

# Ex-Reporter Denies That She Gave F.B.I. Information

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

Special to The New York Times

NASHVILLE, May 18—Amid reports of concern that she may have acted as a doubled agent for the Soviet Union, Jacque Srouji, who enjoyed "a special relationship" with the Federal Bureau of Investigation when she was a newspaper reporter here, denied that she had ever provided the F.B.I. with information about The Nashville Tennessean or members of its staff.

Mrs. Srouji, a former copy editor and feature writer, was discharged on May 5 by John Seigenthaler, The Tennessean's publisher, after, Mr. Seigenthaler said, she advised him that she had had what he termed "communications" with the F.B.I. regarding two Tennessean employees.

Mr. Seigenthaler declined to name the two, but other sources identified them as Dolph Honicker, a news editor who has expressed opposition to the



Associated Press

Jacque Srouji at Nashville news conference.

nuclear energy industry, and Jerry Hornsby, a copy editor who until last year was a member of the Socialist Party U.S.A.

Federal sources have expressed concern about Mrs. Srouji's recent relationship with a Soviet diplomat in Washington who is said to be a member of his country's intelligence service, especially in view of the assertion by Mr. Seigenthaler that she had shown him a number of classified F.B.I. documents, including one so sensitive that he refused to characterize it.

That assertion, coupled with the publisher's criticism of the bureau and his reporting of some of Mrs. Srouji's alleged statements to him about her relationship with the F.B.I., was followed by private suggestions from bureau sources that some of Mr. Seigenthaler's activities, could not withstand scrutiny.

### Brief Statement Read

In a statement issued today,

SDAY, MAY 19, 1976

## About a Nashville Paper or Members

Mr. Siegenthaler said that he was "shocked" to learn that such suggestions had been made, and that he intended to ask the F.B.I. for an explanation.

Mrs. Srouji appeared at a news conference after taking what she described as an 11-day vacation upon her departure from The Tennessean.

Looking pale and nervous, and accompanied by her lawyer, William R. Steltmeier, of whose law firm her brother-in-law is a member, Mrs. Srouji read a brief statement in which she said that her only discussion of Mr. Hornsby with the F.B.I. came at a luncheon with a bureau agent in the fall of 1975.

She said that Mr. Hornsby told her previously that he had been questioned "extensively" by the F.B.I. about his socialist connections, and that she "teased" the F.B.I. about whether he was the subject of an official investigation.

"The agent laughed, shook his head and replied that Mr. Hornsby had 'walked in off the street to see us,'" Mrs. Srouji said. "I consider the conversation incidental. This is the extent of any and all conversations with the F.B.I. regarding The Tennessean or any of its staff."

### Agent Is Investigated

But Mr. Seigenthaler said that Mrs. Srouji told him on May 4 that the conversation about Mr. Hornsby had been initiated by the F.B.I., and not herself.

Mrs. Srouji told reporters today that she had never discussed Mr. Honicker with the F.B.I., but Mr. Seigenthaler said that in a discussion May 5 she assured him that she had told the bureau only "good things" about the men.

Mrs. Srouji rejected a characterization of herself as an F.B.I. "informant" and said, "The

F.B.I. has never paid me anything for any information." She did concede, however, that while she was working as a reporter for The Nashville Banner in the 1960's, the F.B.I. paid her air fare to Michigan to attend a conference for Students for a Democratic Society.

Mr. Seigenthaler said that she told him recently that she had filed a 50-page report on the meeting with the bureau.

F.B.I. sources indicated that whatever arrangements existed between the bureau and Mrs. Srouji had been made in its national field office and not at F.B.I. headquarters in Washington. Larry Olsen, the agent who served as her contact in the 1960's, is now under investigation by the F.B.I. in connection with hundreds of pages of confidential bureau documents on

nuclear power and other matters allegedly obtained by Mrs. Srouji.

The New York Times reported last week that, before her departure from The Tennessean, Mrs. Srouji met with Sergei Zaitzev, a Second Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Washington, in connection with a book that she was preparing on nuclear power.

Mrs. Srouji said today that she had approached Mr. Zaitzev, who was introduced to her as a nuclear physicist, on her own initiative, and not at the behest of the F.B.I., and that she had met with him "on several occasions" while he "helped me with the technical aspects" of her book.

Her only discussion with the F.B.I. about that relationship, she said, came when two F.B.I.

agents sought to determine the reason for her initial visit to the Soviet Embassy.

Intelligence sources have identified Mr. Zaitzev as a colonel in the KGB, the Soviet intelligence service, but Mrs. Srouji said today that she had known him only as a scientist. Mr. Seigenthaler said, however, that she told him on May 4 that she knew Mr. Zaitzev to be an officer in the KGB.

### Visits Encouraged

F.B.I. sources said that although her initial approach to the Soviet diplomat was indeed her own idea, the relationship was subsequently encouraged by the bureau.

Mrs. Srouji, a petty officer in the Naval Reserve, was on duty with the Navy at the time

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of Its Staff

she was seeing Mr. Zaitzev.

Mr. Seigenthaler said that she told him two days before he discharged her that she had recently done some "work" for the F.B.I. on the Soviet Union and on the Palestine Liberation Organization. Her husband, an engineer for the State Highway Department, is of Arabic descent.

The F.B.I. is reported to be "extremely concerned" about Mrs. Srouji's relationship with Mr. Olsen and other F.B.I. agents, and particularly about her apparent access to classified bureau documents.

Mr. Seigenthaler said today that one of the documents she had shown him was the most sensitive he had ever seen "in the hands of a civilian."

The F.B.I., sources said, is

unsure whether Mrs. Srouji was a "double agent," and whether any of the F.B.I. documents she obtained were made available to the Russians.

Mr. Seigenthaler said that Mrs. Srouji told him earlier this month that she received \$400 from the Russians in recent weeks. She denied today that she had received the money. She also told reporters that she had visited the Chinese Government's liaison office in Washington in connection with her book, but she did not elaborate.

One indication of the F.B.I.'s concern about the Srouji matter came last week when Federal agents suggested that perhaps Mr. Seigenthaler and the Tennessean were themselves "not entirely pure."

"There's a lot more there, and it's not all anti-F.B.I.," one F.B.I. source said, adding that organized crime and "a sheriff" in Nashville were involved.

The sources' assertions were apparently founded on information received at F.B.I. headquarters in Washington about a Federal investigation here of Lafayette Thomas, the sheriff of Davidson County.

#### No Comment on Charges

Federal agents in Tennessee said that Mr. Thomas and Mr. Seigenthaler were lifelong friends, but made no assertion that the publisher was involved in any wrongdoing.

Justice Department sources here confirmed that Mr. Thomas was the target of a Federal grand jury investigation, but declined to comment on the al-

legations against him.

Mr. Seigenthaler said in an interview today that last March 20 Mrs. Srouji told him confidentially that the F.B.I. believed he had a "diabolical" mind and was involved with a criminal syndicate in Nashville.

He said that Mrs. Srouji told him that she had assured the F.B.I. that that was not the case. Asked today whether she had in fact heard such assertions from the F.B.I., Mrs. Srouji declined to respond.

According to law enforcement sources here, the investigation of Sheriff Thomas was begun last Nov. 12 by Charles Hill Anderson, the United States Attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee.

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