

CIA Admits Torturing Defector

BY STEWART KELLERMAN

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- Yuri Ivanovich Nosenko rolled over on the metal bed and squinted. The light bulb was still burning. It was always on. Twenty-four hours a day.

He looked about the barren vault-locked door, windowless steel walls, furniture screwed to the floor. And the guard. Nothing but a cold stare from the guard. He wouldn't say a word.

Nosenko asked for a book. But, no. They wouldn't let him have anything to read. They even took away his tooth-paste box when the guard caught him reading it.

He needed something to take his mind off it all. To keep his sanity. He made a chess set from threads of clothing. It was a way to escape from the nightmare. But then the guard swept it away.

No Heat, Poor Food

He'd lost track of time. But it must be winter. It was freezing in the vault. There was no heat. And the food didn't help much. The weak tea, macaroni and porridge.

The Central Intelligence Agency disclosed details of the Nosenko story, horrifying members of the House Assassinations Committee with a real-life spy thriller.

The CIA condemned the Soviet defector to 3 1/2 years of "hostile interrogation" in an attempt to break him into confessing he was planted by the KGB to pass along "disinformation" about Lee Harvey Oswald.

Nosenko eventually convinced his interrogators he was on the level. He wound up with a new identity and a \$38,125-a-year job as a consultant to the CIA on Soviet intelligence.

John Limond Hart, a retired CIA officer recalled to investigate the case, told the House panel about the 1,277 days of hell Nosenko underwent from the spring of 1964 to the end of 1967.

"I have never seen a worse-handled operation in the course of my association in the intelligence business," Hart said.

Nosenko, who described himself as deputy chief of the KGB department responsible for surveillance and recruitment of tourists in the Soviet Union, first approached U.S. Intelligence agents in Geneva in 1962.

He offered to defect on Jan. 23, 1964, two months after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and claimed to have supervised Oswald's KGB files.

The FBI questioned Nosenko after he was spirited to the United States, but handed him over to the CIA in April 1964 for the rest of his interrogation.

Nosenko told contradictory stories about the KGB's involvement with Oswald, first saying the Soviet spy agency didn't keep him under surveillance and then saying it kept an extensive file on his movements.

The small group of men running the Nosenko case became convinced he was part of a plot to spread false information and decided to do everything necessary to break him.

He was first questioned at a safe house in the Washington area and then moved to a windowless, 10-by-12 foot steel vault for the rest of his ordeal.

Toward the end of Nosenko's confinement, one of his main interrogators wrote a memo suggesting the CIA "liquidate" him and "clean up traces" of his illegal imprisonment.

Nosenko may have got another jolt from his imprisonment when he read newspaper accounts of his ordeal. Officials said it would be the first time he had been told a CIA official had been considering his "liquidation".