

Soviet Defector Accused Of Fabrications in Book

By EDWIN McDOWELL

A magazine article charging that a former Soviet diplomat made up important parts of his best-selling book, with the apparent complicity of the Central Intelligence Agency, has evoked heated denials from the American intelligence community. Moreover, defenders say that even if some dates in the book are incorrect and some passages embellished, the overall thrust — that the author spied for the United States while serving as the senior Soviet official at the United Nations, until his defection in 1978 — is essentially correct.

The story by Edward Jay Epstein, titled "The Spy Who Came in to Be Sold," appears in the issue of *The New Republic* on sale today. It sets out a lengthy bill of particulars against the book "Breaking With Moscow" by Arkady N. Shevchenko, the highest-ranking Soviet official ever to defect.

Mr. Epstein's article seeks to cast doubt on Mr. Shevchenko's claim that he spied for the United States beginning in 1975, while he was the senior Soviet diplomat at the United Nations, until his defection.

It attempts to debunk Mr. Shevchenko's claim that he furnished the C.I.A. with details of Soviet strategy on arms-control negotiations, including the strategic arms limitation talks.

And it asserts that the "car chases, meetings, conversations, reports, dates, motives and espionage activities" in the book, which has been on the best-seller list for 18 weeks, were concocted to create "a spy that never was."

C.I.A. Issues Response

Mr. Shevchenko, who did not return a message left on his answering machine, is said by his publisher and friends to be out of the country on vacation and unreachable. But last week, while galleys of the Epstein article were circulating in Washington and New York, the C.I.A. took the unusual step of responding publicly to Mr. Epstein's article, saying that Mr. Shevchenko "provided invaluable intelligence information" to Washington and that the C.I.A. "had nothing to do with writing his book."

Nevertheless, the Epstein charge that the book is a fraud caused both the book's publisher and *Time* magazine, which ran two lengthy excerpts from the book earlier this year, to re-examine its accuracy. Both pronounced themselves satisfied that it is accurate.

But Mr. Epstein, who has written

books challenging the Warren Commission conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing President Kennedy, said he sticks by his account. In the magazine article and in telephone interviews, he said the spy fraud was perpetrated in order to produce a "success story" at a time when "the C.I.A. was in disarray" following Congressional revelations of past abuses, and the agency was concerned about K.G.B. espionage successes.

Mr. Epstein's article makes numerous allegations, and cites a number of seeming inconsistencies in Mr. Shevchenko's account. Mr. Shevchenko's inaccessibility and the refusal of some present and former officials to discuss the various matters have greatly complicated the task of independent observers in rechecking the accuracy of many points raised in the article. Nevertheless some of Mr. Shevchenko's assertions that have been questioned by Mr. Epstein can be supported and certain inconsistencies in Mr. Epstein's account have come to light.

Kissinger Cited in Article

For example, a major Epstein claim is that "one former national security adviser to the President" — whom he subsequently identified as former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger — told him "there could have been no such spy as Shevchenko purported to be" without his knowing about it. But Mr. Kissinger did not return a number of telephone calls to his New York office, seeking to verify that claim.

However, Stansfield Turner, who headed the C.I.A. from 1977 to 1981, said in a brief telephone conversation that, "Shevchenko gave good intelligence." And Ray Cline, former deputy C.I.A. director, said that the C.I.A. denial is correct "and the Shevchenko story substantially truthful."

Mr. Epstein, reconstructing a timetable based on incidents reported in the book, says Mr. Shevchenko's spy career could not have begun before 1976. "Yet the book details a wealth of espionage coups Shevchenko accomplished on behalf of the C.I.A. before 'the end of 1975,'" Mr. Epstein writes.

The Shevchenko book is vague on dates — as indeed it should be, in the opinion of current and past intelli-

gence officials. And Mr. Epstein is correct that Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, when he was later vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, wrote that he learned on Dec. 5, 1975, that Mr. Shevchenko had told an American in the Secretariat that he wished to defect.

But Senator Moynihan, who had described the Shevchenko information as "invaluable," said he was reluctant to discuss details in the Epstein article, except to reiterate that Mr. Shevchenko "was working for us for a period until that rather dramatic moment" of his defection.

