

Imprisoned Russian May Be American

Moscow

A Lithuanian seaman imprisoned in the Soviet Union since his unsuccessful defection to a U.S. Coast Guard cutter in November, 1970, could become eligible for American citizenship following announcement that his mother is an American citizen.

However, U.S. embassy officials in Moscow refused to indicate whether such a claim might be pressed for Simas Kudirka as the son of a native-born American. Documents relating to the seaman have been forwarded to Washington in the light of his mother's successful claim.

The mother, Marija Sulskiene, a 67-year-old widow now living outside Vilna in Lithuania, was issued an American passport by the embassy last week after an investigation proved that she was born in Brooklyn.

Mrs. Sulskiene, who was taken back to Lithuania 60 years ago by her parents, becomes one of 12 Soviet citizens whom the U.S. has recognized as American citizens by birth, parentage or naturalization. The Soviet Union has generally refused to recognize such claims.

Mrs. Sulskiene's son is serving a ten year sentence at a labor camp somewhere in the Urals for his attempt to defect.

Mrs. Sulskiene, a retired farm worker, had been turned back by Soviet authorities at the Vilna railroad station when she previously tried to come to the U.S. embassy in Moscow.

On Friday, two consular officials waited on the sidewalk to meet Mrs. Sulskiene and escort her to their office before the police at the embassy could intercept her, as has become a common practice.

The passport issued to the Lithuanian woman is being kept at the embassy, officials said, but it can be claimed whenever she wishes. But before she can leave the Soviet Union, Mrs. Sulskiene must surmount the formidable hurdle of obtaining an exit visa.