

state/nation/world

Soviet ex-defector cleared to return home Refinery explosion kills two

By HENRY GOTTLEB Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Vitaly Yurchenko, the Soviet spy master who slipped from the CIA's grasp after three months in America, was cleared to return to Russia yesterday after assuring U.S. authorities he was not being forced by the Soviet Union to go home.



Vitaly Yurchenko

Yurchenko, clenching his hands over his head like a victorious boxer, left the State Department after a half-hour meeting and declared, "Yes, home!" when asked if he was heading back to the Soviet Union.

State Department spokesman Charles Redman said it appeared that Yurchenko's action "was a personal decision."

With four Soviet diplomats on one side and six State Department officials, including a doctor, on the other, Yurchenko had his first face-to-face meeting with U.S. authorities since he walked away from their custody over the weekend, after three months in the United States.

Yurchenko had appeared at an extraordinary news conference at the Soviet Embassy Monday, charging he had been abducted in Rome, drugged and pumped for secrets in CIA hideaways. The State Department denied the charges, saying Yurchenko had voluntarily defected.

As a result of his meeting yesterday, "the United States government has decided that Mr. Yurchenko's decision to return to the Soviet Union was made of his own free will, and that he is now free to leave the United States," Redman said.

"In arranging this meeting we wanted to satisfy ourselves that Mr. Yurchenko truly did wish to return to the USSR and that he made this decision freely and of his own volition," Redman said.

He said the meeting was held in an atmosphere free of the possibility of Soviet coercion and that Yurchenko, who was told he would not be subject to U.S. detention or returned to Soviet custody either if he didn't want to be.

Refinery explosion kills two

MONT BELVIEU, Texas (AP) — A series of explosions and fires rocked an underground storage tank at a refinery yesterday, killing two workers, shooting jets of flames high into the air and forcing hundreds to flee their homes.

"We ran as fast as we could," said Dean Conley, an electrician working at the Warren Petroleum Co. refinery and natural gas storage plant. "We didn't stop to turn in our badges."

It took about 200 firefighters nearly six hours to control the blaze, which was fed by three pipelines that could not be shut off because the intense heat kept crews away from valves, said Cal Ingram, a spokesman for Chevron Inc., which owns the complex.

One of the pipelines ruptured while construction crews were doing maintenance work, Ingram said. "I don't know how."

Mayor Fred Miller, who called for the evacuation of the entire town of 1,200, lifted the order about 8 p.m. for about half the residents. He said residents living near the plant would not be allowed to go home yet.

Ingram predicted damage to the complex would be "into the millions" and that the charred area, about 10 percent of the plant, would be closed for a few weeks. The fire was fueled by liquefied, highly flammable propane gas, he said.

The blasts occurred in a hollowed out salt dome used to store natural gas.

Floods roar through mid-Atlantic states

By CHRISTOPHER SULLIVAN Associated Press Writer

Yesterday's torrential flooding forced residents of five states scrambling onto their rooftops and into trees, as water inundated houses and businesses in Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

Hundreds of roads were submerged, some covered by up to 12 feet of water and others by mudslides, and homes were washed away before the storm system, which had stalled over the Carolinas, crept slowly to sea.

"I've never in my life been as scared," said Veronica Robey, who was trapped with her 18-year-old daughter, Anissa, in their car as a bridge began washing out beneath them in Rockingham County, Va.

Firefighters stretched a ladder over their car to pluck them to safety. The car then washed away.

Damage in West Virginia alone was described as in the "millions and millions," and officials said it was the state's worst flooding disaster ever.

Most of the business district in Paw Paw, W.Va., was underwater Tuesday night.

"Right now it is a total disaster," said Mayor Dave Clark. "We have just about lost everything."

Six one-ton canisters of poisonous chlorine gas were washed into the James River from a plant near Lynchburg, Va., but city Fire Chief

William A. Anderson said he was more concerned about several tanks of propane gas seen floating in the river.

"With the rate of the river, they would be like torpedoes" if they hit bridge piers, he said.

West Virginia Gov. Arch Moore, who mobilized the National Guard and appealed to President Reagan to designate 22 counties as disaster areas, said the flooding "covered more territory and affected more people" than any in the state's history.

