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Soviet defector calls attack on memoirs 'terroristic'

By Bill Gertz
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A high-ranking Soviet defector said yesterday that charges he fabricated portions of his memoirs are "terroristic journalism."

Arkady Shevchenko, author of the best-selling book "Breaking With Moscow," admitted that "a few" minor inaccuracies appeared in his best-selling book but said they were the result of poor memory.

Mr. Shevchenko, a former Soviet disarmament specialist, said he provided U.S. intelligence with details of secret Soviet "fall-back" positions on arms control negotiations in Geneva. The discovery by Soviet counterintelligence officers that he was working for the Americans led to his defection, he said.

Mr. Shevchenko held a press conference to respond to Edward Jay Epstein's article in the July 15 issue of The New Republic, in which Mr. Epstein accused Mr. Shevchenko of collaborating with the Central Intelligence Agency in writing the book.

The headline on The New Republic cover said "The Shevchenko Fraud."

"The CIA [did] not [help] me in writing this book," Mr. Shevchenko said. The CIA was "the last place" that would have provided help, he said. The agency opposed revealing details of Mr. Shevchenko's espionage activities.

Mr. Shevchenko accused the article's author of harboring the "obsession" that all Soviet defectors are "double agents" secretly working for Moscow.

Mr. Epstein's article claimed the former Soviet official had embellished certain episodes, which did not appear in an earlier manuscript turned down by a New York publisher. The article also pointed out several alleged inaccuracies regarding Mr. Shevchenko's driver's license, the exact date of his defection and a meeting with a Soviet secret police official.

Before defecting to the United States in 1978, Mr. Shevchenko served as an under secretary general at the United Nations. For a period of three years he reportedly worked as an agent for the CIA, sup-

plying details of Soviet foreign policy positions, specifically Soviet arms control positions.

Responding to charges his book is a "fraud," Mr. Shevchenko said, "Then two presidents of the United States are frauds." He said former President Jimmy Carter and President Reagan knew about his activities, as well as "several national

security advisers."

Mr. Shevchenko said the manuscript that was turned down by Simon and Shuster in 1979 "was not a book" but five chapters about 100 pages in length.

The book took a long time to write, he said, because of "the very dull Soviet style" of writing.

Mr. Shevchenko charged that Mr. Epstein did not read "Breaking With Moscow" because the book contains no exact date of his defection. The only date provided in public, he said, appeared in Time magazine, which incorrectly identified the day as "Friday, April 6, 1978." Mr. Epstein pointed out that April 6 that year was a Saturday.

Mr. Shevchenko firmly defended the accuracy of events portrayed in the book. The few minor inaccuracies relate to dates, he said.

"There are only a few [mistakes]," Mr. Shevchenko said. "I'm amazed that I didn't make more mistakes than I already did."

Mr. Epstein said yesterday he stood by the thesis of his article that the Shevchenko book was "basically a fraud."

"I think he's making these things up," Mr. Epstein said in a telephone interview. He described the portions of the book dealing with Mr. Shevchenko's espionage activities as "a novel," and said he will respond to

Mr. Shevchenko in detail in a forthcoming article.

Mr. Epstein said former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger did not know anything about Mr. Shevchenko's activities, but admitted that former Carter administration national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski was not consulted for The New Republic piece.

A New Republic spokesman said the controversy will be addressed in a forthcoming issue.

The book provides details of Soviet foreign policy decisions, including Middle East conflicts, and an intimate profile of former Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, now Soviet president.

He denied that the CIA had anything to do with the book, but admitted the CIA helped him to locate two translators for an earlier manuscript.

A CIA spokesman said earlier this year, when the book was published, that it did not review the book. A CIA statement two weeks ago, in response to the Epstein article, said Mr. Shevchenko provided "invaluable" information.

Ashbel Green, Mr. Shevchenko's editor with Alfred A. Knopf Inc., yesterday said book sales have increased since the Epstein article first appeared. Of 184,000 copies in print, 180,000 have been sold, Mr. Green said.