Information on Arms Talks

Mr. Epstein writes that one of those espionage coups claimed by Mr. Shevchenko in 1975 was that of providing information about the strategic arms limitation talks. Yet Mr. Epstein said in conversation that Mr. Kissinger told him he had never heard of Mr. Shevchenko passing along information on those talks. "And if that claim is wrong than the book's a lie even if none of the other details are wrong," he added.

But Strobe Talbott, the *Time* magazine correspondent who recommended that *Time* publish the Shevchenko excerpts, and the author of several books on arms negotiations, said he is convinced that the Shevchenko story stands up. "A former intelligence community official with direct knowledge told me one reason he remembered the Shevchenko episode, although he did not know Shevchenko by name, was because this Soviet source at the U.N. was providing information that was useful on arms control," he said.

Mr. Epstein's article describes Mr. Shevchenko's three-page account of a 1976 dinner party at the two-room 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, discussed President Ford's chances of winning re-election — discussions that he said he relayed to the American case officers.

But "there could not have been such a meeting," Mr. Epstein writes, because Mr. Solomatin returned to the Soviet Union in July 1975, six months before Mr. Shevchenko began his alleged spying for the United States and more than a year before Mr. Arbatov would have come to the United States to appraise the presidential elections.

Discrepancies Not Explained

William Geimer, a former State Department official and close friend of Mr. Shevchenko, concedes that he has no ready explanation for the apparent discrepancy. He said he has not been in contact with Mr. Shevchenko since he left the country early last week. "But my suspicion is that Solomatin came back into the country and Epstein missed it," he said.

Even if that were true, Mr. Epstein said, the apartment that is described in such detail as having been Mr. Solomatin's would then have belonged to his replacement.

Mr. Epstein makes much of the fact

that Mr. Shevchenko describes a series of clandestine meetings with Americans in the "otherwise empty" reference section of the United Nations library, where he exchanged messages — even though, the magazine article says, on two sides the reference section is exposed by plate-glass windows to onlookers and on a third side is in the direct line of sight of the head librarian, who at the time of the alleged meetings was a Soviet official presumed to be in the K.G.B.

In fact, there are two reference rooms in the United Nations library, one on the first floor and another on the second, but neither has plate-glass windows on both sides. An employee who has worked in the library for 16 years and has read Mr. Shevchenko's book said it was conceivable that an information drop could have taken place unnoticed on the second floor, where it is usually quite quiet and where volumes of United Nations documents and records are arranged according to number.

But more important, a source who would not speak for attribution affirmed that he personally had picked up material from Mr. Shevchenko in the library. He added that it happened the way it is described in the book and that any mistakes are of a minor nature.

Mr. Epstein points out that an earlier version of the book, which Simon and Schuster rejected, and which was also turned down by Reader's Digest Press, made no mention of the author's espionage activities and contained no revelatory first-hand conversations with Soviet leaders — in contrast to the dramatic verbatim conversations with Nikita S. Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders in the current best seller.

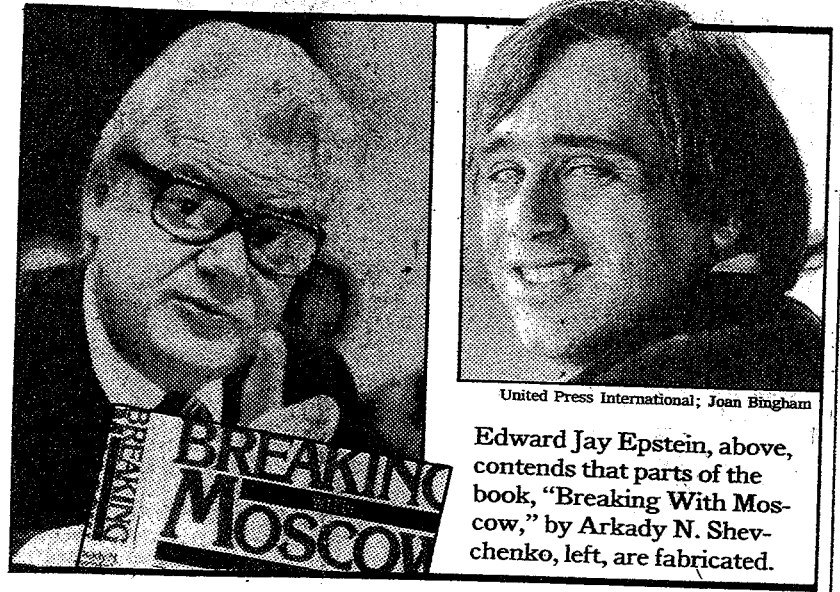
"My basic feeling is that somebody juiced up the manuscript of his new book quite a lot to make it more commercial," said Michael Korda, editor

