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# Soviet Defector Defends Book Against Criticism

By EDWIN McDOWELL

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WASHINGTON, July 31 — Breaking a monthlong silence, Arkady N. Shevchenko, the highest-ranking Soviet official to defect to the West, today denied allegations that his best-selling book is exaggerated, embellished or inaccurate.

The book, "Breaking With Moscow," has been on the best seller list for 22 weeks. But an article by Edward Jay Epstein in The New Republic magazine earlier this month charged that Mr. Shevchenko, who defected in 1978, made up important parts of the book with the apparent complicity of the Central Intelligence Agency. The article also sought to cast doubt on Mr. Shevchenko's claim that he spied for the United States beginning in 1975, while he was Under Secretary General and the ranking Soviet diplomat at the United Nations.

During an hourlong news conference at the National Press Club this morning, Mr. Shevchenko described Mr. Epstein's charges as "unwarranted attacks" and "plain falsehoods." If his book is a fraud, he said, "then two Presidents of the United States are frauds, both Carter and Reagan, who knew about my story, and the several National Security advisers also are frauds."

A number of high-ranking United States officials have said that Mr. Shevchenko's book is essentially correct. These include Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Democrat of New York, who had been deputy chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and Stansfield Turner, who was Director of Central Intelligence from 1977 to 1981.

## Blames Faulty Memory

But Mr. Epstein's article cited a number of apparent inconsistencies in Mr. Shevchenko's account, several of which the former Soviet diplomat today blamed on a faulty memory.

"Human memory is not a perfect instrument," Mr. Shevchenko said. "I'm amazed that I didn't make more mistakes than I already did." He described the errors as minor.

The most important of them was in describing at length a 1978 dinner party at the apartment of Boris Solomatin, the head of the K.G.B. in New York, at which they and Georgi A. Arbatov, the Soviet authority on the United States, supposedly discussed President Ford's chances of winning re-election — discussions that Mr. Shevchenko said he relayed to the American case officers.

In his article, Mr. Epstein wrote that Mr. Solomatin had returned to the Soviet Union in July 1975, six months before Mr. Shevchenko began his alleged spying for the United States. Today, Mr. Shevchenko said that he may have been wrong about the date. "I think that it happened a few months before" the date cited in the book, he said. But he insisted that the dinner and the dinner conversation were accurate.

Mr. Epstein said today that Mr. Shevchenko's explanation still does little to inspire confidence in the account in his book.

"I don't doubt that he met Arbatov or Solomatin," Mr. Epstein said. "The question is did he meet with them the way he describes it. In the book, he tells of relaying information about that meeting to the U.S. If the meeting took place before July 1975, it was before he supposedly made contact with the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. If it was after July, Solomatin wasn't even in the U.S. Either way, the account is fictionalized."

Mr. Shevchenko, dressed in a dark suit, yellow shirt and red checked tie, said that he waited until now to respond to the article because he was out of Washington much of the time and because he had not wanted to respond at all. But, he said, "when it's been snowballing, I felt that I had to react."

In answer to a question, he acknowledged that he had not been out of the country on vacation late in June, shortly before Mr. Epstein's article appeared, as his editor and lawyer had said he was.

Mr. Shevchenko denied any C.I.A. involvement with the book, except to help him find translators when he began writing an earlier version in Russian. He said he assured the agency that he would not reveal the names of its officials, but the agency did not help him write the book, did not see it before it was published and did not particularly like the portrait that he painted of the agency in the book.

Although Mr. Shevchenko said he could not speculate on Mr. Epstein's motives in attacking his book, he said that Soviet officials "have been working here in the United States to compromise me." He said he was told that some Soviet officials were talking to Congressional assistants and journalists, presumably to undermine his veracity.