

S. F. CHARLES

Defector, 75, Found in Soviet Psych Ward

His U.S. family wants him back, says he was mentally ill when he left 30 years ago

Chronicle Wire Services

Troitskoe, Russia

Day after endless day, he sits in the corner of a room here in Psychiatric Prison No. 5, his felt cap pulled over his forehead.

His eyes explode with pain when the thinnest sliver of light penetrates his darkened surroundings. Once adjusted, they dart about as if he is constantly on the lookout for trickery and betrayal.

This is the world of Victor Norris Hamilton, a frail and suspicious 75-year-old with a history of psychiatric troubles whose family now wants him home in America.

It was 30 years ago this month that Hamilton, a naturalized U.S. citizen living in the Atlanta area, flew to Prague and defected to the Soviet KGB.

Three years earlier, he had been dismissed from his job as a code analyst for the National Security Agency on the ground that he was mentally unstable; he was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic. He vowed to get even by divulging U.S. intelligence-gathering secrets to the Soviets.

After his 1962 defection, Hamil-

ton says, the KGB drained him of information for a year or so and then abandoned him to psychiatric "hospitals," where he languished for the better part of three decades.

He was discovered recently at the psychiatric prison in the village of Troitskoe, about 43 miles from Moscow, by the Ark Project, a Connecticut-based group that searches for U.S. prisoners of war and soldiers missing in action. The group acted on a tip received after Russian television coverage of the search for American POWs in the former Soviet Union.

Records show that Hamilton was transferred to the Troitskoe hospital in 1971 from a Kremlin hospital for high-ranking officials.

In an interview from her Union City, Ga., home, Hamilton's 73-year-old wife, Lillie Bell, said her last contact with her husband was a brief letter he wrote from Moscow in 1973.

"He was mentally ill when he left (for Prague)," said Lillie Bell Hamilton, a retired school teacher. "He told me what he was going to do. But I didn't believe him."

She said her husband was born



BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

VICTOR NORRIS HAMILTON

Photo from early 1960s

in Jaffa, when it was under English rule, went to school in Jerusalem and studied social sciences at the American University in Beirut. They met and married in Beirut and subsequently moved to the United States.

A reporter who spent time with

Hamilton in his psychiatric prison room Tuesday discovered a cultured man who, although intelligent, seemed to wander in and out of reality.

Attendants at the prison said he generally refuses to speak anything but elementary Russian, although he is still fluent in English.

He is either unwilling or incapable of discussing his years in captivity. But he has written lengthy, detailed journals that say the KGB locked him up, tortured him and injected him with drugs almost from the minute he arrived. He calls his prison "the house of horrors."

When the KGB was finished with him, he said, it abandoned him.

He trusts no one and suspects everyone, refusing to speak to anyone running the prison hospital. He will not eat unless he selects and spoons his own food because he believes "they" are trying to poison him.

Hamilton's wife, who never remarried, and his two daughters hope to arrange for his return to the United States.