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Ukrainian Nationalism and the Fall of Shelest

In May 1972, Petr Efimovich Shelest, first secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, was demoted and transferred to Moscow in the shadowy post of deputy premier. He continued to hold his seat in the Politburo in a kind of lame duck existence, until he was prematurely pensioned off eleven months later. No official charges were placed against him immediately, and most foreign observers attributed his fall to his hard-line views on foreign policy at the moment of budding détente. He was reported to have argued heatedly in the Politburo against the Nixon visit, and his removal on the eve of that occasion was seen as a means of getting him out of the way as the President's host in Kiev. It was also recognized that Shelest was in trouble for his failures in party administration and his inability to stem the tide of intellectual dissent in the largest non-Russian republic. But the official charges that were eventually brought against him were of a different magnitude. He was accused not only of failing to maintain the norms of Leninist nationality policy, but of actively fostering the intensification of divisive Ukrainian nationalism.

In April 1973, while Shelest still held his Politburo seat, the Ukrainian party journal *Komunist Ukrainy* harshly denounced his popular book of 1970, *O Ukraine, Our Soviet Land*,¹ for a variety of "ideological errors," "biased evaluations of important historical matters," "factual errors," and "editorial blunders" (all pertaining to Ukrainian history and culture), which were said to have been presented from positions of "local nationalism" and "national narrow-mindedness."² At the same time Shelest was rebuked in public speeches by his successor in the Ukraine, V. V. Shcherbitskii.³ Not since Trotsky's day had a sitting member of the Politburo suffered such humiliation by official party sources.

1. P. Iu. Shelest, *Ukraino nasha radians'ka* (Kiev, 1970).

2. "Pro seriozni nedoliky ta pomylky odnii knyhy," *Komunist Ukrainy*, 1973, no. 4, pp. 77–82. There is an English translation in *Digest of the Soviet Ukrainian Press*, 1973, no. 5, pp. 1–6 [hereafter *DSUP*]. The excerpts given here are of my own translation.

3. *Komunist Ukrainy*, 1973, no. 5, pp. 21–41. Shelest is not called by name, but the language closely follows the wording of the earlier charges. There has been speculation that Shcherbitskii is the author of the article denouncing Shelest, possibly because of the similarity of language. But the article is unsigned, and it seems likely that the denunciation of so important a figure was collectively planned—hence the authorship is attributed here to Shelest's "critics."

Only a speculative rationale for the belated and anonymous "review" can be offered. Clearly, the party's main concern was about the uncontained fires of Ukrainian nationalism and the attendant specter of separatism. Shelest was probably made the scapegoat for various party failures in the Ukraine, and this aspect of his case was chosen for public view for its corrective value.⁴ In this connection, however, there is something more concrete in the critique of Shelest's book—something of special interest to students of the history and culture of the non-Russian peoples of the USSR. "Correct" interpretations in this area had been shifting over the previous two decades. The party had given out broad pronouncements and left the details for Soviet scholars to work out by trial and error. The critique was the most detailed bill of particulars on this sensitive subject in many years; it provided an updated party judgment on the boundaries of "local nationalism" and "national narrow-mindedness," and it must have sounded an alarm from Kishinev to Yakutsk.

The basic charge against Shelest was that his treatment of historic relations between Ukrainians and Russians had violated well-established "Marxist-Leninist" interpretations, which hold that the USSR is a kind of commonwealth of fraternal nations historically established under Russian leadership. Friendship and mutual assistance among contemporary Soviet peoples are said to have existed from their earliest historical contacts. The emphasis in historical writing is placed on the whole community, the integration of the histories of the various ethnic and national groups, and ultimately on the inculcation of "Soviet patriotism" in all peoples. Any view that points up the distinctiveness or separateness of one people, or places it in a superior position or adversary relationship to another Soviet people, is denounced as a manifestation of "local patriotism."⁵ This "friendship of peoples" concept is one of the mainstays of Soviet nationality policy and a vehicle for combating non-Russian nationalism, which persists a half-century after the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

4. For speculation on Shelest's fall, see "Hawk's Wings Clipped—the Fall of Shelest," *Radio Free Europe Research*, Communist Area, no. 1421, May 24, 1972; Roman Kupchinsky, "The Re-Stalinization of the Ukraine," *New Politics*, 10, no. 3 (1973): 71–80; "The Fall of Shelest: New Sign of Turmoil in Ukraine," *Ukrainian Quarterly*, 29, no. 2 (1973): 117–23; N. Kantorovich, "Zakat Petra Shelesta," *Novoe russkoe slovo*, May 3, 1973.

5. There is, of course, an all-important exception to this rule: there is no ban on references to the distinctiveness or superiority of the Great Russians. Stalin's toast to the Russian people at the end of World War II is only one in a long line of such tributes which have become standard in speeches by Russian and non-Russian leaders alike. In a recent example at the Twenty-fourth Party Congress, Brezhnev began by crediting Soviet achievements to all nationalities, but "above all the great Russian people." He continued by declaring that "the revolutionary energy, unselfishness, diligence and profound internationalism of the great Russian people have rightly won them the sincere respect of all the peoples of the Soviet homeland" (*Pravda*, March 31, 1971).

