

Dance

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Defections at Olympics of 3 From East Raise Several Unanswered Questions

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MONTREAL, July 31—Several mysteries surround the announced defections to Canada this week of three Olympic athletes from Eastern Europe.

Little is known, at least publicly, of the motivation for the reported action of the three athletes. They are a Soviet diver and a rower and a canoeist from Rumania. None of the three ranked high in the competitions in their sports.

Canadian authorities say that they are unaware of the whereabouts of the Soviet athlete, 17-year-old Sergei Nemtsanov, who applied to an immigration officer for permanent residence in Canada on Thursday, then disappeared.

The Rumanian rower, Walter Lambertus, 20, joined relatives in Niagara Falls, Ont., after requesting refugee status on political grounds at the Canadian immigration office there on Wednesday.

Reported in Ontario

The Rumanian canoeist, Ivan Haralambie, 21, also applied for permanent residence in Toronto on Thursday and is reported to be somewhere in Ontario with Canadian friends.

A spokesman for the Department of Immigration here said that the Olympic identification cards held by the three athletes were "equivalent to a passport and visa" and entitled them to remain in Canada, traveling wherever they wished, until August 31.

Immigration officials declined to comment on the three cases, except in general terms, stating that the details of the defections were "confidential" information to be considered in passing on the applications to remain in Canada.

The request for refugee status by Mr. Lambertus, the Rumanian rower, has complicated his case, however. Under Canadian immigration rules, such appeals must go before an interdepartmental committee of officials from the Ministries of Immigration and External Affairs, with a representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees participating as an observer.

Permission to remain in

Canada as a political refugee is normally granted on determination that the applicant's safety would be in danger if he were returned to his own country. But the immigration department spokesman said that Mr. Lambertus would be permitted to "change his mind" if he wished and ask for a simple resident status as the other two defectors have.

It is believed that this procedure would be less sensitive diplomatically for the countries involved.

Meanwhile, the Rumanian delegation to the games, adding to the mystery, issued a statement saying that Mr. Lambertus had been given permission by his coach to visit relatives in Niagara Falls for an unlimited time.

Mr. Lambertus, who speaks English, told reporters in Niagara Falls that he had decided to stay in Canada "for freedom," but he added that he was worried about the possible effects of his action on his parents in Rumania.

"It's a great new world," he was quoted as saying. "I can't believe how wonderful everyone has been in assisting me."

Mr. Lambertus denied to reporters that others had influenced him to defect, declaring that the decision had been entirely his own. The reported Ukrainian background of Mr. Haralambie, whose name is also

spelled Charalanbig, a Ukrainian version, brought up the question of a possible involvement of Ukrainian activists here.

Members of an organization in Montreal called the Ukrainian Olympic Committee, which agitates for separate participation by the Ukraine in the games, was linked with Mr. Haralambie's defection.


A spokesman for the group, Andriy Semotiuk, said that Mr. Haralambie had asked members for assistance. He said that the organization had provided the canoeist with a lawyer, and that Mr. Haralambie had been driven to the Toronto immigration office by two unidentified Canadians. The athlete's later movements were not disclosed.

In the case of Mr. Nemtsanov the Soviet diver, the Russians here have demanded that Canadian officials work for his return to the Soviet delegation. But the delegation has withdrawn its threat to pull out of the Olympics over the case.

The Canadian Department of External Affairs said it would convey to the diver, when he is found, the request of Soviet authorities to talk to him.


"Whether the Soviet officials see him will depend upon Mr. Nemtsanov," a Canadian spokesman said. A representative of the Canadian Department of External Affairs would be present at any such interview, an official said.

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