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Soviet defector charges high-level U.S. betrayal, scorns press

By Scott Shane

Fourteen years after he disguised himself as an American hippie and disappeared from his job as KGB agent and press officer for the Soviet Embassy in New Delhi, Tomas D. Schuman seems a man without a home.

In the U.S.S.R., like all defectors, he's officially considered a traitor.

In Canada, where he worked for six years as a Russian-language broadcaster for the Canadian Broadcasting Company, he ultimately was told to tone down his anti-Soviet commentary and play "light music." He quit.

And in the United States, though Mr. Schuman extols "the beautiful free market system," he denounces U.S. corporate executives as stooges of the Soviets and network journalists as gullible tools of international communism.

"Jane Fonda is filthy rich because she betrays her country," said Mr. Schuman, who stopped in Baltimore yesterday to meet with reporters and give a \$3-a-ticket lecture on "How the Communists Use the Free World Press." "I'm working for \$600 a month for a small Jewish newspaper in Los Angeles. Is that freedom?"

Even the John Birch Society, sponsor of Mr. Schuman's lecture tour, does not claim his full allegiance. "I'm not a member. I don't agree with everything they say," said Mr. Schuman.

Mr. Schuman, who looks older than his 44 years, passed through Baltimore yesterday on an East Coast tour. At each stop, he's hosted by local members of the Larry McDonald Crusade to Stop Financing Communism, a Birch Society offshoot named for the conservative Georgia congressman who died aboard the Korean airliner shot down by the Soviets last September.

Mr. Schuman fielded questions yesterday morning in a coffee shop at the Joppa road Holiday Inn, where he was to lecture last night.

A Moscow native, Mr. Schuman studied Hindi and Urdu at Moscow State University in order to gain a coveted prize of Soviet society: a job abroad. He joined the Novosti Press Agency and in 1969 became the top information officer at the embassy in New Delhi.

But his real work, he said, was as a propagandist for the KGB. On occasion, he led groups of Western journalists on Soviet tours, and he became persuaded that they could easily be hoodwinked, he said.

In 1967, for instance, he toured the U.S.S.R. with a group from *Look* magazine. "It was disgusting to see how easy it is to manipulate your journalists," he said, describing how the visiting reporters were kept from all but preplanned contacts with Soviets.

His resentment of the Soviet regime, he said, had its roots in childhood, when he saw a contradiction between the official denunciations of the United States and the proliferation of donated American food after World War II.

"I had Spam meat on the table, powdered eggs, powdered milk — all that good stuff," he said. "Try to convince a 6-year-old kid that the source of all this food is the enemy."

Eventually, he came to believe that "socialism stinks, it kills people," he said. After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, he decided to defect.

He saw an opportunity in 1970 in the flood of young Americans coming to India in search of religious enlightenment. One day he donned a wig and hippie clothing and mingled with the crowd, eventually contacted the CIA and was smuggled out of the country through Bombay.

Apart from the broadcast work, Mr. Schuman has been a farmhand, a truck driver, a proofreader and a security guard. He now is "political analyst" for *Panorama*, a Los Angeles-based Russian-language newspaper serving Soviet Jewish immigrants. But he sees his true mission as disabusing Americans of illusions about the Soviets.

In that mission, he's had discour-

aging moments.

After his defection, he went to *The New York Times*, hoping to be interviewed. "I was left standing in the lobby. It was humiliating," he recalled.

On several occasions, he has offered to work for the Central Intelligence Agency. "I've called them. They've replied very politely that 'We have no need for someone with your experience,'" he said.

Perhaps as a result of such setbacks, Mr. Schuman's views have become, well, outspoken.

"The biggest bosses of this country are in cahoots with the Politburo," he said, suggesting that companies trading with the Soviets deliberately prop up the regime. "There's a conspiracy at the highest level," he confided.

Most big-time U.S. journalists are "ignoramuses," he said. "The big networks for 40 years give a distorted view, projecting the U.S. as the source of all problems and glorifying communism."

What, then, does he like about this country?

"The ordinary people, the middle class, the truck drivers," he replied. They call up radio talk shows when he's on the air, he said, and express the revulsion of the Soviets he believes is appropriate.

That's the good thing about the lecture tour, he said. But he added: "This is just an experiment. I'm not sure if I'll do this again."