George Y. Shevelov's Personal "History of the Ukrainian Language in the First Half of the Twentieth Century"

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Abstract: In his two-volume memoirs, George Shevelov (1908-2002), the leading specialist of Ukrainian linguistics in the twentieth century, offers recurring observations about the development of his attitudes toward Ukrainian, and other languages to which he was exposed. The present article collects and interprets such comments from the first part of the memoirs in order to reconstruct some elements of Shevelov's personal "history of the Ukrainian language in the first half of the twentieth century."

Keywords: George Y. Shevelov, Ukrainian Linguistics, Kharkiv, Language Biography

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

At some point in his career, George Y. Shevelov, aka (in Ukrainian) Iurii Shevel'ov (17 December 1908 – 12 April 2002), supposedly remarked, "What Hrushevs'kyi did for history, I did for the Ukrainian language."[1]

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[1] "Те, що Грушевський зробив для української історії, я зробив для української мови." The quotation is obviously based on hearsay; I was unable to find it. Shevelov wrote something similar in a letter to Iurii Boiko-Blokhyn from 31 October 1983: "I do think without false modesty that in my field I have done no less than Hrushevs'kyi in his." ("Я думаю без зайвої скромности, що в своїй ділянці я зробив не менше, ніж Грушевський у своїй"). Shevelov continued: "So what? What is the reaction? Nobody knows about that in Ukraine (because it is forbidden), in the emigration (does it have any decent specialists?), or among foreigners (because who among them is even interested in the problem of the history of the Ukrainian language?" ("Ну, і що? Яка реакція? Ніхто того не знає на Україні (бо заборонено), на еміґрації (бо тут відповідні фахівці?), ані серед чужинців (бо кого з них взагалі цікавить проблематика історії української мови?)" (Shevelov and Blokhyn 213). I sincerely thank my friend Dr. Serhii Vakulenko (Kharkiv) for sharing this valuable bibliographic information.

Although this is certainly not a modest statement, it can hardly be refuted. Shevelov's *opus magnum*, *A Historical Phonology of the Ukrainian Language* (1979), offered convincing arguments that Ukrainian did not develop from a Common East Slavic language (often labelled as "Common Russian") and that such a language in fact never existed. Instead, as Shevelov confirmed, Ukrainian was created on the basis of Slavic dialects that had developed immediately out of Common Slavic. In *A Prehistory of Slavic* (1964), another work of utmost importance, Shevelov had prepared the ground for his 1979 study. By the late 1960s at the latest, he had become the leading specialist of Ukrainian linguistics and one of the most authoritative Slavic linguists in general. Shevelov's expertise extended to almost all spheres of the study of the Ukrainian language, be it phonology, morphology, syntax, stylistics, not to mention the study of the history of the Ukrainian literary language. The fact that Shevelov was not only a linguist, but also an important voice in the field of Ukrainian literary criticism and cultural history, undoubtedly had a significant impact on Shevelov's linguistic works. His articles and reviews, many of which were collected in the volumes *Teasers and Appeasers* (1971) and *In and around Kiev* (1991), prove that Shevelov was not only an erudite scholar, but also a leading Ukrainian intellectual. In his monograph, *The Ukrainian Language in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (1989), Shevelov confirmed that the study of language should be embedded in a larger historical, sociological, and political context. George Y. Shevelov has thus inspired generations of scholars dealing with the Ukrainian language; it is certainly not an exaggeration to say that without Shevelov's work, Ukrainian linguistics would be in a completely different situation today.[2]

Shevelov's scholarly merits have been repeatedly appraised by leading scholars of Ukrainian linguistics. The intention of the present essay is to shed some light on George Shevelov's "language biography" and, particularly, his personal "history of the Ukrainian language in the first half of the twentieth century,"[3] i.e., during the period when Shevelov spent most of his time in the city of Kharkiv (and several months in Lviv), prior to his exile in Western Europe and, subsequently, the U.S.A. Whereas the study of "language biographies" (see Franceschini), i.e., the collection and interpretation of autobiographic data reflecting the acquisition of languages and language attitudes in multilingual contexts, is usually embedded in the framework of applied linguistics, particularly language didactics, the following

[2] See, e.g., Hrytsenko or Rieger and Hnatiuk. Katryna Karunyk's study offers the most recent information regarding the bibliography of Shevelov's works, adding to the bibliography collected by Andrii Danylenko and Lev Chaban.