Gauging the extent of Shelest's "guilt" as a Ukrainian nationalist is complicated by the party's changing requirements in historical writing. Khrushchev's famous denunciation of Stalin in February 1956 contained explicit remarks about the need to reform Stalinist historiography, and for a few months it looked as if non-Russian historians would have a comparatively free hand to rewrite the history of their homelands—history distorted to the point of absurdity by such themes as "voluntary annexation" to the Russian Empire, "age-long friendship" with the Russian "elder brother," and the extent of economic betterment under tsarist rule. Ukrainian historians were particularly active in the revisionist campaign: they re-reviewed some offending books by Russians about the Ukraine; they called on "Old Bolsheviks" to correct details about the revolutionary period with eye-witness accounts; they complained bitterly to the editor of *Voprosy istorii* about the way Moscow had handled Ukrainian history; and they won the right to publish their own journal, the *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, in which they have sometimes probed the limits of the permissible in historical interpretation.⁶

But before the end of 1956, the party was warning historians that parts of the Stalinist prescription could not be touched. Among the sacrosanct formulations were the historical friendship of the Soviet peoples (even under the conditions of Russian colonial rule), the "progressive consequences" of annexation to Russia (its voluntary nature was quietly dropped in many cases), high-mindedness and correctness of the policies and actions of Bolshevik organizations in the revolutionary period, and the "voluntary" character of the formation of the USSR. However, historians were allowed to work out the details, with the result that some of the most unsightly Stalinist warts were removed: the peoples' "yearning" for annexation; their cheering of arriving Russian troops; their rapid economic improvement under Russian reforms. At the same time the untouchable propositions were covered with subtle euphemisms, and many of the details were not spoken to authoritatively.

Thus, the detailed critique of Shelest's book must have been seen as both good news and bad by historians of the non-Russian nationalities; it was good news to have more details of party requirements, but it was regrettable to have the lines drawn so tautly. Stalin could have subscribed to most of the propositions of the critique, though he would have stated them more bluntly.

Shelest's *O Ukraine, Our Soviet Land* is a popular book intended to inform Ukrainians about many facets of the republic's life. More than half of

6. These developments are surveyed in my book, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 225–28.

it is an oblast-by-oblast description of cities, sights, monuments, and economic achievements. There are short, encyclopedic sections on Ukrainian painting, music, sculpture, architecture, and literature. The section on history, longest and most criticized, is seventy pages in length. As Shelest's critics pointed out, the book dwells heavily on the Ukraine's past and on her distinctiveness, and there is some boasting about cultural and economic achievements as well. Although the Ukrainian patriotic tone is mild by comparison to most books of the genre published elsewhere, this element probably accounted for the book's enormous popularity. All 100,000 copies were quickly sold out. The popular demand for the book was an early danger signal and it was not reprinted. Within a year it was reportedly being removed from libraries. By 1972, Shelest had earned an embarrassing and portentous distinction: a member of the Politburo had published a book that was being excerpted for circulation in *samizdat*.⁷

Although the party attack specified some thirty Shelest "errors" on a variety of subjects, nearly all are variations on a single theme: the separation of the Ukraine from the general stream of the USSR's development. The critics have charged that too much space is given to prerevolutionary times and that treatment of the Soviet period (when presumably more examples of Ukrainian-Russian solidarity abound) "is very weak." The picture of the Ukraine which emerges in the book is that of a distinct nation, too much apart and isolated from the other Soviet republics to meet the requirements of Leninist nationality policy. From the repeated hammering on this subject it is clear that the party still regards the "friendship of peoples" concept, in all its ramifications, to be the *sine qua non* for historical writing on the non-Russian peoples of the USSR.

Insistence on national togetherness was not confined by the guardians of ideology to the history of the Soviet period, when nationality policy has consciously inculcated the concept of common development. They have insisted instead that the "friendship of peoples" has existed throughout history. The official critique is peppered with examples of Shelest's violations of this principle for the prerevolutionary history of the Ukraine. He is said to have treated "reunification" of the Ukraine with Russia by the Pereiaslav treaty of 1654 as an "ordinary, run-of-the-mill fact." He does not emphasize that "because of this historical event the Ukrainian people were saved from foreign enslave-

7. "Shelest's 'Oh, Ukraine, Our Soviet Land'—a Heresy?," *Radio Free Europe Research*, Communist Area, no. 1843, July 16, 1973. Earlier, the book had received favorable reviews in Ukrainian publications. It was reviewed in *Literaturna Ukraina* by Iu. Smolych (March 12, 1971) and again by V. Kozachenko (March 30, 1971); by Academician S. Iampols'kii in *Ekonomika radians'koi Ukrainy* (no. 4, 1971) and O. Nosenko in *Raduha* (no. 6, 1971).

ment; he says nothing about the advantages the Ukrainian people gained by entering the unified, centralized state." Too much emphasis is placed on the role of the Cossacks in the Ukrainian "liberation" movement of the seventeenth century and not enough on the alliance of Ukrainian and Russian peoples. Shelest's discussion of the Decembrists is reportedly so one-sided that "the reader can get the impression that the Decembrist movement was limited exclusively to the Ukraine, and that its culmination was the revolt of the Chernigov regiment." He ignores the "indisputable fact" that literary and artistic developments in St. Petersburg "had a great effect on the fate of all the peoples of tsarist Russia." Specifically, "the book does not show the beneficial influence of Russian culture on the formation and development of Ukrainian literature, art, music, and mutual enrichment." The critics point out five pairs of Russian and Ukrainian cultural figures whose alleged "personal friendship and creative relations" were ignored.

