

UNITED NATIONS

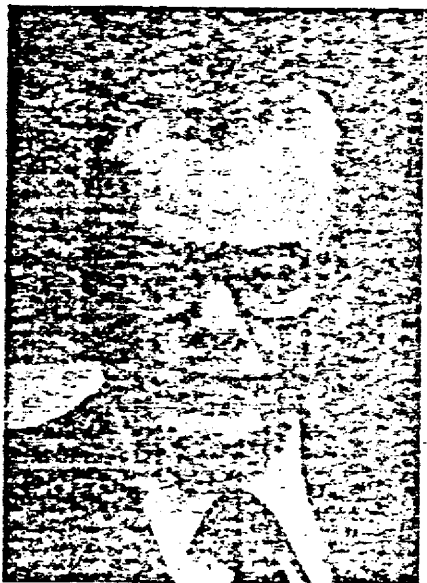
Defection of an Apparatchik

Differences with his government, and a deal for Washington

At the United Nations earlier this month, members of Soviet Diplomat Arkadi Shevchenko's staff were astonished when their ordinarily aloof, impersonal boss confided that he had a grievous family worry: his mother-in-law was so ill that he had to fly home to Moscow. Summoning security guards, Shevchenko ordered his private office sealed. Then the stooped, round-faced Under Secretary-General strolled out of U.N. headquarters in Manhattan and disappeared.

Last week a New York City attorney retained by Shevchenko announced that his client would not be returning to the U.S.S.R. because of "differences with his government." Shevchenko was by far the most important Soviet diplomat to have defected to the West, and the news caused consternation at the U.N., intense alarm in Moscow, and scarcely concealed elation in Washington. A protégé of Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, and Moscow's top-ranking official on the U.N. staff, Shevchenko was privy to many of his country's secrets, including the inner workings of Kremlin foreign policy making. Moreover, as a disarmament specialist serving as Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim's principal assistant in the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, he was familiar with Soviet positions on strategic arms. For example, Shevchenko had been instrumental in organizing next month's special U.N. session on disarmament, which it was reported, Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev planned to attend.

Stunned and unbelieving, Soviet officials in the U.S. requested a meeting with



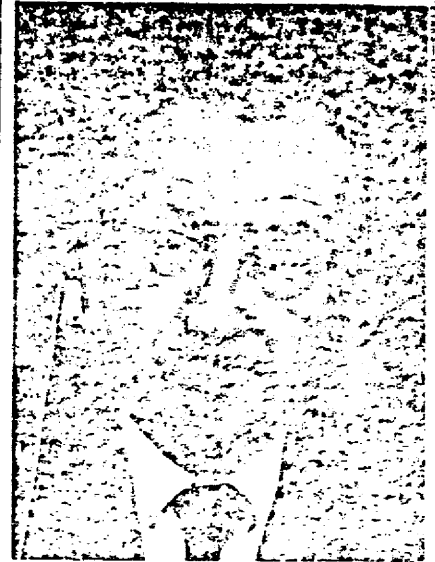
Arkadi Shevchenko at the U.N.
Seeking a better bargaining position.

Shevchenko, who was in hiding somewhere in New York State. The defecting diplomat's lawyer, Ernest Gross, a U.S. Assistant Secretary of State under Truman, arranged a meeting in his Manhattan law office. In a dramatic, hour-long confrontation with Soviet Ambassador to Washington Anatoli Dobrynin and Ambassador to the U.N. Oleg Troyanovsky, Shevchenko insisted that he would not return to his native land on an official visit, as Moscow had demanded. Following that meeting, the Soviets registered their first public reaction to the defection by claiming that Shevchenko was being held in the U.S. "under duress." Echoing a Tass dispatch from Moscow, the Soviet Mission to the U.N. issued a statement calling the defector a victim of "premeditated provocation" and of a "detestable frame-up" by American intelligence agents.

A U.S. State Department spokesman, Tom Reston, denied the charge. Shevchenko, he said, "is free to stay here, return to the U.S.S.R. or go to another country, as far as we are concerned. The U.S. Government in no way attempted to influence him in his decision." Meanwhile, Shevchenko was proving an embarrassment to Waldheim, since he had not resigned his \$76,032-a-year post, which is traditionally reserved for a Soviet diplomat.

The reasons behind Shevchenko's action appeared murky at first. Regarded by his U.N. colleagues as an arrogant, hard-line Communist apparatchik, Shevchenko clearly had not been moved by a sudden, overwhelming yearning for freedom. Moreover, the move seemingly cut short a brilliant career. First posted to the U.N. in 1963 as a counselor in the Soviet Mission, Shevchenko served in New York for seven years. The Ukrainian-born diplomat then returned to Moscow as an adviser to Foreign Minister Gromyko and reached ambassadorial rank at the unusually early age of 40. In 1973 he was sent back to the U.N. to fill the cushy Under Secretary's post.

Speaking through his lawyer, Shevchenko maintained that his summons home by Moscow was unacceptable and improper for an independent U.N. official like himself. Some U.N. aides scoffed at his explanation; whenever Shevchenko was late for a meeting, they would say it was because he had stopped off at the Soviet Mission 30 blocks away to get instructions. According to one theory, Shevchenko had been recalled to Moscow as a result of some behind-the-scenes power struggle in the Foreign Ministry that threatened to end his career. With his dreams of further advancement shattered, so the theory went, he defected in despair.



Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim
Enduring a temporary embarrassment.

Soviet officials at the U.N., whose own careers will be compromised by Shevchenko's defection, hastened to offer other explanations. Second Secretary Yevgeni Lukyantsev of the Soviet Mission insisted that "Shevchenko had a drinking problem. It is quite possible that the FBI or the CIA caught him." One of Shevchenko's aides at the U.N., Vyacheslav Kuzmin, believed to be the KGB officer who was assigned to keep him under surveillance, asserted that "he is a sick man who must be sent back to Moscow so he can get the medical care he needs." Other U.N. officials speculated that Shevchenko had fallen in love with an American woman—a theory that gained credence when it was learned that his wife, Lengina, 46, had flown home two weeks ago, apparently after a violent quarrel with her husband. She took their teen-age daughter, Anna, with her and joined the couple's son, Gennadi, 25, an employee of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, in Moscow.

There was another reason for Shevchenko to defect. TIME has learned that for two years he has been secretly talking to U.S. intelligence officers. In recent weeks he has offered to explain which American agency—presumably either the CIA or the FBI—had been deluded by Soviet agents who fed them "disinformation" prepared by the KGB. According to one source, Shevchenko's price for this interesting secret is about \$100,000 a year. If the U.S. should reject his terms, Shevchenko has the alternative of giving similar information to five other nations whose secret services have been in touch with him. "He has put himself in an excellent bargaining position," said one American intelligence official. "We can hardly say that we're not interested in his information, but it's up to President Carter to decide, whether to pay his price."