[3] For a theoretical approach to "autobiographic narratives as data in applied linguistics," see Pavlenko.

obervations, which are based on a close reading of the first volume of Shevelov's memoirs (*Ia, meni, mene*), are merely meant to contribute to a better understanding of the relation of the leading scholar in Ukrainian linguistics toward the Ukrainian language.

TELLURIC POWERS?

With regard to Shevelov's language biography, it is crucial to recall from the onset that Shevelov was neither an ethnic Ukrainian nor a native speaker of the Ukrainian language.[4] He was born in Kharkiv in 1908, the son of Vladimir Shneider and Varvara Meder, both of German ethnic background; his original official name was Georgii Vladimirovich Shneider (*Ia, meni, mene* 24-25). Ukrainian culture and the Ukrainian language were largely alien to the Shneider family.[5] Russian was the language of the family. Moreover, Shevelov's father, who died during the First World War, was even a strong supporter of Russian imperial nationalism. He not only requested the Tsar to Russify his name, but as a general major of the Russian Imperial Army, he also reportedly established personal measures for the Russification of his non-Russian subordinates, personally ordering them to "speak and write in Russian only" and demanded that their relatives also only reply in Russian (*Ia, meni, mene* 25, 78).

Based on his family experience, Shevelov must have understood at quite an early age that national identity—which is often connected with linguistic identity—is to a certain degree a matter of individual choice. However, this choice is not completely arbitrary, but rather a matter of one's personal convictions and loyalties. Under German occupation, Shevelov did not try to be acknowledged as a *Volksdeutscher*, although he would have temporarily achieved considerable privileges. At that point, Shevelov was not willing to "change his skin and soul" (*Ia, meni, mene* 302).

Shevelov's mother began speaking Ukrainian only in 1941. When she passed away in the U.S.A., her son was struck by the fact that she addressed her last words to him in Ukrainian. In his memoirs, Shevelov writes that "Ukraine, with its landscape, its people, and its (then) white huts," had in some mystical way always been on his mother's and his own mind (*Ia, meni, mene* 77). Also, Shevelov occasionally refers to some "'telluric powers' of the Ukrainian soil that gives birth to Ukrainianness even in the darkest epochs" ("'телюричні сили' української землі, що породжує з себе українськість

[4] Shevelov emphasizes that his choice of a Ukrainian identity distinguished him from ethnic Ukrainians (*Ia, meni, mene* 156).

[5] Shevelov was one of five children in the Shneider family. Most died at an early age, but one sister survived until the interwar period.

навіть у найчорніші епохи"; *Ia, meni, mene* 47).[6] These mystical causes notwithstanding, Shevelov himself repeatedly concedes in his memoirs that his own way to Ukrainianness was strongly influenced by rather coincidental external factors; and that without their impact, everything could have, in fact, developed differently (*Ia, meni, mene* 76, 156).[7]

Besides Russian, the second language that Shevelov acquired in his family was French (but not Ukrainian), the traditional language of the Russian imperial upper classes (*Ia, meni, mene* 36). Shevelov learned French from his distant relatives and at school; when he was in gymnasium, he and his mother used to speak French one day a week (*Ia, meni, mene* 28, 61). At the same time, Shevelov learned some German through private lessons (*Ia, meni, mene* 61); he also became acquainted with the basics of Latin in the first grade of the gymnasium, before the Bolshevik Revolution demolished the traditional school system (*Ia, meni, mene* 53).