Many examples of the Ukraine's separateness are also discovered in the section of the book covering the more recent period. Shelest supposedly simplified the "multi-faceted activity of Bolshevik organizations in the Ukraine in exposing the nationalistic, anti-popular policies of the Central Rada; . . . [he made] absolutely no mention of the military-political alliance among the Soviet republics that ensured victory in the civil war." He even suggested that under the conditions of the German occupation in 1917 the Ukrainian Bolsheviks "should have acted independently"—a suggestion that is scorned but not explained. He said "nothing about the great aid given by V. I. Lenin to the Ukraine" and did not even discuss the "fundamental principles underlying the formation of the USSR." The Ukraine's economic successes in the Soviet period are so self-contained that the critics feel obliged to observe that "elements of economic autarchy are apparent in the book. Their harmfulness lies in the fact, that, among other things, they nourish nationalist illusions and prejudices, the survivals of national narrow-mindedness and arrogance."

Another related category of charges concerns the "idealization of the past." Although the critics ascribed Shelest's distortions to his failure to analyze events in a proper Marxist class framework, their practical considerations for nationality policy are always just below the surface. They opened this line of attack by giving him the back of their hand for permitting the publication and distribution of three popular historical novels,⁸ which idealized

8. The novels were Ivan Bilyk, *Mech Areia*, Roman Ivanychuk, *Mal'vy*, and Iu. Kolisnychenko and S. Plachynda, *Neopalyma Kupnia*. They all offended party critics on the sensitive question of Russian-Ukrainian relations, but "corrective" reviews only caught up with them two years or more after publication, by which time the ideological damage had been done. Such delays in criticism are symptomatic of the comparative relaxation of controls in the Ukraine for which Shelest was condemned.

and distorted the history of Kievan Rus, the Ukrainian “liberation war” (1648–54), and the life of an aristocratic Ukrainian family of the eighteenth century.

Embellishing the past, such authors counterpose it to the present. The book *O Ukraine, Our Soviet Land* not only does not help to discredit such manifestations, but on the contrary, restricts the opportunity for criticism of anti-historical tendencies in elucidating the past of the Ukrainian people in artistic and scholarly publications.⁹

The alleged idealization of the history of the Zaporozhian Cossacks is the first and most detailed charge lodged against Shelest. His critics quoted his characterization of the Zaporozhian Sich as a “model democratic order . . . [in which] all matters—military, economic, the punishment and pardon of criminals, election of the Sich *starshyna* [officer corps], foreign relations, etc.—were decided by the Sich Council, in which all Cossacks had equal rights.” Obviously, Shelest completely forgot that official history views the Zaporozhian Sich as basically a feudal society in which an intense class struggle existed. “This utopian picture of some kind of ‘absolute’ democracy has nothing in common with reality.” All Cossacks may have had a formal right to vote, but the *starshyna* actually made the decisions, which were frequently against the interests of the rank-and-file, even to the point of helping the Polish landlords put down popular uprisings. Shelest had added insult to injury by observing that “unfortunately in our present-day historical and artistic literature, in motion pictures and the fine arts, the progressive role and significance of the Zaporozhian Sich, this glorious page in the heroic chronicle of the struggle of the Ukrainian people, have not been adequately depicted,”¹⁰ and he called on Ukrainian writers and artists to correct the oversight.

Shelest’s critics also deplored a special kind of idealization, which is called “lyrical digression.” The complaint is that Shelest injects too much emotion and color into his accounts, which inspire feelings of “local nationalism.” His narrative is “embellished with exclamations of rapture and descriptions of idyllic scenes.” They cited one rather bland and puzzling example: “Past the oblast center, the city of Rovno, flows the small but beautiful Ustia river, with its picturesque banks. It is a pleasure to stroll there and rest in the park.” Without explaining exactly what offends in this passage, they concluded that “all of these ‘lyrical digressions’ lead to a single tendency: they strengthen the

9. *Komunist Ukrainy*, 1973, no. 4, p. 78.

10. Shelest, *Ukraino nasha radians'ka*, p. 22.

spirit of self-satisfaction, of self-esteem, which permeates this book from beginning to end."¹¹

"On the whole," according to the critics, "the book draws the reader's attention too much to the particularity and originality [*osoblivostiakh i svoieridnosti*] of the history and culture of the Ukrainian people."

Using the prescribed interpretation for Soviet historical writing as a measure, how much of this criticism does Shelest deserve? It is no defense to point out that he is not a historian, for these are essentially political questions to which he, of all people, should be keenly sensitive. Nor is it very important that he is almost certainly not the sole author. The book is unevenly written and obviously a compilation. (His critics pointed this out by slamming his "dry, documentary reports, lifted from. . ." standard reference works.) His "error" could conceivably have been a failure to check the nuances of accounts others had written for him, but ultimately he bears the responsibility for the book.

