

30th October 1952

Re:- Charles CHAPLIN, THORNSTEIN or HARLEY

13a

The various directories show Chaplin's name to be CHARLES SPENCER CHAPLIN, born 16.4.1889, London, the son of Charles Chaplin and his wife Hannah (professionally known as Lily HARLEY).

I have searched at Somerset House the relevant indexes of births for England & Wales but could find no record of any person of the above-mentioned surnames with the Christian name Charles, Charles Spencer or Israel born 16.4.1889.

It would seem that Chaplin was either not born in this Country or that his name at birth was other than those mentioned.

So

B.1. (Mr J. H. Marriott)

Your memo., Gen., dated 22.10.1952 refers.

D. Storrier
D. Storrier

B.5.
31.10.1952
2724

Dyke
19/11

42787
31/10/52

CONFIDENTIAL

28a

PF. 710549/B.1.G/WMTM

Commander,
Special Branch.

Charles Spencer CHAPLIN

We were recently asked by the Americans if we could discover whether the original name of Charlie CHAPLIN, the film star, was Israel THORNSTEIN. Although his claim to have been born in London on 16th April 1889 has been accepted by the Passport Office at least since 16th September 1920, the earliest date of which there is a record of CHAPLIN having been issued with a British passport, we cannot find particulars of his birth at Somerset House.

This suggests that his name at birth may not have been CHAPLIN, or, alternatively, that his birth did not take place in this country. We should be very grateful to receive any comments that you may have on his origin. We have no Security information of our own to his detriment, but in view of the American allegations we would at least like to clear up this point.

D
W.M.T. Magan.

5th January 1953

LDS/RE

BIG/SH
6/1/53

S.B. No. 1 (Flimsy)

METROPOLITAN POLICE

Special Report

ENCL.

SPECIAL BRANCH,

BA 12 FEB 1953

TO BLS

11th day of February, 1953

REF PF 710549

SUBJECT

Charles Spencer

CHAPLIN.

With reference to M.I.5 letter PF 710549/B.1.G/WMPM, dated 5-1-1953, asking for information as to the original name and the date and place of birth of Charles Spencer CHAPLIN, the film star :-

Reference to Papers

405/53/9.

M.I.5 PF.

710549/B.1.G/WMPM.

Discreet enquiries have been made and a number of old records on the life of Charles Spencer CHAPLIN have been consulted and as far as can be ascertained it appears that he was born in Kennington, London, on 16th April 1889. His parents are said to have been Charles CHAPLIN, a music hall singer, and Hannah CHAPLIN, a singer and dancer (known professionally as Lily HARLEY).

One source of information, however, which is usually considered fairly reliable, claims that CHAPLIN was born near Fontainebleau, near Paris, on 16th April 1889. There may or may not be some truth in this, but in view of the fact that no documentary proof has been obtained that CHAPLIN was born in the United Kingdom, it may well be that he was in fact born in France.

No information has been obtained as to CHAPLIN's original name and as far as can be ascertained from enquiry in the Motion Picture Industry he has never been known by the name of Israel THORNSTEIN. It is said, however, that he is of German-Jewish origin and that his name at birth was probably other than that by which he has been known since childhood.

Charles Spencer CHAPLIN first came under notice of Special Branch on 21-5-1948 when he was mentioned in a telephone message from M.I.5 to this Department as having sent Arthur W. KELLY, vice - president of United Artists Film Producers, to this country from America to get his (CHAPLIN's) frozen assets out of the United Kingdom. CHAPLIN is also said to have authorised KELLY to give money to Left-Wing groups in England. Subsequent

METROPOLITAN POLICE

enquiry by Special Branch shows that no evidence was obtained to confirm this information, which originated from American sources (405/48/249 dated 21-5-1948 and 5-7-1948 refers).

There is no mention of Israel THORNSTEIN in Special Branch records.

R. Hecla.

Sergeant.

Submitted.

[Signature]
Chief Inspector.

[Signature]
CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT.

CONFIDENTIAL

H7a.

FP. 710,549/B.1.G/PRG

19th February, 1953.

Dear [redacted]

~~Charles Spencer CHAPLIN~~
~~Charlie CHAPLIN~~
© Israel THORNSTEIN

We were recently asked by the Americans if we could discover whether the original name of Charlie CHAPLIN, the film star, was Israel THORNSTEIN.

Although his claim to have been born in London on 16th April 1889 has been accepted by the Passport Office at least since 16th September 1920, the earliest date of which there is a record of CHAPLIN having been issued with a British passport, we cannot find particulars of his birth at Somerset House under CHAPLIN, THORNSTEIN or HARLEY (the name of his mother, Hannah, known professionally as Lily HARLEY).

Special Branch have been informed by a source which is usually considered fairly reliable that CHAPLIN was born near Fontainebleau on 16th April 1889 and in view of the fact that there is no documentary proof of his birth in U.K. we should be glad if you would ask [redacted] whether they can confirm this information from their records.

Yours sincerely,

D.M.

for P.R. Clapham.

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REPLY
20 2 53
BIC
19 2 53

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PF. 710,549/B.1.G/PRC

405/53/9

Commander,
Special Branch.

Charles Spencer CHAPLIN

462

Further to our letter of 19th February under the above reference, we have been informed by the French that there is no trace of CHAPLIN's birth in either Fontainebleau or Melun area.



P.R. Clapham.

4th May, 1953.
PRC/JT

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N7.RC
6-5-53
31651-
4.5.53

Secret.

53a

In reply, state NUMBER and DATE.

30th April, 1953.

ENCL _____
hs - 1 MAY 1953
TO BIG PRC 4/5/53
REF P. 710549

50a

Dear Clapham,

Reference your PF.710549/B.1.G/PRC of the 17.4.53.
and previous correspondence on the subject of Charles Spencer
CHAPLIN.

_____ has now informed us that
there is no trace of subject's birth in either the Fontainebleau
or Melun area.

Yours sincerely,

P.R. Clapham, Esq.,
M.I.5.

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H.O.16./11.46.

TJKS
M.P.C.
6-5-53