As for the coexistence of the Ukrainian and Russian languages, Shevelov recalled that in accordance with Russian imperial stereotypes, he originally viewed it as a merely social, not a national, phenomenon, and that he did not regard Ukrainian as a language in its own rights.[8] Only between the ages of seven and nine, when Shevelov spent his holidays in the countryside, was there a "first direct and continuing contact with the Ukrainian sphere," which initially re-enforced his original view that Ukrainian was a mere peasant idiom that was necessarily alien to him, much as the rural world in general (*Ia, meni, mene* 38, 74). Later, when Shevelov learned Ukrainian at school during the brief period of Ukrainian independence, his teachers and teaching

[6] In retrospective, Shevelov also attributed particular significance to the fact that one of his mother's teachers in Saint Petersburg was Dmytro Iavornyts'kyi, the dedicated researcher of the Zaporozhian Cossacks (*Ia, meni, mene* 77-78).

[7] See, e.g., Shevelov's comment regarding the period following his first enthusiasm for the Ukrainian language: "I do not know how long my new enthusiasm for the Ukrainian language would have lasted if what was about to be and what had been had not happened" ("Не знаю, як довго потривало б моє нове захоплення, українською мовою, якби не те, що ставалося далі і що було перед тим"; *Ia, meni, mene* 76).

[8] In other words, Shevelov had understood that language is a socially releveant phenomenon. In this respect, an anecdote related to the pragmatic aspects of French is of interest. Having learned that "please" (Russian пожалуйста) is "je t'en prie" in a family context, Shevelov used the phrase in precisely the same form when he addressed his school director at a school event (instead of the formal "je vous en prie"). As Shevelov mentions, he was very much ashamed when people reacted with laughter. This was for him "a catastrophic defeat in his early encounter with the broad world beyond the family." This little episode left deep vestiges in his "consciousness and memory" (*Ia, meni, mene* 36).

materials tended to even further confirm this view, as they strongly linked the Ukrainian language to rural topics (Shevelov mentions Olena Kurylo's textbook as an example; *Ia, meni, mene* 47).[9] Shevelov, by contrast, felt deeply that he was an urban person.[10] In the memoirs, Shevelov indicates that despite these stereotypes, he did not have a "hostile attitude toward the Ukrainian language."[11] Nonetheless, the stereotypes were deeply rooted, and they were not positive. In the second year of his gymnasium, Shevelov was quite surprised when the director of his school, who had formerly impressed him as an enthusiastic supporter of the Tsar's regime, began teaching the Ukrainian language in independent Ukraine. Shevelov remembers that he was puzzled by the fact that "the director of a gymnasium speaks Ukrainian and teaches this language," because he had been convinced that "in a city only new arrivals from the village" spoke it (*Ia, meni, mene* 47).

Acquiring the Ukrainian language

It was only in Shevelov's teenage years (1923 or 1924) that his cousin Anatolii Nosiv initiated Shevelov's sudden transformation "from Saul to Paul" (as Shevelov described it), or, as he also put it, his "discovery of Ukraine" (*Ia, meni, mene* 73-74). Nosiv, a young scholar, became fascinated with the Ukrainian national idea and occasionally presented Ukrainian books to Shevelov's sister, Nosiv's fiancée. One of these books was Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyj's *Illustrated History of Ukraine*.[12] In the course of a conversation

[9] After the Second World War, the German professor Erwin Koschmieder was baffled by the large amount of agricultural words in the examples given in Shevelov's syntax and noted that he had not noticed anything similar while working with Russian or Polish sources (*Ia, meni, mene* 273).

[10] Only during the Second World War, when Shevelov visited a Galician village and when he and his friend were photographed in village clothes, did he deeply feel that this was a "return to the soil, a baptism" (*Ia, meni, mene* 386).

[11] Ukrainian culture was often not in high esteem even among those urban intellectuals who did not have a hostile attitude toward it. Shevelov gives the example of his first teacher, Leonid Bulakhovs'kyi, who, despite his "tolerant" attitude toward "the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian culture, and Ukrainian students," "unconsciously" shared the view of "all people of Russian culture in Kharkiv, and, perhaps, everywhere," namely, that Ukrainian culture was not at a high level. Therefore, Bulakhovs'kyi could not imagine that a student as talented as Shevelov would choose to focus his interests on the Ukrainian sphere (*Ia, meni, mene* 157).

