

Article sheds light on the fabrication of charges against Strauss-Kahn

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A lengthy article by long-time investigative journalist Edward Jay Epstein, published in the *New York Review of Books*, sheds new light on the arrest of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, former head of the International Monetary Fund, last May in New York City on bogus rape charges.

The article suggests that the arrest may have been the product of a sting operation mounted with the knowledge of top French government officials, including the chief intelligence adviser to French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Strauss-Kahn was at the time the frontrunner for the presidential nomination of France's Socialist Party (PS) and was leading Sarkozy in the polls for next year's election. His arrest led to his resignation as IMF managing director and the selection of PS Chairman François Hollande, a weaker candidate, as the party's presidential nominee.

The most remarkable aspect of Epstein's article is how unremarkable his investigation was. There is no sensational breakthrough, no new and unexpected witness, only a careful compilation of facts available in court and public records. On this basis, Epstein points to numerous conflicts between the factual record and the account given by the woman who claimed she was raped by Strauss-Kahn—Nafissatou Diallo, a housekeeper at Sofitel, the luxury hotel where the assault allegedly took place.

Epstein is an experienced investigative reporter, going back to his book-length analysis of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, *Inquest*, which rebutted the claims of the Warren Commission that Lee Harvey Oswald was a lone assassin. What he does in the *New York Review of Books* could have been done by the *New York Times* or any of the television networks, had they desired to seek the truth about the Strauss-Kahn affair.

These media outlets spearheaded weeks of witch-hunting reports on the supposed rape case, which ultimately collapsed after the New York District Attorney's office found it impossible to conceal the gross contradictions in Diallo's accounts. Neither the *Times* nor the networks have yet reported on Epstein's article, although accounts have

appeared online and in the wire services.

Epstein established a detailed timeline of the events of May 14, 2011—based on the evidence of room-access cards used by the staff and guests, cell phone records, and time-stamped videotapes from several surveillance cameras. The sexual encounter between Strauss-Kahn and Diallo could have taken place only during a seven-minute interval between 12:06 p.m., when Diallo entered Strauss-Kahn's hotel suite, and his 12:13 p.m. phone call to his daughter, Camille.

The article notes that a male hotel employee used his access card to enter the Strauss-Kahn suite one minute before Diallo, making the sexual assault even less plausible. This employee, Syed Haque, worked for room service and was to clear dishes from the suite. The access cards record only entry and not departure from a room, so it is not known whether he was in the suite when Diallo came in, or during the alleged sexual encounter. Haque refused to speak with attorneys for Strauss-Kahn.

Epstein calls attention to the access card records for an adjacent room, 2820, which Diallo entered before she went into Strauss-Kahn's suite and again after the supposed "rape," before she reported to hotel security that she had been assaulted. In her statements to prosecutors, Diallo repeatedly lied about visiting room 2820 before and after the event until the access card records were produced.

Prosecutors described Diallo's actions in concealing her repeated visits to 2820 as "inexplicable," noting in their motion for dismissal that if she had made mention of these visits, the room would have been searched as part of the crime scene.

Epstein writes, "Given Diallo's conflicting accounts, all that we really know about what happened in the nearby room 2820 is that Diallo went there both before and after her encounter with DSK and then omitted the latter visit from her sworn testimony to the grand jury. We still do not know if there was anyone in 2820 when she entered it again following the encounter with DSK or if, prior to the police arriving, anyone influenced her to omit mention of room

2820.”

The clear implication is that the nearby room could have served as a command point for a sting operation against Strauss-Kahn, with Diallo checking in with her handlers before and after the supposed “attack.” Sofitel has refused to divulge who occupied room 2820 that day, citing privacy grounds.

Epstein suggests that those directing Diallo and orchestrating the sting were linked to the Sarkozy administration in France. He notes that when John Sheehan, security director at the hotel, was alerted to the reported “rape,” he called a 646 area code number at Accor, the French corporation that owns Sofitel.

Sheehan’s boss at Accor, René-Georges Querry, is a former top French police official who, Epstein writes, “had worked closely in the police with Ange Mancini, who is now coordinator for intelligence for President Sarkozy. Querry, at the time that Sheehan was making his call to the 646 number, was arriving at a soccer match in Paris where he would be seated in the box of President Sarkozy.”

One could easily conclude from this chain of connections that the news of Strauss-Kahn’s arrest could have passed directly to the French president.

Another possibility offered by Epstein is that Sheehan called a lower-ranking security official at Accor, Xavier Graff, who was later suspended by the company when it was revealed that he had boasted in an e-mail to a friend that he had been involved in “bringing down” Strauss-Kahn.

The most extraordinary evidence brought forward in the Epstein article concerns the actions of Brian Yearwood, the hotel engineer, and an unidentified man, apparently a security agent of some kind, who are seen on the videotape accompanying Nafissatou Diallo to the security office where she reported the attack. About an hour afterwards, the security office placed a 911 call to the police—a delay which Epstein notes as peculiar and unexplained.

Two minutes after the 911 call is placed, bringing the police into the case officially and ensuring the public vilification and humiliation of Strauss-Kahn, Yearwood and the unidentified man appear on a security videotape giving each other high-fives and performing what lawyers for Strauss-Kahn described as a victory dance. What were they celebrating?

There are other aspects to the case that raise questions, according to Epstein. Strauss-Kahn had been notified that day that Sarkozy aides had been reading his private e-mail messages, and he had asked for a technical analysis of his IMF Blackberry. The Blackberry subsequently disappeared—its GPS locator terminated at 12:51 p.m. that day—and it has never been found.

Another mystery is the long delay in obtaining medical

treatment for the alleged rape victim. As Epstein writes: “After she said that she had been the victim of a brutal and sustained sexual assault, it is hard to understand how the security staff would have ruled out that she might require immediate medical attention. But as has been seen, until 1:31, several minutes after receiving a message from Sheehan, the security staff did not make the 911 call. She did not arrive at St. Luke’s Hospital until 3:57 p.m., nearly four hours after the alleged attack.”

All the issues raised by Epstein call into question the decision to charge Strauss-Kahn and the subsequent media frenzy over the case. As the *World Socialist Web Site* pointed out at the time, there were basic issues of democratic rights at stake, including the presumption of innocence.

The prosecution rushed to indict Strauss-Kahn before any of the evidence could be examined and considered objectively, so as to accomplish his political destruction. This was a goal shared by the Obama administration, in conflict with the IMF director over global economic policy, and the Sarkozy administration in France.

The corporate-controlled media was mobilized for that purpose, along with its acolytes in the petty-bourgeois “left” publications, from the *Nation* to *Socialist Worker*. Not for the first time, and not for the last, a lurid sex scandal was used to regulate the internal affairs of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

Strauss-Kahn is, of course, a representative of big business, no different from Sarkozy, Obama or any other capitalist politician in that respect. The warning to be made is that if such brutal treatment, and such a fabricated case, can be carried out against such an individual, what will the ruling elite prepare against individuals from the working class, who lack Strauss-Kahn’s access to millions of dollars and high-priced legal backing?

The author also recommends:

The serious questions raised by the Dominique Strauss-Kahn affair

[19 May 2011]

Political lessons of the Strauss-Kahn affair

[4 July 2011]



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