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'Spy that never was' denies he wasn't

By George E. Curry
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WASHINGTON—Arkady Shevchenko, the highest-ranking Soviet official ever to defect to the United States, dismissed Wednesday as "absolutely ridiculous" charges that much of his best-selling book, "Breaking With Moscow," was fabricated.

He held a press conference to reply to charges that he made up key portions of his book, which has sold more than 180,000 copies and was serialized in Time magazine.

The strongest criticism was a review by Edward Jay Epstein in New Republic magazine:

Epstein, best known for his book attacking the Warren Commission finding that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing President John Kennedy, wrote: "As it turns

out, much of the material about Shevchenko's espionage career has either been spun out of formulaic spy fiction or invented out of whole cloth. . . . What is fabricated here are not just car chases, meetings, conversations, reports, dates, motives and espionage activities, but a spy that never was."

Shevchenko said Presidents Jimmy Carter and Reagan, high-ranking CIA and State Department officials and former national security advisers all knew of the role he played as a double agent. Former CIA Director Stansfield Turner and former Deputy Director Ray Cline supported the defector by taking the unusual step of publicly confirming that he provided the United States with valuable intelligence.

"All of a sudden someone is coming and telling, 'No, there was

no story at all,'" Shevchenko said. He called the criticism "absolutely ridiculous."

Shevchenko did acknowledge errors, which he called "a few minor things." One involved a meeting that he said took place in 1976 among Shevchenko; KGB head Boris Aleksandrovich Solomatin and his wife, Vera; and Georgy Arbatov, head of the Soviet U.S.-Canada Institute.

As Epstein pointed out, the meeting could not have taken place at that time because Solomatin returned to the Soviet Union in mid-1975.

In another mistake, the former Soviet official wrote that he considered approaching UN Ambassador John Scali about defecting sometime after the summer of 1975. Scali was replaced by Daniel Patrick Moynihan in June of 1975.