[12] During visits to the Shevelov family, his cousin Anatolii Nosiv apparently taught Shevelov another lesson. The fact that he consistently gave thanks in Ukrainian ("Дякую!"), even when conversations were usually in Russian (*Ia, meni, mene* 74), demonstrated to Shevelov that even the occasional choice of a language can serve as a convincing expression of one's own identity.

about this book, Shevelov willy-nilly acknowledged to Nosiv that Ukrainian was a separate language, but provocatively added that it was "not beautiful." While Shevelov apparently expected a sharp reaction at this point, his cousin calmly replied, "A language spoken by millions of people cannot be not beautiful." These words led to a genuine "revolution" in Shevelov's views, who immediately developed an active interest in the Ukrainian language, read Hrushevs'kyj's *Illustrated History of Ukraine* and then translated a short feuilleton by Edgar Allan Poe from Russian into Ukrainian (*Ia, meni, mene* 74-75).[13]

The fact that Shevelov was not a native speaker of Ukrainian was probably significant. First, it is likely that Shevelov was more aware than most native speakers that the modern Ukrainian standard language, as any other modern standard language, was not a natural given. At the same time—and this is important to note from the outset—Shevelov acquired a modern Ukrainian standard language (which was increasingly being codified during his lifetime), not genuine dialects. When Shevelov learned Ukrainian, he soon realized that standard languages can be quite distant from the spoken varieties one is exposed to, that norms are consciously constructed, and that these norms have to be codified. When Shevelov read Hrushevs'kyi's *Illustrated History of Ukraine*, he had great difficulties understanding it, given its specific vocabulary, with its many Galician elements and professional terminological expressions: he had never heard these words from Ukrainian-speakers with whom he had been in contact (*Ia, meni, mene* 75-76). When Shevelov embarked to translate Poe, he must have felt the need for—and, in fact, the lack of—good dictionaries of the Ukrainian language even more intensely (*Ia, meni, mene* 75-76).[14]

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[13] Prior to that, Shevelov, as a second grader in the gymnasium, had only written a short Ukrainian-language homework essay, "Winter," with his mother's assistance—and not of his own free will (*Ia, meni, mene* 47, 75).

[14] Later, Shevelov took an active part in various smaller projects devoted to the codification of Ukrainian terminologies: Under German occupation, he was a member of teams working on German-Ukrainian juridical and agricultural dictionaries. The dictionary of juridical terminology was finalized in German-occupied Lviv. In the course of this project, it turned out that the different law traditions of the German and Ukrainian-speaking areas, as well as the different traditions of the Ukrainian-speaking areas within Austria and the Russian Empire made the endeavor extremely difficult (*Ia, meni, mene* 364). As to the agricultural dictionary, which was to be prepared in Berlin, Shevelov faced quite a different problem: as "a person who had spent perhaps two weeks of his entire life in a village," he was not familiar with the world of agriculture (*Ia, meni, mene* 404). For similar reasons, when Shevelov was repeatedly asked in German-occupied Kharkiv to help translate liturgical books into Ukrainian, he declined because he had not been connected with church life for years;

By the time Shevelov acquired the Ukrainian language, the codified norms had not yet been successfully disseminated. Many native speakers spoke local variants that frequently exhibited strong Russian interference.[15] With regard to the Ukrainian-Russian mixed varieties that were in broad use, Shevelov notes that he heard the word *surzhyk* for the first time in the early 1930s, when one of his students characterized the language of the villages of the southeastern Kharkiv region (*Ia, meni, mene* 172).[16] While Shevelov discussed the *surzhyk* phenomena, which he even observed in the language of his teachers in student newspapers (*Ia, meni, mene* 132), native speakers of Ukrainian often admired Shevelov for his "correct" language.[17]

Later, when Shevelov and his mother had already left Kharkiv for German-occupied Lviv, Shevelov realized even more clearly to what degree not only general language practice, but also the norms of a language can differ from region to region. In his memoirs, Shevelov repeatedly refers to typically Galician norms that raised his awareness during that period; at that point, he began preparing his study of the Galician impact on the history of

moreover, no materials that could have helped him were available in Kharkiv after decades of Soviet rule (*Ia, meni, mene* 313).

