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PROGRAM Good Morning America STATION WJLA-TV
ABC Network

DATE February 11, 1985 7:00 A.M. CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Arkady Shevchenko

DAVID HARTMAN: In the spring of 1978 an important Soviet diplomat, who at the time was serving as Undersecretary General at the United Nations, defected to the United States. Arkady Shevchenko was the highest-ranking Soviet diplomat to defect since World War II. Well, now he's written a book about why he defected, about how he spied on the Soviets for the CIA, and much about the inside workings of the Soviet government. His memoirs are entitled Breaking with Moscow.

Arkady Shevchenko joins us this morning from Washington.

Good morning, Mr. Shevchenko. Welcome back.

Why'd you defect?

ARKADY SHEVCHENKO: I defected, of course, for several reasons. But first of all, I belonged to the elite. I occupied a high position in the Soviet Union. But let me tell you, the elite also doesn't have a personal freedom. We live in a kind of golden cage, entirely controlled. We cannot speak freely, do freely what we want to. We have all the material benefits, chauffeur-driven cars, dachas, and so on and so forth. But we didn't have this little thing which sometimes Americans do not appreciate: to do what we want and to think what we want -- what we would like to do.

HARTMAN: How surprised should all of us be that more Soviets don't defect?

SHEVCHENKO: Oh, to begin with, there is quite a lot of the prominent Soviet people who defected. There is a lot of writers, artists, dancers, and musicians. There's not too many

politicians. And let me tell you, because they are not certain how they can adjust to a society in the West. There is a lot of unknown things.

I was lucky to know more about the West because I lived for a very long time in the United States and I can compare, that I was sure and I knew what I can expect.

So -- and there are people, for sure, even in the political elite in the Soviet Union, people who share my views. But there is a lot of problem. To leave your country is something which, as you know, it's a hard decision. You always will have a pain in your heart. You always will miss your country. You'll always miss your former friends. It's a big problem with the family. Some of the member of your family may not join you. This is something which is really a decision which could be made only once in your life. You know it's irreversible decision, and you have to face all the consequences of that.

I had also, on top of that, a serious disagreement with the policy of my government. And it was very difficult for me to defend a position in which I'd entirely lost face [sic]. It was extremely difficult.

And if you would like to find a last straw -- Americans always would like to find out what is the last straw, what really pushed you at the last moment. I was Undersecretary General of the United Nations, assumingly an independent international civil servant. But actually, Soviets dictated me what I have to do. I mean I received almost every day orders from Moscow, which is, of course, contrary to the Charter of the United Nations. And I looked like an idiot. My colleagues in the United Nations had no respect for me because I was just a puppet, not a really independent man who performed my duty.

But it was, as I would repeat again, a last straw. First of all, it's really a matter of freedom. There's a lot of people who really -- the Soviet Union and Russia have to be proud of them -- who left the Soviet Union. Rostropovitch and Baryshnikov, a lot of them. They also had lack of freedom. They had lack of artistic freedom. I have a lack of freedom to influence any way, political way, the Soviet system. It was absolutely useless for me to continue to be with the Soviet government, because I could not change anything. And I lost a belief that the Soviet Union is really, is a champion of peace, in which I believe initially, it's for disarmament, and so on and so forth. I saw the reality. And the more I rose in ranks in the Soviet Union, the more I knew what is going on behind the scene. I saw the hypocrisy which has absolutely penetrated the top of the Soviet leadership.

HARTMAN: Let me ask you -- let me interrupt. Let me

ask you, briefly, a couple of questions about Soviet policy.

Many people here in our country would like to improve the relationship between our country and the Soviet Union. Many people in our country believe it's up to us to make that happen. Realistically, realistically, how much can we do right now to improve the relationship with the Soviet Union?

SHEVCHENKO: I think that we have to have a normal relation, what I would say, with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and the United States are the two major country of the world, with enormous military might. They can destroy each other or they can destroy the whole world.

HARTMAN: We are going into the arms talks right now. Realistically, what can we achieve in these arms talks without giving up the store?

SHEVCHENKO: We can achieve something. But you're absolutley right. We cannot give the store. We should not make any kind of a unilateral concessions to the Soviet Union to give up all the military programs here now before, I mean, any kind of negotiation or without any kind of giving anything in return from the Soviet Union. And we have to be very careful in negotiating with the Soviet Union because the Soviet Union -- first of all, we should not accept any kind of ambiguous formulation, because the Soviets will use all loophole not to obey. We have to have only the agreements with the Soviet Union which can be verifiable. Because if we conclude unverifiable agreements with the Soviet Union, they will cheat for sure.

But the Soviet Union also has some interests. The Soviet leadership also don't want to have a nuclear war, which, as you know, can blow them -- they can burn themselves in a nuclear war.

So that there are some common interests between the Soviet Union and the United States. And if these interests are coincidable and parallel, we can achieve something. We can avoid unnecessary risk of a nuclear war.

HARTMAN: Let me interrupt you again, in the interests of time.

You are quoted as saying in your book that over half the Soviets in New York City are KGB agents. Briefly, realistically, again, what can the United States do, if anything, about that?

SHEVCHENKO: What we can do, only one thing, is to watch them as carefully as possible. And unfortunately, some of the people here in Washington, they don't like to pay enough attention to have enough personnel to follow the Soviets which are in

the United States. We have no control over them because, unfortunately, they are at the United States and they have as much people as they want there at the Soviet mission to the United Nations. There is no reciprocity, let's say, because the U.N. allows to have as many Soviets as possible.

So the only way is to not to -- you know, Congress should really seriously think about that, to have enough people to watch carefully what the Soviets are doing.

And secondly, American should not be so naive as to believe that the -- to believe that a lot of Soviets are really, I mean, good, that these people are real diplomats or real scholars, and so on. They have to be extremely cautious about that. I don't say that there is no real diplomats or real scholar and good people who come from the Soviet Union here. But we have to be on alert all the time and to try to find out who is who before being frank, open with them.

HARTMAN: Mr. Shevchenko, let me interrupt. We also want to discuss the economy this morning. It's good to have you back with us, Arkady Shevchenko.

Thank you, sir.