in chief of Simon and Schuster, who rejected Mr. Shevchenko's original manuscript. "My impression was that a lot of work was done on the book by the C.I.A., because he was completely living under their protection and guidance."

But the decision to "juice up" the book was the author's, according to Mr. Geimer, who denied there was any C.I.A. involvement with this book.

"Arkady had always wanted to write a memoir but never intended to disclose his relationship with the C.I.A.," Mr. Geimer said. "That was the thrust of the five chapters he submitted to Simon and Schuster." Later, when told that the espionage activities were widely known in Washington, Mr. Shevchenko decided he could no longer ignore the subject. "Ashbel Green, the book's editor, also said there was no C.I.A. involvement."

As for the verbatim conversations, Mr. Geimer said the gist of the Khrushchev conversations were in a chapter in the earlier version. "But Arkady tried to make it more vivid for



United Press International; Joan Bingham

Edward Jay Epstein, above, contends that parts of the book, "Breaking With Moscow," by Arkady N. Shevchenko, left, are fabricated.

the new book by reconstructing them in quotation marks," he said.

After Mr. Shevchenko signed a \$150,000 book contract in 1980 with Alfred A. Knopf and Ballantine Books, divisions of Random House, Alfred A. Friendly Jr. was paid \$50,000 to write the first draft. But Mr. Green wanted substantial revisions. Mr. Geimer said Mr. Shevchenko's American wife, Elaine — the Soviets claim that his Russian wife Lina killed herself after returning to Moscow after his defection, he claims she was murdered by the K.G.B. — did much of the work on the revisions, but that Mr. Green put the language into shape for publication.

Mr. Epstein describes as an invention the book's opening scene, which describes Mr. Shevchenko, on the way to his first meeting with a C.I.A. contact in 1975, roaring away at high speed from what he mistakenly thought to be a K.G.B. surveillance car — then being pulled over by a Nassau County policeman and given a ticket for speeding.

Mr. Epstein describes that as a "cinematic detail" that "never happened" because police records show that Mr. Shevchenko did not receive a ticket in 1975, or any other year, on ei-

ther a New York or an international driver's license. And he did not even have a driver's license until Oct. 20, 1977.

Records of the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles confirm that a license was indeed last issued to Mr. Shevchenko on the date cited by Mr. Epstein. But Lars Allanson, an agency spokesman, said that was not necessarily Mr. Shevchenko's first license. Drivers are normally given a one- to two-year grace period to renew expired licenses, after which all record of the license is expunged from the department's computer.

Mr. Shevchenko writes that he did not "invoke diplomatic immunity" in hopes of avoiding his traffic ticket, but Mr. Green said Mr. Shevchenko recently explained that he later took the ticket to the security office of the United Nations to arrange to have it dropped.

Irene Payne, a press spokesman for the United States Mission, said that until this year the United Nations security chief would arrange for traffic violations to be dropped by clearing them with the United States mission if the diplomat or United Nations employee was entitled to diplomatic immunity. Mr. Shevchenko had such diplomatic immunity, she said.

Mr. Epstein also said Mr. Shevchenko's account of his defection — which included a midnight flight from the 26th floor of his East Side apartment building, down the stairs and out the service door — was fictitious because "this door is sealed shut every night at 7:30 P.M."

The door has a bar on a hinge that is padlocked after 7 P.M., according to Robert Hammer, managing agent of the building, The Phoenix. However, until 2 A.M., the garage in the sub-basement is open and its entrance leads directly onto 64th Street, alongside the service entrance.