[15] Shevelov mentions students from the villages of Left Bank Ukraine, mostly from the Poltava area, who "did not make any attempt to adapt their language to the standard language" and would consistently use, e.g., the word предложення for пропозиція (both meaning 'suggestion') (*Ia, meni, mene* 111). On the other hand, another student from the Kharkiv area desperately strived to "speak correctly" (*Ia, meni, mene* 238). Elsewhere, Shevelov refers to a student from the Poltava region who returned from the Soviet navy, where his language was heavily Russified, and who deeply admired Shevelov for his correct language (*Ia, meni, mene* 195). Moreover, Shevelov mentions that one of his teachers, Oleksa Vietukhiv, spoke a language close to the local Sloboda dialects and thus gave the impression of being an outdated "Ukrainophile of the ethnographic period" (*Ia, meni, mene* 132). With reference to the late 1930s, Shevelov mentions that he observed less dialectal variation among his students at Kharkiv university than in his earlier institution (which was attended by students from more different regions in Ukraine, while most students of Kharkiv university were from the northern Left Bank regions; *Ia, meni, mene* 245). In other words, dialects were very much alive even at schools and universities.

[16] Ukrainian-Russian mixed varieties (*surzhyk*) have become a very "fashionable" topic in Slavic studies since the 1990s. For one of the most recent English-language monographs, see Del Gaudio; for a review, see Moser.

[17] Other speakers of Ukrainian demonstrated to Shevelov that the perception of "correctness" in a language can occasionally be quite subjective, especially if the codified norms have not yet been fully established. This was the case of Halyna Zhurba, a Volhynian lady of Polish ethnic background, and a Ukrainian writer of some note, who defended her personal understanding of the norms of the Ukrainian language in disputes with Shevelov in German-occupied Lviv (*Ia, meni, mene* 369-70).

the Ukrainian language (i.e., *Die ukrainische Schriftsprache*), which became one of Shevelov's most important books (*Ia, meni, mene* 262, 393-94).[18]

Another important consequence of Shevelov's personal biography is undoubtedly his genuine awareness of the fact that the Ukrainian language is certainly not just the language of, or the language for, ethnic Ukrainians. In his memoirs, Shevelov repeatedly refers to ethnic Russians, Jews, and Poles who spoke Ukrainian, mentioning even ardent Ukrainian patriots who were not ethnically Ukrainian (*Ia, meni, mene* 328, 181, 173-74).[19] Incidentally, the NKVD was perfectly aware of this fact as well: In August 1941, when an NKVD officer interrogated Shevelov about the Ukrainian "nationalist deviations" of his academic teachers Leonid Bulakhovs'kyi and Oleksandr Bilets'kyi, he refuted Shevelov's argument that they were not even ethnic Ukrainians, remarking, "One can be non-Ukrainian and a Ukrainian nationalist!" (*Ia, meni, mene* 287).

Shevelov himself, as an ethnic non-Ukrainian, sincerely enjoyed being acknowledged as a member of the Ukrainian and Ukrainian-speaking community (*Ia, meni, mene* 345-46). This emotion was so strong that he labeled his stay in Lviv during the Second World War as nothing less than his personal "honeymoon"—his honeymoon with "the capital of the Ukrainian Piedmont" (*Ia, meni, mene* 356, 260).[20]

Multilingualism

While being exposed to multilingual settings under two different totalitarian regimes, Shevelov repeatedly observed that language choice can be utilized for either nationalistic or opportunistic reasons. When he was in Lviv during the Second World War, he observed that Poles would usually speak Polish with local Ukrainians, but switched to Ukrainian when dealing with representatives of the Soviet regime; at the same time, local Ukrainians would not speak Polish with Poles, even if they had a perfect command of that language (*Ia, meni, mene* 262-63). When Shevelov wanted to rent an

[18] For the publication histories of *Die ukrainische Schriftsprache* and *The Ukrainian Language in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* see the latter (16-17).