The book does have most of the earmarks of orthodoxy. It makes the *pro forma* bow to Lenin by extensive citation of his works, and in spite of the charges of *Komunist Ukrainy*, there is a considerable integration of Ukrainian and Russian history, and hundreds of examples of friendship and cooperation. The problem is mainly one of emphasis and the Shelest book sometimes seems to turn well-known interpretations upside down. This can be illustrated by an examination of the context of the book and by comparing it with recent standard Soviet accounts of Ukrainian history.¹²

The question of whether Shelest gave enough emphasis to the "reunification" of the Ukraine with Russia is closely linked to his treatment of the history of the Zaporozhian Cossacks. At first glance this "central event of Ukrainian history" would seem to be adequately covered. It receives more than a page in the text and explicitly states that the Ukrainian "liberation war" against Polish oppression could not have been successful without Russian help. The "progressive consequences" are treated at some length,

11. This criticism is similar to the charges against poet V. Sosiura in 1951. His popular poem, "Love the Ukraine," was said to have extolled "the wide open spaces of ancient Ukraine" to the exclusion of the new industrial Ukraine (*Pravda*, July 2, 1951).

12. Two recent Soviet surveys, at the extremes of length and detail, have been used as yardsticks. The first is V. A. Diadichenko, F. E. Los', V. E. Spitskii, *Istoriia ukrainskoi SSR. Uchebnik dlia 7-8 klassov*, 5th ed. (Kiev, 1966), whose coverage of Ukrainian history up to the revolutionary movement is about the length of the Shelest sketch, and at a comparable popular level. For finer points the *Istoriia ukrainskoi SSR*, 2 vols. (Kiev, 1969) is used. Both are collectively written and edited and thus presumably contain interpretations acceptable to the party. There are many nonconforming Ukrainian accounts which are closer to Shelest's interpretations. Some of them are discussed below.

albeit in general terms only.¹³ But the reader would hardly be stimulated to enthusiasm for the event: the Pereiaslav treaty is dispensed with in a sentence; the pageantry of the Rada meeting and the proclamation which Bohdan Khmel'nitskii read to a cheering crowd—standard fixtures in even the briefest Soviet accounts—are both absent.¹⁴ The “progressive consequences” are discussed in a dry and repetitious manner and taken directly from the party’s *Theses* issued on the three-hundredth anniversary of the event.¹⁵

When Shelest’s account of the Ukrainian “liberation war” and the Pereiaslav treaty are examined in the setting of the Cossack saga, the critics’ objections become clear. Not only is the section on the Zaporozhian Sich nearly ten times as long, but its tone is entirely different, full of drama and heroic exploits. The “liberation war” is but one event—an important one, to be sure—in a number of Cossack wars over a period of two centuries. But Shelest has reversed the emphases found in recent standard histories of the period in which the Cossack role is subordinated to “reunification.”¹⁶

Shelest has reinterpreted these events in more specific ways. The “liberation war” is represented in standard Soviet histories as a popular, primarily peasant war, although initiated and led by Cossacks. Khmel'nitskii is first of all the leader of the Ukrainian people, and secondarily a *hetman*. His army is generally referred to as a “peasant-Cossack” army. The seventh grade textbook for Ukrainian schools stresses this proposition in an entirely italicized capsule: “*the oppressed peasantry was the main motive force of this struggle against the feudal yoke, for the liberation of the Ukraine from foreign domination.*”¹⁷ Shelest not only drops the “peasant-Cossack army” phrase, but repeatedly refers to the primacy of the Cossacks: “for a long period, the Sich was the center of the Ukrainian people’s military power”; the Cossacks were “the heroic defenders of the Ukrainian people,” the “cementing force” of the liberation movement.

The standard histories hold that the *starshyna* supported the “liberation war” for an ulterior motive: they felt that union with Russia would give them

13. Shelest, *Ukraino nasha radians'ka*, p. 25.

14. Diadichenko, *Istoriia*, pp. 38–39; *Istoriia ukrainskoi SSR*, 1:234–37.

15. *Tezisy o 300-letii vossoedineniia Ukrainy s Rossiei (1654–1954)* (Moscow, 1954). The theses are first paraphrased and then quoted. The word-for-word repetitions suggest that either the author was slavishly following formula and filling space, or possibly that there were two versions in rough draft and neither was taken out (Shelest, *Ukraino nasha radians'ka*, p. 25).

16. Diadichenko, *Istoriia*, pp. 28–29; *Istoriia ukrainskoi SSR*, 1:210–39.

17. Diadichenko, *Istoriia*, p. 32. The two-volume survey is more discriminating, but not in disagreement: “a great role in the liberation war was played by the Cossacks, principally the small landholders,” but at the same time, “the main and decisive force in the popular war was the oppressed peasantry” (*Istoriia ukrainskoi SSR*, 1:215).

the best opportunity to hold and enhance their power.¹⁸ Shelest omits this implication, giving an impression that the struggle was a national movement. In doing so, he blurs the class struggle within the Cossack community and thus violates the main tenet of the Soviet interpretation of Cossack history.¹⁹

Moreover, there are stirring passages about the Cossacks that are clearly patriotic in tone. This part of the book contains numerous “exclamations of rapture” and must have made the party wary about the growth of a Cossack cult.

