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U.S. Betrayed 2 Soviets, Interpreter Confirms

Robert Kennedy Disclosed Action Involving Dissident Writers to Russian Poet

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In the mid-1960s, then-Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y.) told Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko that U.S. intelligence agents had betrayed the identities of two dissident Soviet writers to the KGB, a move that led to their imprisonment, according to the interpreter who helped Kennedy and Yevtushenko converse.

Yevtushenko described the incident in Time magazine this month. He quoted Kennedy as suggesting that the betrayal was designed to create an incident that would embarrass the Soviet Union—a counterweight to the propaganda difficulties the United States encountered over the war in Vietnam.

When the Yevtushenko article first appeared early this month, numerous associates of the late Sen. Kennedy said in interviews that they had never heard him speak of an American betrayal of the Soviet writers, and several expressed doubt about the validity of Yevtushenko's story. But the interpreter, Prof. Albert Todd of Queens College, confirmed it in an interview.

The 1966 trial and imprisonment of the two writers, Andrei Sinyavski and Yuli Daniel, was the spark that ignited the political dissent in the Soviet Union of the 1960s and 1970s. The trial created an uproar among intellectuals in the West, including those associated with the communists.

Daniel and Sinyavski were established literary figures in Moscow at the time. Several of their unpublished works were smuggled to the West where they were published under the pen names of Abram Tertz and Nikolai Arzhak. Sinyavski was sentenced to seven years in prison and Daniel to five on charges of spreading anti-Soviet propaganda.

Associates of Kennedy said the senator considered Yevtushenko a friend. They confirmed that Kennedy had entertained him at his New York apartment, as the poet reported. But none was aware of the remarks Yevtushenko attributed to Kennedy.

However, Todd, the interpreter, said "the general substance [of Yevtushenko's story] is correct, absolutely, there is no question about it."

In his Time magazine article, Yevtushenko recalled that after the Sinyavski-Daniel

trial he was in New York and was a guest at Kennedy's Manhattan apartment.

"To my surprise," Yevtushenko wrote, Kennedy "invited me into his bathroom, turned on the shower, and in a lowered voice he said, 'I would like you to tell your government that the names of Sinyavski and Daniel were given to your agents by our agents.'"

"I was amazed and I asked him why they would have done that. He smiled at my naivete and said, 'Because our people wanted to take advantage of the situation, and your people took the bait. Because of Vietnam, our standing has begun to diminish at home and abroad. We needed a propaganda counterweight.'

"The cynical logic was shattering. There is more to this story but the time has not come to tell it," Yevtushenko said.

Todd, a professor in the Queens College Department of Slavic Studies, said the "disclosure" mentioned by Yevtushenko "was made" but "the details are a bit different. There was discussion on the subject and betrayal was mentioned. The sequence in my memory is a bit different. This is all I want to say at this moment."

A spokesman for the Central Intelligence Agency had no comment.

Sinyavski, who is now living in Paris, was traveling in Italy and could not be reached. But an article in the New York Russian-language daily *Novoe Ruskoe Slovo* by emigre writer Vladimir Kozlovsky quoted his wife, Maria, as saying last week in an interview that "Yevtushenko told us about it eight years ago in Paris."

The paper quoted Maria Sinyavski as saying that the clandestine manuscripts of Daniel and Sinyavski were smuggled out of the Soviet Union by "outsiders," adding: "I know full well that Sinyavski and Daniel were betrayed from here, from the West. I knew that already in Moscow." The paper quoted her as saying that Sinyavski and Daniel had reached that conclusion on the basis of material evidence presented at the trial which included the sole copy of Daniel's manuscript which was in the West. "There was no copy of that manuscript in Russia," she added.

Former Kennedy aides said the senator, who had served as attorney general in his brother's administration, had good contacts in the U.S. intelligence community. They

wondered, however, about his motives in reporting the alleged betrayal to the Russian poet and suggested that he may have wanted to "warn" him of some unspecified danger.

Yevtushenko became famous in the 1960s as a rebellious young poet, but he long ago opted for a conventional literary career in full cooperation with the authorities in Moscow.