[19] Of course, Shevelov was at the same time aware of the fact that neither the language nor the ethnic background defines a person's human values. As he reports with gratitude, the ethnic Russian Oleg Kulikov (*Ia, meni, mene* 344) and an anonymous German soldier (*Ia, meni, mene* 355-356) saved his and his mother's lives when they escaped the Bolsheviks in 1943.

[20] By contrast, Shevelov was embarrassed when he and his fellow refugees from Kharkiv were asked in Kyiv, "So you are still speaking Ukrainian?" (*Ia, meni, mene* 348).

apartment in wartime Lviv, he knew it was useful to turn to a Polish official in Polish; and it worked (*Ia, meni, mene* 262-63). During the Soviet occupation of Lviv, when he was waiting in line, Shevelov found that he could skip long waits in line, if he addressed Soviet officials in Russian (*Ia, meni, mene* 261). In Kharkiv, in 1941, Shevelov had felt instinctively that it was preferable to use Russian, not Ukrainian, especially when the NKVD interrogator entered his room (*Ia, meni, mene* 285-86).

Not surprisingly, George Shevelov was a person who valued ethnic and linguistic diversity, as witnessed by the account of his visits to the Crimea. Shevelov describes the presence of Crimean Tatars—living next to "Russian arrivals"—as something "greatly appealing," mentioning that he enjoyed "looking at a different world and listening to an incomprehensible language" (*Ia, meni, mene* 203-04). With regard to the Mineralovodsky District in Soviet Russia, Shevelov deplored the fact that people there talked "a lot about Lermontov," but never about the "original inhabitants of these areas who were neither 'Lermontov' nor Russians at all" (*Ia, meni, mene* 203).

Adopting a Ukrainian national identity

As noted earlier, at precisely the time Shevelov was becoming acquainted with Ukrainian culture, the Ukrainian language was being standardized and disseminated throughout Soviet Ukraine. Whether Shevelov understood the processes of his time exactly as he later described them in his memoirs is not clear, but it is likely that, even in the 1920s, he knew that an attractive intellectual sphere was crucial for the success of the standard language, and that intellectual elites were of utmost importance in that endeavour.[21] The achievements of Ukrainian-language literature and theater, as well as the general atmosphere of Bolshevik Ukrainization, played a crucial role in Shevelov's own adoption of a national Ukrainian identity (*Ia, meni, mene* 76). Shevelov took active part in the realization of the Ukrainization policy since he, inter alia, taught Ukrainian in the Central Committee of the Communist Party (*Ia, meni, mene* 139-42).

On the other hand, Shevelov also witnessed the awkward and even grotesque aspects of Bolshevik Ukrainianization: People who did not know Ukrainian could pass bureaucratically organized language exams, whereas

[21] Although Shevelov reports that he was not particularly impressed when he saw Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi and Serhii Iefremov during an assembly at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in the winter of 1925-26, he later labeled this event as "the second act" of his "baptism into Ukrainianness" (again, Anatolii Nosiv was with him) (*Ia, meni, mene* 91). Later, in Lviv, Shevelov met Metropolitan Andrii Sheptyts'kyi, who deeply impressed him (*Ia, meni, mene* 392).

people who did know the language (including Shevelov himself) could fail them. Official documents, which had to be written in Ukrainian, often only featured a Ukrainian title, while the body of the text was in Russian (*Ia, meni, mene* 96). Professors who were supposed to teach in Ukrainian (including Shevelov's esteemed teacher, Oleksandr Bilets'kyi, a person not hostile toward Ukrainian culture) lectured in Russian nonetheless (*Ia, meni, mene* 126-27). Many Ukrainian translations in the technical sphere were doomed because of a lack of expertise and appropriate dictionaries (*Ia, meni, mene* 158-60).