"It's certainly, in terms of the widespread nature, got to rank as the worst flooding disaster West Virginia has ever had," added his press secretary, John Price. Flood warnings

were in effect in 33 of the state's 55 counties.

Virginia Gov. Charles S. Robb declared a state of emergency in western and central parts of his state.

"People in the hundreds had to be evacuated by helicopter and with heavy-duty vehicles," said Michael Chine, deputy operations director at the Virginia Department of Emergency Services.

Flood waters along the upper reaches of the Potomac River caused the collapse of a temporary bridge connecting Maryland and Paw Paw and some of the town's 700 residents fled, the weather service said. About 100 residents of Old Town, Md., also were evacuated as the river reached

51 feet, 26 feet above flood stage. Secondary roads in northeast Ohio were flooded and flood warnings were issued across portions of northeast New York State, where up to 6 inches of rain had fallen since Sunday.

Eighteen people were killed by the storm in Virginia, many around Roanoke.

In western Maryland, the body of a fireman on a Chesapeake System train was recovered yesterday from one of two locomotives that plunged 200 feet down an embankment on Monday night, said state police.

"Apparently as a result of heavy rains there was a mudslide that undercut a section of our track," near Strecker, said Chesapeake spokesman Milton Dollinger.

state news briefs

'Dr. J' buying Coke franchise

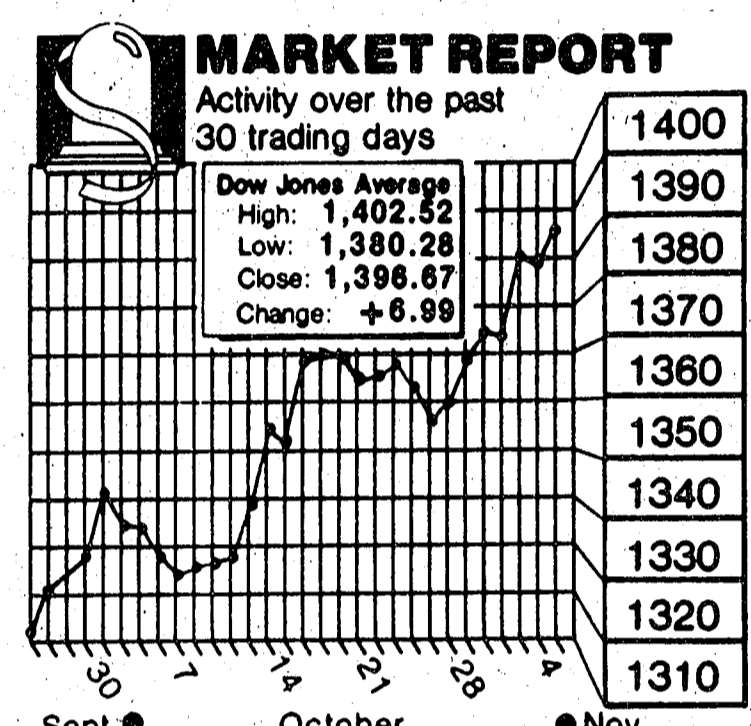
PHILADELPHIA (AP) — An investor group led by basketball star Julius "Dr. J" Erving and a New York businessman is buying the local Coca-Cola bottling franchise.

nation news briefs

Illegal alien wins \$2 million lottery

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) — An illegal alien from Mexico who won \$2 million in the California Lottery will be able to collect his winnings, but he'll have to leave the country or risk deportation, officials said yesterday.

Market hits all-time high



Soviet seaman had wrist slit

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP) — American doctors who examined a Soviet seaman who twice had jumped ship near New Orleans found that the young man's wrists had been slit, a State Department official testified yesterday.

world news briefs

Libyans burn effigy of Reagan

TRIPOLI, Libya — Thousands of Libyans filled Tripoli's streets yesterday and burned an effigy of President Reagan to protest an alleged CIA plan to undermine Col. Moammar Khadafy's regime, diplomatic and Libyan sources said.

Marcos tries to ensure stability

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — President Ferdinand E. Marcos changed his mind yesterday and announced that a vice president also will be chosen in the election planned for Jan. 17. He said filling the post would ensure political stability.

Thinking About Law School?

On Thursday, November 7th, a representative from the Case Western Reserve School of Law will be on campus from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

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