

Soviets Say U.S. Reporter Was Spy

From News Dispatches

MOSCOW, July 12—The Soviet Union today accused a former American newsman here, Robert C. Toth, of having worked for U.S. intelligence agencies and said that it was only due to the "good will and restraint" of Soviet authorities that criminal proceedings were not lodged against him.

The accusation came in a lengthy commentary distributed by the official Soviet news agency, Tass. It came a month after Toth, former Moscow bureau chief of the Los Angeles Times, was seized by the KGB security police on a downtown street and hauled away for the first session of a total of 14 hours of questioning spread over six days.

In another incident involving an American journalist today, CBS correspondent Bernard C. Redmont and his West German cameraman were roughed up while filming a Moscow beer garden and then questioned by police.

Redmont said he and cameraman Kurt Hoefle had been filming for about an hour when two unidentified men suddenly tried to rip the camera away, kicking Hoefle.

Uniformed and plainclothed police broke up the melee and took the CBS men to a police station where they were questioned for about an hour.

Redmont said the police were "quite

correct" in their behavior and returned the camera and film, but he added that "this is an indication of the difficulties of doing television in the Soviet Union, even on an innocuous subject."

Toth, who was permitted to leave the Soviet Union on June 17, at the scheduled end of his assignment, was first accused of collecting "secret information of a political and military character." Later, he was told he was being questioned as a "witness," presumably against Anatoly Scharansky, 29, a computer expert and prominent Soviet dissident who had been under arrest since March 16, reportedly on a treason charge.

Today's Tass article broadened the attack against Toth, saying that he had "received assignments not so much from the Los Angeles Times as from American special agencies. While fulfilling these assignments, Toth tried to make the acquaintance of Soviet scientists who he thought could possess information of interest to U.S. special agencies."

Toth has denied collecting any secret information during his three-year Moscow assignment and the U.S. embassy said today, "We repeat what we said earlier — that Mr. Toth was a journalist engaged in legitimate journalistic activities."

Asked why Soviet authorities are

resurrecting the case, the embassy spokesman declared: "Because he's safely out of the country and they can afford to say anything they want to." [William Thomas, editor of the Los Angeles Times, called the Tass charges "ridiculous."]

Tass hinted broadly that it could prove Toth's connection with U.S. intelligence agencies but did not state so flatly. "Will not those who now come out as Toth's advocates feel quite ill at ease if evidence is submitted irrefutably proving the connection of this so-to-say correspondent with U.S. intelligence services?" Tass asked rhetorically.

It mentioned specifically the CIA and "other espionage agencies, related for instance to the Pentagon" as engaged in "intensive subversive activities."

The U.S. embassy spokesman here noted that the Soviets had previously "hinted darkly that they had information that would close the book" on journalists accused of being CIA agents.

Three American journalists accused a year ago in an article in the government-controlled press of being CIA agents denied the charge and the authorities have produced no "proof" of their alleged intelligence ties.

Toth was detained by the KGB on June 11 while he was receiving an ar-

ticle on parapsychology from Soviet scientist Valery Petukhov, who also was taken in by the police.

Dissident sources said today that Petukhov was released after spending four days in KGB custody.

The dissident sources said the director of the institute where Petukhov works was summoned to the Interior Ministry and told to take no action against him because he had "helped the KGB expose an arch-intelligence agent from one of the imperialist countries."

In other developments:

• Nobel Peace laureate Andrei Sakharov and four other dissident physicists appealed to scientists attending an international conference near Moscow to take up the case of human rights activist Yuri Orlov, who was arrested last February and reportedly faces charges of anti-Soviet slander.

• The senior military adviser to the Soviet U. N. mission was "brutally" beaten last Thursday by two men near his home on Manhattan's upper east side, according to a Soviet letter of complaint. The Soviet note said the "premeditated" attack caused "serious bodily injury" to Col. Vladimir Chernyshev. A New York City police spokesman said the Soviets never reported the attack and have not allowed them to interview Chernyshev since the delivery of the protest note to U.S. officials yesterday.

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