George Shevelov adopted a Ukrainian national identity only after he had acquired an excellent command of Ukrainian. In the final analysis, it was not so much the Bolshevik policy of Ukrainization as the enduring treatment of Ukrainian speakers as "underdogs"—and the subsequent Bolshevik persecution of Ukrainian language and culture—that was responsible for that process. As Shevelov put it, he had "invested too much into this culture to embark on its destruction" (*Ia, meni, mene* 176). Moreover, as he argued later, he unconsciously regarded Ukrainian culture and himself as "allies," because he himself had always been afraid of Bolshevik persecution (*Ia, meni, mene* 156-57).[22] Shevelov felt that it would have been "a shame and a crime against himself" if, under the pressure of Stalin's terror, he had "abandoned that which fascinated him in the 1920s" (*Ia, meni, mene* 76).

Precisely at the time when the Bolsheviks were severely persecuting Ukrainian culture, Shevelov was gradually transformed from "a person of two cultures" into someone who fully adopted a Ukrainian national identity—choosing "Ukrainian" as his nationality in the Soviet passport. Interestingly, Shevelov personally knew some of the Stalinist agents "on the

[22] Shevelov's family feared persecutions because Shevelov's father had been a high-ranking officer of the Tsarist army. Shevelov's mother, therefore, falsified Shevelov's biography and indicated Łomża as Shevelov's birthplace, although he was actually born in Kharkiv (*Ia, meni, mene* 15). Shevelov became acquainted with the Bolshevik's murderous policy from the moment when they entered Kharkiv for the first time in 1917 (*Ia, meni, mene* 49). In Kharkiv in the late 1920s and 1930s, Shevelov was in one of the centres of Bolshevik terror against Ukrainian culture. While Shevelov paid little attention to the attacks against Mykola Khvyl'ovyj during 1925-26 (*Ia, meni, mene* 135-36), he was embarrassed about the confiscation of his favorite literary journal in 1927, *Vaplite* (*Ia, meni, mene* 136). When Shevelov was in the audience during two sessions of the show trial against the fabricated "Union for the Liberation of Ukraine" (SVU), he was still unable to view this trial "in a broader context" (*Ia, meni, mene* 139). But when the Bolsheviks started their campaign against Les' Kurbas in the early 1930s, Shevelov was so embarrassed that he even attempted to defend Kurbas in a theater review—a text that he regarded as his "debut" as an author (*Ia, meni, mene* 135-38).

linguistic front," that is, he had colleagues who actively published articles against alleged "nationalist deviations" in the norms of the Ukrainian language (*Ia, meni, mene* 180-81). At one point, Shevelov even willy-nilly collaborated with Naum Kahanovych, one of the leading initiators of the Stalinist war against the Ukrainian language, when he was forced to help compile a new textbook for Soviet schools at Kahanovych's home, after the authors of the previous version of the textbook had fallen victim to Bolshevik persecutions (*Ia, meni, mene* 188-90).[23]

As Shevelov recalled, he was not particularly interested in the orthographic conference that was organized in Kharkiv in 1927 (he was still quite young and was preparing for his final school exams). Later, he admitted that the results of the conference were not satisfactory (*Ia, meni, mene* 135). In 1933, when the Bolsheviks introduced their new orthography, Shevelov was baffled,[24] realizing more intensely than ever that "being a student of the Ukrainian language" was "not easy," because the Bolsheviks experimented with that language, they made "a toy" of it (*Ia, meni, mene* 197). The NKVD kept a watchful eye on the norms of Ukrainian (*Ia, meni, mene* 131) and taught Shevelov a lesson: even the inner norms of a standard language can be subject to political terror.[25] Subsequently, Shevelov described the general developments of the Ukrainian language during those years in his excellent

[23] Later, Shevelov adopted the name of one of the authors of this textbook (Shevchuk) as one of his pseudonyms (*Ia, meni, mene* 190). Incidentally, in German-occupied Kharkiv, Shevelov compiled another textbook—a school grammar—that was later published in the U.S.A., albeit not under Shevelov's name but Dmytro Kyslytsia's (*Ia, meni, mene* 313). For more details, see Karunyk, "Shkil'ni hramatyky. . ." (particularly 85).