The bravery of the Zaporozhians, their knightly qualities [*lytsarstvo*] and contempt for death, which they showed in battles for freedom—these are the characteristic features of the members of the Sich.

The Zaporozhian Sich played a great progressive role in the history of the Ukrainian people. The democratic order of the Sich gave Karl Marx reason to call it a “Christian Cossack republic.” The spirit of the Cossacks spread throughout the Ukraine.

Repin brilliantly portrayed the unbending will of the Zaporozhians, their patriotism, their disregard and contempt for those who attacked our lands, our freedom and possessions, their readiness to defend to the last breath their homeland, their people. Even now, one cannot contemplate this painting [“Answer of the Zaporozhians to the Sultan”] without emotion, without taking pride in our daring, clever and bold ancestors.²⁰

Cossack history has become an increasingly sensitive subject in recent

18. Diadichenko, *Istoriia*, p. 32; *Istoriia ukrainskoi SSR*, 1:213 ff.

19. Shelest’s lack of attention to the class struggle within the Zaporozhian Sich does violence to the “friendship of peoples” concept in another way not mentioned in the critique. According to the formula, dual alliances were formed on a class basis in non-Russian areas, even before annexation. “Official Russia” allied with native leaders, while “democratic Russia” allied with the common people. Each allied group followed its class interests—the former desiring to rule and exploit, the latter seeking liberation from multiple oppressions. Employing this formula, most clearly stated by the historian A. V. Piaskovskii in the late 1950s, it is argued that the peoples never harbored ill feelings against each other: Their resistance was to “tsarism,” not Russia (see A. V. Piaskovskii, “K voprosu o progressivnom znachenii prisoedineniia Srednei Azii k Rossii,” *Voprosy istorii*, 1959, no. 8, pp. 21–46; Tillett, *The Great Friendship*, pp. 253–59). Applied to the Sich in the period of the “liberation” war, the formula has the Ukrainian people fighting shoulder to shoulder in perfect accord with the Russian people. At the same time, the formula avoids another pitfall inimical to Soviet nationality policy: Khmel’nitskii does not become an unqualified hero and thus a probable focus of a nationalist cult. His historic act in uniting the Ukraine to Russia was pursued out of an interest in enhancing his own power. After the union he seized lands, portioned them out among the *starshyna*, and so oppressed the peasantry that there was a popular uprising against him in 1657, the year of his death (*Istoriia ukrainskoi SSR*, 1:246–54).

20. Shelest, *Ukraino nasha radians'ka*, pp. 20 and 22.

years as an object of much patriotic "idealization."²¹ Cossack gravesites, battlefields, and the remains of their settlements have caught the popular interest. Museums have been opened, and popular books, obviously turned out with loving hands, are full of illustrations of Cossack sites, costumes, and weapons. Historians are reexamining the bits and pieces of Cossack history, and have begun publication of a series of chronicles which may make the approved interpretations of seventeenth-century Ukrainian history more difficult to maintain.

The extent of Cossack glory in scholarly work can be illustrated in two recent studies by the most prolific Ukrainian specialist on the subject, O. M. Apanovych. Her book, *The Armed Forces of the Ukraine in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century*, is solidly based on archives and chronicles and deals mainly with the Russo-Turkish War of 1735–39.²² It would seem to be on firm ideological ground since the Ukrainian Cossacks fought alongside the Russian army, and the author deals at length with the class struggle within the Sich. But in other respects the book comes perilously close to "idealization," although it apparently has not been criticized on that count. The Cossacks play an inordinately large role in the partnership and are characterized throughout as an independent army, the brave protectors of the Ukrainian people, fighting in alliance with the Russians, who are given no special praise. Especially eye-catching are the illustrations—seven full-page color pictures of Cossack leaders and uniforms, dozens of pictures of firearms, flags, forts, seals, and even a variety of military batons. Apanovych's article on the liquidation of the Sich in 1775 emphasizes the treachery of Catherine II and in the process glorifies the Cossacks.²³ Catherine's overriding reason for wiping out the last remains of the Sich, according to Apanovych, was her fear of Cossack institutions; their "political autonomy," "independent social order," "demo-

21. The persistence of nonconforming nationalist views on Cossack history can be seen in the works of one of the most prominent of contemporary Ukrainian historians in the Soviet Union, F. P. Shevchenko. His book on Ukrainian-Russian relations, although published in a period of increasing party controls, represents the Cossack state as a highly advanced state, and union with Russia is termed "unification" rather than "reunification." The book raises some questions about whether this union fully realized the highest aspirations for Ukrainians and even casts doubt on the solid pro-Russian orientation of Ukrainians at the time (F. P. Shevchenko, *Politychni ta ekonomichni zvl'azky Ukrainy z Rosieiu v seredyni XVII st.* [Kiev, 1959]). In spite of heavy criticism of this book and subsequent articles, Shevchenko remained, except for one brief period in the late 1960s, the editor of the *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* until 1972. Shevchenko's nonconforming views have been documented in Ivan M. Myhul's unpublished dissertation, "Politics and History in the Soviet Ukraine: A Study of Soviet Ukrainian Historiography, 1956–1970" (Columbia, 1973).

