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Soviet Expels AP Reporter; Harasses Other Newsmen

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Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Feb. 4—The Soviet Foreign Ministry today ordered a correspondent of The Associated Press to leave the country within a week. It was the first expulsion of an American journalist in seven years, and it underscored the rising Government pressure directed against the Western press here in recent months.

The correspondent, George A. Krimsky, has been known as one of the most tenacious reporters in the Moscow press corps. With a good command of the Russian language and many Russian friends, he has been particularly active in reporting activities by dissidents in a period when Soviet authorities are strengthening efforts to curb the dissident movement.

Mr. Krimsky was one of three reporters accused last spring by the weekly Literaturnaya Gazeta of working for the Central Intelligence Agency. He and the two others—Alfred Friendly Jr., then with Newsweek, and Christopher S. Wren of The New York Times—denied the charge and asserted that the Government was attempting to cut them off from Soviet sources.

Mr. Friendly, whose assignment was scheduled to end, left Moscow last summer. Mr. Krimsky and Mr. Wren remained.

AP Refused to Withdraw Krimsky

On Jan. 24, the press department of the Foreign Ministry summoned David Mason, bureau chief of The Associated Press, asked him why Mr. Krimsky was still here and suggested that he should be withdrawn. The Associated Press refused.

Two days ago, Literaturnaya Gazeta renewed the C.I.A. charges against the three correspondents in an article that focused on Mr. Krimsky and mentioned the others only in passing. Mr. Krimsky was accused of having given a Russian informant special coupons available only to foreigners for use in special stores where goods are better and prices lower than in regular Soviet shops. Mr. Krimsky denied the charge.

Meantime, other forms of harassment were used. While he was covering a dissident demonstration in December, the tires on his car were slashed. Last week, his Russian maid was blocked by a policeman as she came to his apartment and was told she could no longer work for him.

Some other correspondents have also felt pressure. Soviet acquaintances have been interrogated by the K.G.B., the security police, and told to stay away from the Americans. Official interviews and permission to travel within the country have been denied from time to time.

Yesterday, the tires on a car belonging to David Satter, an American who works for The Financial Times of London, were slashed in front of the police-guarded foreigners' compound where he lives; he had met with two dissidents in his apartment.

Rail Official Canceled Wren Interview

Last week, a Ministry of Railroads official canceled a scheduled interview with Mr. Wren because he said he had been told by the Foreign Ministry about the espionage charges in Literaturnaya Gazeta.

Emil Svelis of United Press International, the only American correspondent based in Leningrad, has had particular difficulties since he arrived several weeks ago to open an office as part of a reciprocal arrangement in which Tass, the Soviet press agency, has opened an office in San Francisco.

According to colleagues of Mr. Svelis, he has been followed almost constantly, his wallet was stolen and his car was tampered with in a manner potentially dangerous. As he was meeting with dissidents at a hotel, a good tire was replaced with a bald one and the wheel was put back on with only two nuts replaced and those not properly tightened.

Mr. Svelis noticed the change before he drove off and reported it to nearby policemen, who then interrogated him for several hours.

The colleagues said that his wife, Charlotte, a secretary at the United States Consulate, had called a taxi one evening to take her home. It took her instead to a dark and deserted warehouse district, where the driver turned into a side street, switched off the engine and smiled at her silently. Then, out of the shadows, two men appeared, entered the taxi and smiled at her for a long time. Finally the driver took her home.

Such harassment of the foreign press had been suspended for several years, during the bloom of detente and the approach and aftermath of the European security conference in Helsinki in August 1975. The last American newsman to be expelled was John Dornberg of Newsweek, in 1970.

The Helsinki document, signed by the Soviet Union and 34 other states, declares: "The legitimate pursuit of their professional activity will neither render journalists liable to expulsion nor otherwise penalize them. If an accredited journalist is expelled, he will be informed of the reasons for this act and may submit an application for re-examination of his case."

Valentin A. Khazov, deputy chief of the Foreign Ministry's press department, told Mr. Mason and William Brown, political counsellor at the United States Embassy, that Mr. Krimsky was being expelled for espionage and currency violations.

American officials were understood to have told the Russians that the move against the correspondent "might possibly lead to unpleasant consequences."

Normally, the State Department likes to reciprocate and expel a Soviet reporter in retaliation, one diplomat explained. But in the past, he said, American news organizations have opposed such tactics. Speaking of the Russians, he declared, "the only language these people understand is the language of reciprocity, and I think we ought to apply it across the board."

Protest by President of AP

Keith Fuller, president and general manager of The Associated Press, said in a statement:

"The expulsion of George Krimsky, in our view, is a flagrant violation of the Helsinki agreement as it pertains to news reporters carrying out their mission.

"We would submit George Krimsky's news dispatches to any fair-minded third party for comparison with any other Western journalist's work within the Soviet Union.

"He did make friends with many Soviet citizens because of his language facility and his Russian heritage. He is an American, of course, but of Russian descent.

"From the facts before me, I can discern only that his sin was to be an aggressive reporter in the Soviet Union today where the rising voices of Soviet dissidents seem to be unnerving those responsible for his expulsion."

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