[24] Regarding orthography, it is interesting to note that in German-occupied Kharkiv, Shevelov was at some point requested to voice his opinion about the correct transliteration of Ukrainian street names, but to no avail: As it turned out, the Nazis transliterated street names from the Russian (*Ia, meni, mene* 318-19).

[25] When it comes to language norms, the rules of the language of propaganda is of interest too. By the 1930s, at the latest, Shevelov realized how important it was to understand and to follow the rules of Bolshevik phraseology and terminology. He did so both as a teacher (*Ia, meni, mene* 253) and as an author (*Ia, meni, mene* 163, 256). Shevelov knew the rules of the game so well that at one point, his teacher Leonid Bulakhovs'kyi asked him to find a quotation from Lenin for one of Bulakhovs'kyi's books (*Ia, meni, mene* 234). Later, under Nazi rule, Shevelov discovered the other side of political propaganda. It is interesting to note that Shevelov was not willing to employ the label "Jewish-Bolshevik regime," as the Nazis demanded, but used instead in his articles the phrase "Bolshevik regime." He was therefore not able to publish anything for months, although he desperately needed the honoraria (*Ia, meni, mene* 311); see also Shevel'ov, *Dorohoiu vidradianshchennia . . .;* and Mozer.

monograph, *The Ukrainian Language in the First Half of the Twentieth Century (1900-1941)*.

BECOMING A LINGUIST

Shevelov, as we saw, adopted a Ukrainian identity only gradually; it also took him several years to become a linguist. Although the renowned linguist Leonid Bulakhovs'kyi soon turned out to be Shevelov's most important academic teacher, Shevelov was more interested initially in literature (*Ia, meni, mene* 122-23, 155). Even in 1936, when Shevelov finally became a "graduate student" (*aspirant*) in Kharkiv, he chose linguistics as his field of study primarily because it seemed to be less politicized than literary studies (*Ia, meni, mene* 122-23). The topic of the dissertation that Shevelov defended in the summer of 1939 was still at the boundary of literary studies and linguistics ("Mova i styl' politychnoi liryky P. H. Tychyny"; *Ia, meni, mene* 243), as was the majority of Shevelov's works during his Kharkiv period. However, following the dissertation, Shevelov became increasingly interested in the history of the Ukrainian language of the 19th century, and he wrote his first study on Ukrainian syntax (*Ia, meni, mene* 272).[26]

Although Shevelov believed that he became a mature scholar only after his exile, he had in fact already become a slowly acknowledged authority in the field of Ukrainian linguistics. In German-occupied Lviv, where Shevelov met his second important teacher, Vasyl' Simovych (*Ia, meni, mene* 265, 372-75), Shevelov was surprised to see that promising young students of Ukrainian linguistics came to see him and were full of admiration for his expertise. One of these young scholars was Oleksa Horbach, who became a distinguished Ukrainian linguist in the diaspora; the other was Havrylo Shylo, who became quite a well-known dialectologist in Soviet Ukraine (*Ia, meni, mene* 367, 374-75).

To conclude: In his memoirs, George Y. Shevelov tells us, inter alia, how he gradually acquired the Ukrainian language, adopted a Ukrainian national identity, and embarked on his career as the leading Ukrainian linguist. Needless to say, Shevelov's intriguing personal language biography is also an integral part of the history of the Ukrainian language in the first half of the twentieth century.

[26] This study has quite a complicated publication history too; it was later published even in the Soviet Union, albeit not under Shevelov's name (*Ia, meni, mene* 272).

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