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# Defector wasn't a defector

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To me, the only puzzling aspect of the case of the Soviet spy who went back into the cold is why there should be any speculation as to whether or not Vitaly Yurchenko's defection was genuine. Logical deduction, based on what is known about the Soviets' methods, makes it possible to reach only one conclusion: The defection was a phony.

Ever since World War II, when the Soviets went from being "those lousy Reds" to "our gallant allies," we have been dealing with their dirty tricks and, through the few top-level spies we have caught, have been given some insight into their methods, yet Washington has apparently learned nothing. Senator Daniel P. Moynihan (D., N.Y.) brushed aside the possibility that the Kremlin might have played a trick on us by calling such a theory "bizarre." He insisted that Yurchenko was too prominent in the KGB to be used as "bait."

Arkady Shevchenko — the Soviet delegate to the United Nations, who was serving as under secretary general when he defected in 1978 — maintains Yurchenko was just a run-of-the-mill official at the KGB, and it was the Central Intelligence Agency, in its hysterical excitement at having a KGB official swim into its net, that made him out to be a much bigger fish than he actually was. (By doing so, of course, the agency ended up with much more egg on its face when the Soviet-concocted soufflé exploded than would otherwise have been the case.) Nevertheless, Yurchenko *did* work for the KGB and was just important enough to serve its purpose in having him pretend to come over to our side.

William Colby, a former CIA director and apparently even more naive than Moynihan, is quoted in the press as saying that Yurchenko was a genuine defector who had had second thoughts about his family and had decided to "go home and face the music." Obviously, even after years of heading the CIA, Colby has no idea what kind of music it would be.

Yurchenko, on the other hand, having spent 25 years in the KGB, would have no doubts as to what the music would be: Chopin's funeral march. A man in his position would have to be either insane or suicidal to return to the Soviet Union after having defected and spent several months in American hands; he gave no indication of being either.

So, the only question that remains to be answered is exactly why the Soviet government thought it worthwhile to mount this melodrama. The most obvious and logical reason would have been to offset the harm done to communism by the new wave of Soviet spies and bureaucrats defecting for ideological reasons rather than the earlier, mundane reasons, such as falling into debt or falling out of favor with Moscow.

A very effective way to do this would be to make intelligence agencies in the West leery of any Communist defector. After the Yurchenko debacle, it undoubtedly will be a long time before trust is placed in any East European who says he's disillusioned with communism and wants to come over to our side.

There would be an extra benefit to Moscow in gaining firsthand knowledge of how the CIA goes about debriefing a defector.

An intelligence official who recently left the CIA maintains that Yurchenko wouldn't have learned much about debriefing methods because questioning in such cases is carefully handled to protect important information. Did the same kind of experts do the questioning who, not only allowed Yurchenko to go out to dinner at Au Pied de Cochon, a Georgetown bistro, but also sent him forth for an evening on the town accompanied by only one agent?

The same kind of experts as the dope who, when Yurchenko got up from the table and said, "If I'm not back in 15 minutes, don't blame yourself," and then walked out the door, waited obediently for the 15 minutes to pass before alerting headquarters that the big fish had swum away.

The statement on the CIA's very poor showing from Sen. Patrick Leahy (D., Vt.), ranking Democrat of the intelligence committee, was, "You assume the CIA is trained professionals, that they know what they're doing. That assumption is now being questioned."

If the assumption is actually being questioned, the KGB may have done the United States a favor by staging the Yurchenko farce: perhaps the powers-that-be in Washington will now insist that the CIA agents really be trained as professionals and that

the agency select people capable of entertaining the hypothesis that the mind of a Soviet does not work in exactly the same way as the mind of an American.

However, I'm afraid that, to judge by Washington's track record, the only person who will have benefited from this mess is the owner of the Georgetown bistro who has put a new item on his menu, "Moskovski Borscht."