22. O. M. Apanovych, *Zbroini sili Ukrainy pershoi polovyny XVIII st.* (Kiev, 1969).

23. O. M. Apanovych, "Peredumovy ta naslidky likvidatsii Zaporiz'koi Sichi," *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 1970, no. 9, pp. 23–35.

cratic laws," and elections. There could be no coexistence with this "antithesis of autocracy," and Catherine annihilated the Sich by first lulling the *starshyna* through tricky promises conveyed by Potemkin and then by using surprise military intervention. Her decree announcing the liquidation was full of "crude slander" against the Cossacks, but "in spite of tsarism's efforts, it could not eliminate all traces of the memory of the Zaporozhian Sich from the earth," for the Ukrainian people immortalized Cossack heroism through oral accounts and songs.

The Cossack problem has been coming to a head since the publication of Shelest's book, which, according to his critics, has contributed to a distortion of Cossack history. Several authors of historical novels and literary studies have been rebuked.²⁴ In 1972, *Voprosy istorii* severely criticized a popular book about Khortytsia, the Dnieper island fortress of the Sich by stating that the author had his heroes and villains reversed, had stressed only the negative aspects of the settlement of Ukrainian lands by Russians, and had even used the old Ukrainian term "foreign rabble" to refer to them. Unfortunately, the responsible editors had not caught the errors, and after five years the book had gone into a second edition in which the author "not only repeated his errors, but, in some cases, compounded them"—with, it might have been added, a number of quotations and references taken from Shelest's book.²⁵

Most of the other specific faults which the critics find in Shelest's history are inconsequential and seem undeserved. Shelest is "correct" in his interpretation and coverage, but is not sufficiently explicit or emphatic for purposes of Soviet nationality policy. The book cannot be faulted (except by the bored reader) for a lack of references to Russian-Ukrainian friendship, military and cultural cooperation, and recitations of their "progressive consequences." But these themes have not been spelled out in sufficient detail for the critics. For example, Shelest is criticized for not dealing adequately with Russian cultural influence on the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the nineteenth century, even though he states that Ukrainian writers "invariably moved shoulder-to-

24. The author of a Gogol study, O. I. Karpenko, was advised that Gogol should not be taken seriously, since he had been guilty of idealizing Cossack society (*Literaturna Ukraina*, July 20, 1973, quoted in *DSUP*, 1973, no. 9, p. 10). V. Zarembo, author of a biography of the poet and folklorist Ivan Manzhuza, was rapped for a long digression giving Manzhuza an imagined identity with the Cossacks. Pointing out that Zarembo ignored the class struggle and oppressive practices of the *hetmans*, the reviewer asks: "What purpose does Zarembo's lack of objectivity serve? Is its aim to show that the troubles and misfortunes suffered by Ukraine were brought by others, rather than its own Ukrainian feudal lords?" (*Raduha*, 1973, no. 6, in *DSUP*, 1973, no. 12, pp. 15-17).

25. E. I. Druzhinina, "Po povodu odnoi broshiury," *Voprosy istorii*, 1972, no. 11, pp. 203-5, reviewing M. Kytsenko, *Khortytsia v heroitsi i lehendakh*, 2nd ed. (Dnepropetrovsk, 1972).

shoulder with other progressive writers, in the first place the fraternal Russians, Pushkin and Lermontov, Herzen and Chernyshevsky, Gorky and Chekhov.”²⁶ There are similar lists of influential Russian painters, dramatists, and composers.²⁷ But the critics insist that these Russian cultural figures be paired with the Ukrainians who were inspired by them. This injunction represents something of a regression from recent Soviet surveys, which merely mentioned such ties—in contrast to earlier accounts which depicted all Ukrainian cultural figures as studying Russian mentors.²⁸

In another case, Shelest’s reticence to go into detail about the role of individuals in the Ukraine in the revolutionary period, or to state which Ukrainians wavered on the nationality question, is a time-honored practice with which his critics are well acquainted. In a climate where any historical figure may be disgraced or rehabilitated, it is the better part of wisdom to write faceless history. Here the critics are repeating their call to Ukrainian historians to produce detailed historical works that will stand up under future scrutiny—no easy task.

Certain themes in the history of relations between Russians and non-Russians would seem to have so important an application for the approved interpretation that they must be treated fully, if ritualistically, even in brief historical sketches. In addition to the “progressive consequences” of annexation and the pairing of cultural figures, these subjects would include the Decembrists—whose exiled members are said to have had a great impact in teaching revolutionary ideas in non-Russian areas, the alleged cooperation of proletarians of all nationalities in the formation of the USSR, and Lenin’s great interest in the fate of the non-Russian subjects of the disintegrating Russian Empire.

The most gratuitous charge against Shelest is that he gave too little attention to Lenin’s concern for Ukrainians. More than two-thirds of all references and footnotes in the book are to Lenin, and the fifteen-page introduction might more accurately be captioned “Lenin and the Ukraine.” But Shelest is faulted for not mentioning by title three articles which Lenin wrote about the Ukraine in June 1917. The implication for the Soviet historian seems to be that it is not enough to cite Lenin frequently; nothing relevant can be left out.

