosen for a passport, and that he probably enlisted under the one by which he entered the States of the church.

With such probabilities that Surratt's passport was obtained at the British foreign office, and that the influences which procured it could be traced, an examination was made at Edinburgh, where five John Watsons were found, one of whom proved to be the person who received the passport of October 13, 1865, which was seen and verified.

This incident is briefly detailed in order to show proper reasons for the time occupied, as in each instance care had to be taken that no wrong should be done, and no suspicions raised unless justified by the result.

On the 15th of April I left London and proceeded direct to Rome, bearing a note of introduction from Mr. Adams to General King, with whom, and with Mr. Hooker, I consulted.

General King introduced me, informally, to General Kansler, the Papal minister of war, with whom I had three interviews, and during them I requested that I might be permitted to see any papers or effects left by Surratt.

General Kansler caused a search to be made, and informed me that Surratt left no papers, having, in all probability, destroyed such as he had at the time of his discovery of General King's letter to Ste. Marie.

Surratt also left no effects. He was obliged, by a military regulation, to dispose of citizen's apparel on entering the service, to prevent facilities for desertion, a regulation which, in the end, contributed to his identification and arrest.

General Kansler also caused a search to be made for the original passport by which Surratt entered the Roman States, and upon its production, and my request to be permitted to take a copy, he offered to deliver the original to me, his office retaining a copy.

This offer was accepted, and the passport subsequently forwarded to the State Department.

It may not be improper for me to add, that my interviews with General Kansler were at the war office, and that his instructions to his Italian subordinates, and the reports from them, were made in my presence, with the strongest evidences of the good will and good faith of himself and of his government.

Surratt's passport showed that it was obtained by some influence from the provincial government of Canada, and had received the visé of the United States consul-general there.

It had been approved for entry into the States of the Church at the office of the nuncio, in Paris, but bore no evidence that Surratt had received assistance in any other quarter in Europe.

The nuncio's visé had been given gratis, which was unusual, and inquiries were made at his office to ascertain under what circumstances the same had been procured.

These steps, although taken with great care, and after permission for the interview had been asked, were met with rudeness and discourtesy on the part of the nuncio himself and his secretary; but I was subsequently informed, through our legation in Paris, that the nuncio stated his visé had been obtained, not through any letter or special recommendation, but upon the personal presentation of the passport by Surratt, whom that official remembers to have seen, and upon the former's statement that he was going to Rome for the purpose of enlistment.

There being nothing to throw doubt on the statement, other than the discreditable conduct of the official, by whom better treatment must have been accorded to Surratt than to myself, no further inquiry was made in regard to the passport.

I subsequently saw Mr. Sanford, our minister at Brussels; the United States consul at Paris, and other Americans of distinguished loyalty long resident there, and had full conversations with them concerning all matters which had come to their knowledge, and which were within my instructions. These interviews did not lead to an extension of my stay, but believing that every inquiry which I had been directed to make was completed, so far as there were means to do it, I returned home in July.

Conscious that earnestness was brought to the attempt at identifying the loathsome instigators of the great crime, and that every possible assistance was received, I have to report that, in my opinion, no such legal or reasonable proof exists in Europe of the participation of any persons there, formerly citizens of the United States, as to call for the action of the government.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEORGE H. SHARPE.

Hon. WILLIAM H. SEWARD,

*Secretary of State.*







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