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Writer says 'mole' invented tale

WASHINGTON [AP]—Super-mole or super-fiction writer? An article in next week's New Republic magazine contends that Soviet defector Arkady N. Shevchenko's memoir is more imagination than recollection.

"The Spy Who Came In to be Sold," by Edward Jay Epstein, alleges that Shevchenko and the CIA invented the supermole image that propelled "Breaking With Moscow" to best-seller lists all over the country.

"What is fabricated here are not just car-chases, meetings, conversations, reports, dates, motives and espionage activities, but a spy who never was," Epstein says in the article, circulated Wednesday in galley form.

Shevchenko's book described his life as a CIA spy while serving as an undersecretary general in the United Nations Secretariat. Published by Knopf, the memoir sold 180,000 copies and was serialized in Time magazine.

The editor of the book, Ashbel Green, said Shevchenko was "out of the country and on vacation" and could not be reached for comment on the Epstein article.

But Green said his own connections in the intelligence community "have always confirmed Shevchenko's role. There's no question in my mind that he was a CIA informant."

He added: "I have to be skeptical right from the beginning because of the person who wrote the article. He's a well-known conspiracy theorist."

Epstein, author of investigative books challenging the Warren Commission conclusion that Lee

Harvey Oswald acted alone in assassinating John F. Kennedy, says Time reported in 1978 that Shevchenko had proved of less value than anticipated by the CIA.

But he says the CIA and the defector joined forces later on to depict Shevchenko as a "thoroughly successful spy ... capable,

among other things, of keeping the CIA informed of the Soviets' real intentions in the sensitive SALT negotiations."

He contends that Shevchenko's image as a supermole first came up in "The KGB Today: The Hidden Hand," a 1983 book by John Barron. He says the CIA itself gave Barron the information.

Kathy Pherson, a spokeswoman for the CIA, said, "Arkady Shevchenko provided invaluable intelligence information to the U.S. government. The CIA had nothing to do with writing his book."

Mike Luftman, a Time spokesman, said staff members rechecked original and new sources Wednesday, leaving Time "convinced that Shevchenko's story is true and Epstein's critique is off the mark. The article simply does not deliver on its broad accusations."

According to Epstein, publishers Simon and Shuster signed a \$600,000 contract with Shevchenko in 1978 but rejected the manuscript because it did not have new information, conversations with Soviet leaders or mention of espionage activities.

The firm successfully sued Shevchenko for the return of a \$146,875 advance it paid him.

Readers Digest Press also concluded that the manuscript lacked

substance and personal vignettes, Epstein said. An investigative reporter interviewed Shevchenko for 20 hours before the book was rejected and concluded, according to Epstein, that "Shevchenko's reminiscences were far too vague for a successful book."

A completely different manuscript arrived at Knopf three years later, Epstein says—this one with "all the elements of a spy thriller ... cinematic car-chases, CIA case officers in safe houses, meetings with the KGB resident, recall telegrams and escapes from danger."

The new book also had "dramatic verbatim conversations with So-

viet leaders," including Nikita Khrushchev, which supposedly occurred when Shevchenko was in his 20s and at the bottom rung on the diplomatic ladder, Epstein says.

Epstein writes that his research disclosed numerous discrepancies in chronology and other aspects of the book, for which neither Green nor Luftman had an explanation.

"These errors to me are very minor, but I can't explain them without talking to the author," Green said.

Luftman said "every detail of the book may not withstand investigation," but called the book substantially accurate.

He said the research done Wednesday "establishes to our satisfaction that Shevchenko did indeed spy for the U.S. during the period and in the capacity he claims, and also that he was considered by his CIA handlers to be as important as his book indicates."

Among the problems Epstein cited were a 1975 car-chase during which Shevchenko says he received a ticket. But police records show he did not receive a ticket that year and he did not even have a driver's license until late 1977.

Epstein also said Shevchenko describes "a wealth of espionage coups" for the CIA before the end of 1975, but information from other sources—including former UN Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan—indicates he did not start spying until 1976.

In addition, Shevchenko says he spied on Boris Aleksandrovich Solomatin, head of the KGB in New York, in 1976, and gives an account of a dinner party at Solomatin's apartment. But Epstein says Solomatin returned to the Soviet Union in July, 1975.