While nearly all of the charges against Shelest’s book are specific, one is so open-ended as to constitute a Pandora’s box of potential troubles for the

26. Shelest, *Ukraino nasha radians'ka*, p. 91.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 96 and 99.

28. Diadichenko, *Istoriia*, pp. 71 and 96; *Istoriia ukrainskoi SSR*, 1:401–2, 431, 522, 718; contrast with accounts in *Istoriia ukrainskoi SSR*, vol. 1 (Kiev, 1953), pp. 474–506, 573–602.

intelligentsia of the non-Russian nationalities. It is the condemnation of “lyrical digressions,” of “exclamations of rapture and descriptions of idyllic scenes” which “intensify the feeling of self-satisfaction and self-esteem” among Ukrainians. The only example noted in the article is quite limited in nature. It concerns a “publicistic” passage which is said to sound like a tour guide’s recitation. But the term “exclamation of rapture” obviously has many applications. If the party takes offense at a description of a river with picturesque banks where one can stroll and rest, what must be the reaction to Shelest’s more explicit appeals, such as these:

Give attention to the classic outlines of St. Sophia of Kiev, learn from the written monuments, listen attentively to Ukrainian folk songs, sorrowful and lyrical, as well as funny and cheerful, and they will stir within you wonder, reflection about the past, and emotion.

One must note that prerevolutionary Ukrainian realistic art broadly represented the life, the fate, suffering and joy of plain people—the working people—their pride and indestructibility, their struggle for freedom, their love for their motherland.

Eternal and imperishable is the culture of the Ukrainian people, immortal the people who created it!²⁹

If the party should stand by a strict prohibition of “exclamations of rapture,” the history and culture of the non-Russian peoples would have to be homogenized with the Russian mass and would become formless, without distinctive geographical features, historic events, outstanding personages or monuments. Of course, the party has never made such demands and is not likely to. But it is also true that its sensitivity to nationalist manifestations varies widely depending upon the situation and place, with stricter views following on the heels of real or imagined disorders.

According to *samizdat* reports, the Ukraine has been subjected to unusually heavy restrictions in this area in recent years. Thus, on the same summer evenings when the crowds in Gorky Park in Moscow have enjoyed productions by Georgian dancers in brilliant native costumes or by Uzbek orchestras performing on native instruments, police in Kiev have been breaking up meetings of bandura players and folksingers. Exhibits of folk art have been closed, and Ukrainians have been classified as “hooligans” and arrested for nothing more than attending parties in folk dress or gathering at public

29. Shelest, *Ukraino nasha radians'ka*, pp. 17–18, 100, 101.

monuments for poetry readings.³⁰ In other parts of the Soviet Union, the atmosphere is considerably more relaxed for practical reasons. No such restrictions exist in republics where nationalism is comparatively weak (as in Belorussia) or where foreign policy considerations work to the advantage of the non-Russian peoples (as in Armenia and the borderlands of Central Asia).³¹ Presumably the historians in other republics are under less pressure than their Ukrainian counterparts. But the injunction against "exclamations of rapture" illustrates the uncertainties under which all of non-Russian intelligentsia must work. They must meet a guideline that is vague and as expandable as a Russian accordion, one that can be used against them at the party's convenience.

In one respect the critique of Shelest's book is revealing for an omission. The book represents the Ukraine under tsarist Russia as a heavily exploited colony. It pulls no punches about the tsars' "brutal policy of great power oppression," stating specifically that the annexation treaty was violated, that the measures of Peter I and Catherine II were particularly harsh, and that the Russian government tried to stamp out the Ukrainian language in the nineteenth century. The official critique raises no objections to any of this, although histories of twenty years ago would either have omitted all mention of the matter or confined it to very general terms. Since the late 1950s Soviet historians have condemned "tsarism" (the common enemy of Russian and non-Russian peoples alike), but seldom with such an obvious sting or in a context of such heroic resistance. So long as the historian confines his criticism to "tsarism" and exempts the Russian people, he seems to be on safe ground.

Although many of the charges against Shelest seem frivolous and unmerited, there are a few areas in which he clearly violates the generally understood norms for Soviet historical writing. However vague the charges about "exclamations of rapture" may be, there can be no question that numerous passages on Ukrainian heroism, greatness, and achievements go beyond the prescribed limits for histories of the non-Russian peoples. He has "embellished" the historic role of the Cossacks and underplayed the significance of

30. For a summary of information on this question from *Ukrains'kyi visnyk*, see "Dragnet on Ukrainian Art and Culture," *Radio Free Europe Research*, Communist Area, no. 1049, June 23, 1971.

31. Zbigniew Brzeziński, "Political Implications of Soviet Nationality Problems," in Edward Allworth, ed., *Soviet Nationality Problems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 70–87; Mary Matossian, "Communist Rule and the Changing Armenian Cultural Pattern," in Erich Goldhagen, ed., *Ethnic Minorities in the Soviet Union* (New York: Praeger, 1968), pp. 185–97; Anna Procyk, "The Search for a Heritage and the Nationality Question in Central Asia," in Edward Allworth, ed., *The Nationality Question in Soviet Central Asia* (New York: Praeger, 1973), pp. 123–33.

the Ukraine's union with Russia. Thus, within the narrow Soviet definition, Shelest must be considered a Ukrainian nationalist, as charged.

