

Russian Itch Traps

A Rash American

Moscow

The U.S. Embassy here has protested a Soviet "attempt at subversion" of a young American working as a guide with a touring U.S. home exhibition in Tashkent, it was learned yesterday.

"The man was sent home for his own protection," an embassy spokesman said.

The American guide, in an apparent setup recalling Cold War days, had sexual relations with a Soviet girl, was taken to a Soviet hospi-

tal on a pretext and there was pumped for information, according to reports.

As pieced together, the Tashkent affair occurred about two weeks after the exhibit opened February 14 in the capital of Soviet Uzbekistan.

Large, friendly crowds came and the American guides — about eight single men and eight single women, plus two married couples — were invited out virtually every night to dinners that

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involved considerable drinking.

All the guides, who had been chosen from 500 applicants and who spoke Russian fluently, thought they were "having a ball with regular Soviet families."

One of the single men met a Soviet girl at one of the parties and spent two or three nights with her.

He then discovered a rash on his arm. An American doctor was to have traveled with the group but had not yet arrived, so the American went to his new Soviet friends.

They told him it was venereal disease and warned that if American officials learned of it, his career would be ruined. They offered to help him get it treated quietly.

They took him to a Soviet hospital—neither he nor the Soviets told U.S. officials at the exhibit that he was going—and there kept him immobile with his arms and legs bandaged.

For two days he was intensively questioned about the personal background of

the other guides, their training and qualification, and asked such questions as: "Who are the spies among them?"

Concerned U.S. officials discovered his whereabouts and the American doctor, by now arrived, found on examination that the guide's skin rash was minor, akin to athlete's feet.

The guide was released on the demand of U.S. officials and, after telling his story, was immediately flown to Moscow and home.

He was somewhat vague on details, but embassy and State Department officials were sufficiently convinced of its accuracy to lodge the protest.

Other incidents were subsequently related by guides in Tashkent. For example, two told of visiting a Soviet family and being out for about 12 hours after a single drink. They did not know what, if anything, happened during the period.

U.S. officials lectured the guides to be cautious about accepting invitations to private Soviet Homes.

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