

Iurii Shapoval. *Oleksandr Shums'kyi: Zhyttia, dolia, nevidomi dokumenty; Doslidzhennia, arkhivni materialy* [*Oleksandr Shums'kyi: Life, Fate, Unknown Documents; Research, Archival Materials*]. Foreword by Iaroslav Hrytsak, Zhurnal "Ukraina moderna" / Vydavnytstvo "Ukrains'ki propilei," 2017. Ukraina. Ievropa: 1921-1939 [Ukraine. Europe: 1921-1939], vol. 1. 744 pp. Illustrations. Index. \$39.95, cloth.

Here we have yet another valuable collection of archival documents prepared by the Ukrainian historian Iurii Shapoval that sheds light on the inner workings of the secret service during the early Soviet decades in Ukraine. This book is the first volume in the new historical series *Ukraina. Ievropa: 1921-1939* (Ukraine. Europe: 1921-1939), which was initiated by the editors of the journal *Ukraina Moderna* (*Modern Ukraine* [Lviv]). The series aims to publish previously unknown documents from archival collections both of Ukraine and abroad, with a particular focus on the understudied interwar decades. This first volume of the series is dedicated to prominent Soviet Ukrainian Party official Oleksandr Shums'kyi, who came to play an important part in defining Soviet rule in Ukraine.

Two-thirds of the book features little-known and previously unpublished documents gathered by the authorities between 1933 and 1946. The majority of these sources are from a four-volume document collection of the Central State Archive of Public Organizations of Ukraine (TsDAHO) that covers the period between 1933 (Shums'kyi's arrest) and 1940 and from the recently declassified three-volume investigation file on Shums'kyi, which was compiled by the State Political Administration (GPU) between 1940 and 1946 and is held in the archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). The book also includes documents from the investigation file of Shums'kyi's wife, Ievdokiia Honcharenko, who was arrested in 1937; Shapoval obtained these documents from Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB).

It is of note that despite Shums'kyi's great importance in Ukrainian history, no comprehensive study of his life or political activities was written prior to the publication of this book. Indeed, Shums'kyi remains one of the main protagonists of studies of the early Soviet decades, yet most of those studies only consider the period up to the year 1927, when Shums'kyi was demoted from his position in Soviet Ukrainian government. Shapoval used archival sources to write the first comprehensive biography of Shums'kyi, making this volume an extremely valuable contribution to the existing scholarship.

Shums'kyi was born in 1890 into a respected family of Polish decent in the Volhynia gubernia. He moved to Moscow in 1911, where he joined a circle of Ukrainian Social Democrats. He was arrested for his activities in 1916.

After his release in April 1917, he returned to Kyiv where he joined the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries and became its representative to the Central Rada, the legislative authority that was established in Kyiv after the February Revolution. Throughout the civil war, Shums'kyi remained in opposition to nationalist governments while being extremely critical of the Bolshevik chauvinistic attitude toward Ukraine; he was one of the initiators of the Borot'bist party, supporting the idea of an independent Soviet Ukraine and a self-standing Ukrainian Communist party. As the civil war wore on, he, as well as many others, re-evaluated his position and started considering cooperation with the Bolsheviks. In 1919, he was appointed commissar for education in the Soviet government. After the merger of the two parties in March 1920, he became one of the main representatives of the Ukrainian horizon in the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine (CP[B]U), ardently promoted the Ukrainianization campaign, and defended the political autonomy of Soviet Ukraine. His unreconcilable position regarding the national question caused the first major crisis within the CP(B)U. Consequently, the so-called Shums'kyi affair of 1926 redefined centre-periphery relations in the Soviet Union, eventually leading to the decline of the tolerant era of the 1920s.

This collection is most valuable for its provision of sources pertaining to Shums'kyi's life after 1926. In 1927, Shums'kyi was transferred to Russia, where he occupied positions in education before being arrested in 1933 in connection with the fabricated case of the "Ukrainian Military Organization" ("UVO"). Thus commenced Shums'kyi's ten-year-long ordeal in Soviet camps, prisons, and hospitals, during which he bombarded Joseph Stalin with letters demanding that his case be reconsidered. In October 1945, he wrote perhaps his fieriest letter to Stalin, entitled "Protest kommunista-ukraintsa" ("Protest of a Ukrainian Communist" [see 311-14]), in which he stated that he and those like him had become *zaviv* 'redundant' in Soviet Ukraine. He announced his decision to take his own life, as he "had exhausted all of the means available to me in the struggle to be rehabilitated." In addition to having such personal reasons, he wished to protest against the new turn in Soviet national policy, defined as "the vector of Russian great-state [that is, imperial] policy" (311-13).¹ However, his suicide attempts a year later failed. Instead, as the archival sources have proven, he was "liquidated" by the Soviet secret service on the train to Moscow on 20 September 1946.

In the preface (3-5), Iaroslav Hrytsak, the head of the series' editorial committee, defines Shums'kyi as "the brightest representative of Ukrainian national communism[,] . . . who wished to build communism while remaining

¹ All translations of quotations in this review are mine.

a Ukrainian” (4-5). This dual-mind (also referred to as “ambivalence”) perspective also features in Shapoval’s interpretation and is in line with his previous contributions addressing the early Soviet decades in Ukraine. Shapoval presents Shums'kyi as yet another Party member who could not define how much of a Ukrainian and how much of a communist he was. In this book, the historian reiterates the perspective of a “permanent inner ambivalence” toward communism, an argument that he raised while commenting on the writer Mykola Khvyly'ovyi in his essay “Fatal'na ambivalentnist' [Mykola Khvyly'ovyi u svitli dokumentiv HPU]” (“Fatal Ambivalence [Mykola Khvyly'ovyi in the Light of GPU Documents],” 2009). The perspective of the ambivalence of those Ukraine-minded communists significantly limits our understanding of the 1920s, which are defined by Shapoval as the period when “communism in its primitivized Russian-imperial form was not yet so all-powerful” (24). Following that approach, it is easy to overlook the fact that during the 1920s, Soviet Ukrainian elites took an equal and active part in defining and negotiating the limits of Ukraine’s statehood. It was the time of the Ukrainianization campaign and its successes in constructing the modern Soviet Ukrainian identity. Those were also the years of the Literary Discussion, when Soviet Ukrainian writers led by Khvyly'ovyi ventured to create high-brow literature for educated proletarians. Hence, this ambivalence was not merely the idiosyncrasy of each and every Ukraine-minded communist unable to define his loyalties but was characteristic of the entire decade, when an autonomous self-standing Soviet Ukraine was seen as attainable. During that time, an alternate perspective on communism was being introduced, and although it was crushed by the centralist drive in the 1930s, it remains an important reference point—a time when both Soviet and Ukrainian sentiments were appreciated within the Party and society alike.

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Work Cited

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