

U.S. Is Barring Immediate Departure Of Soviet Student Who Tried Suicide

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The State Department said yesterday that a Soviet exchange student who slashed his wrists and throat while being driven to Kennedy International Airport Sunday night on his way to a Moscow-bound flight would not be permitted to leave the country until he had been interviewed by Federal officials.

The exchange student, 36-year-old Merab Kurashvili, did not appear at a scheduled 10 A.M. interview at the United States Immigration and Naturalization Services district office at 20 West Broadway yesterday "due to illness," according to the Soviet Union's United Nations Mission.

After talking by telephone to someone she described as "the mission doctor," a receptionist at the Soviet mission headquarters at 136 East 67th Street reported yesterday that Mr. Kurashvili was in "good" condition and resting somewhere in the 13-story building.

"He doesn't want to talk to anybody," she said.

At a lengthy State Department briefing yesterday, Charles W. Bray 3d, a department spokesman, disclosed the exchange between the two Governments over the student incident and said, without elaborating, that the United States was considering taking "other steps."

New Guidelines Set

Mr. Bray also unveiled a new set of policy guidelines, dated Jan. 4, instructing 75 Government agencies on how to deal with requests for asylum by foreign nationals.

"In the case of Mr. Kurashvili," Mr. Bray said, "it's unrelated to this at the moment for the reason that the guidelines speak to foreign nationals actively requesting asylum of United States officials. On the present record, that is not the situation."

But both the guidelines and the fairly hard stand in the Kurashvili incident appeared to underline Washington's sensitivity to the question of asylum—or situations in which asylum could be an issue.

President Nixon expressed his personal displeasure after the

Coast Guard refused to grant political asylum to a Lithuanian sailor who tried to escape from a Soviet fishing vessel off Martha's Vineyard in November, 1970, and ordered the guidelines drafted.

Mr. Kurashvili, who described himself as an associate professor of civil engineering at the Georgian Polytechnical Institute in Tbilisi, arrived in mid-September at the University of California at Berkeley for nine months of independent graduate study in his field as one of 34 Soviet citizens in America on a cultural exchange program.

Held as Shoplifters

Also on the program was Grigori Smelyi, listed as a 36-year-old associate professor of civil engineering at Dnepropetrovsk University in the Ukraine, who was Mr. Kurashvili's roommate and the only other Soviet student at Berkeley.

On Jan. 5 the manager of the Park and Shop Market on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley made a citizen's arrest of the two men and accused them of stuffing their pockets with tinned salmon, cod, sardines, round steak and cheese. The Berkeley police booked the two men on charges of petit larceny.

Later that day, the two professors met with Marvin Baron, a foreign student adviser, and with two officials from the Soviet consulate in San Francisco. Mr. Baron said in a telephone interview yesterday that the two professors protested their innocence, but that their experience was so humiliating that they would have to leave Berkeley.

Taken to Hospital

Mr. Baron said he had reassured the two men that the charges against them were likely to be dropped, which they were, and that the university would take no action against them. But on Friday the two men checked out of their apartment and told Mr. Baron they were going to Washington to talk with Soviet Embassy officials.

On Sunday night, Mr. Kurashvili was escorted to Jamaica Hospital in Queens by Port of New York Authority

policemen after he arrived bleeding profusely at Kennedy Airport with Mr. Smelyi—with whom he was to fly to Moscow on an Aeroflot flight—and four Soviet officials. Mr. Smelyi took the flight alone.

"I made this myself with a razor blade," Mr. Kurashvili told the policemen, according to Myron Hurwitz, a Port Authority spokesman.

Mr. Hurwitz said the policemen had asked Mr. Kurashvili twice if he wanted asylum in the United States. "No, I want to go home," he reportedly said.

The Port Authority police telephoned the United States Mission to the United Nations and were put in touch with Richard Coombs, a Russian-speaking Foreign Service officer who deals with Soviet affairs.

Mr. Coombs said yesterday that the police on "at least three different occasions" asked Mr. Kurashvili privately if he wanted asylum and that each time he had said no.

Mr. Coombs, who was in continuing contact with the policemen through their headquarters at the airport, said he had told them that "the department would like to have someone talk with Kurashvili" and that a squad car was dispatched to take the Foreign Service officer to the hospital.

Before Mr. Coombs arrived, Mr. Kurashvili was rushed from the hospital—from which he had been discharged following treatment for his wounds—by an enlarged group of Soviet officials. Six others, including a doctor, arrived at the hospital carrying diplomatic passports, according to Melvin Abbot, a spokesman for the hospital.

Mr. Abbot said the officials had apparently learned from a doctor that Mr. Coombs was on his way to the hospital, and hence left in haste.

The hospital spokesman said that Mr. Kurashvili "spoke English perfectly" and told a nurse that he wanted to "die peacefully."

State Department and immigration officials said no new interview with Mr. Kurashvili had been scheduled. Soviet officials were unavailable for comment throughout the day.