While the political ramifications of this affair are beyond the scope of this study, it is worth noting in retrospect that Shelest's public pronouncements on "bourgeois nationalism" were not so much at variance with the party's verdict as they might seem. He campaigned frequently for "ideological education" and tilted with *émigré* Ukrainian nationalists and Zionists, but he seems to have had little to say against the kind of manifestation of Ukrainian nationalism for which he was later condemned.³² On the other hand he was a champion of Ukrainization in education and made occasional statements defending the greatness of the Ukrainian language. "We must approach our beautiful Ukrainian language with care and respect," he told the Fifth Congress of the Union of Ukrainian Writers in 1966, "it is our treasure, a great heritage which each of us, and primarily you writers, should cherish and develop."³³ The nationalist tone of Shelest's book is not inconsistent with that of many recent literary³⁴ and historical works in the Ukraine. Ivan Myhul has noted a wide variety of nonconforming interpretations in dozens of books and articles by Ukrainian historians on virtually all of the themes surveyed by Shelest's critics.³⁵

For all his reputation as an oppressor of dissenters, Shelest had a peculiar history of tolerating, or of at least suspending judgment, on those accused of Ukrainian nationalism. He retained Oles' Honchar as head of the Union of Writers long after his novel *Sobor* had drawn severe criticism, and he was said to have circulated a limited edition of Ivan Dziuba's highly heretical *Internationalism or Russification?* among selected party leaders and academics in 1966 for their reaction. Dziuba was criticized in the press and lost his job, but was reinstated in 1968. After his book was published in the West he was expelled by the Ukrainian Writers Union, but that decision was later rescinded. It was only on the eve of Shelest's demotion that Dziuba was arrested, along with Viacheslav Chornovil, the literary critics Ivan Svitlychnyi and Ievhen Sverstiuk, and the poet Ihor Kalynets. When overly nationalistic

32. Several of Shelest's speeches on these themes are included in P. Iu. Shelest, *Idei Lenina peremahaiut'* (Kiev, 1971).

33. Quoted in *DSUP*, 1969, no. 3, p. 15.

34. Nationalism in literature is discussed in George S. N. Luckyj, "The Ukrainian Literary Scene Today," *Slavic Review*, 31, no. 4 (December 1972): 863-69.

35. Myhul, "Politics and History in the Soviet Ukraine. . . ." See especially section 3, chapter 1, "The Rewriting of Ukrainian Feudal History," pp. 99-162. Myhul divides Soviet Ukrainian historians into "detractors" (conforming) and "rehabilitators" (non-conforming) and shows that the latter were not brought under party control in the decade of the sixties.

works were criticized in the Ukraine, it was usually long after their publication, and frequently on the direct prompting of Moscow critics.

The reason for Shelest's ineffectiveness in dealing with these dissidents, while others (such as those discussed in the *Chornovil Papers*) were punished, is not clear. Perhaps he was trying to steer a middle course that would win support from nationally conscious intellectuals without violating what seemed to be a relaxation of Soviet nationality policy. He may, for example, have been trying to win over the mass membership of the Ukrainian Society for the Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments. In acknowledging a Ukrainian identity and cultural heritage in *O Ukraine, Our Soviet Land*, he tried to produce a work acceptable to Ukrainian sensibilities while at the same time affirming the Ukraine's place in the Soviet multinational state. Thus Shelest could not be characterized as a nationalist in the usual sense; it would be fairer to say that he was a nationalist *malgré-lui*. But while Moscow could look the other way when such heretical views appeared in the inconspicuous pages of historical journals and scholarly books, it could hardly allow them to appear without rebuttal in a popular book by a party secretary and member of the Politburo.

The public denunciation of Shelest supports the view that his main trouble all along was nationality policy, and that, in spite of his reputation as a hard-liner, he had been too lenient for Moscow's tastes. As early as June 1972, Robert Conquest and Tibor Szamuely wrote that Shelest's reputed hard-line stand on foreign policy was probably a sham issue, that nationality policy was the main question, and that "there are a number of signs that Shelest was inclined to comparative mildness. . . ." They cited the long history of party failure in coping with Ukrainian nationalism and Shelest's erratic record on dissenters, characterized by periods of crackdown and leniency, which they attributed to a running battle with Russian police officials in the Ukraine.³⁶

36. "Struggle in the Kremlin," *Soviet Analyst*, 1, no. 8 (June 8, 1972): 2-6. These views are supported and put into a rational narrative by *samizdat* information reaching the West after this article was completed. *Ukrains'kyi visnyk*, nos. 7 and 8 (Spring 1974), contain lengthy remarks about the fall of Shelest. Smoloskyp Publishers of Toronto are planning to publish an English translation, and have given excerpts in a press release (AI-13) of January 30, 1975. According to this account, party vigilance increased from the time of the Twenty-fourth Party Congress, which it labels a "congress of chauvinist-Russifiers." Shelest's final mistake was his intervention at the November 1971 plenum of the Central Committee to save V. Kutsevol, first secretary of the Lviv *obkom*, whom Suslov wanted to sack for failures in "internationalist and atheistic education of the masses." Although momentarily successful, Shelest soon lost control of the KGB in the Ukraine, whose head, V. Fedorchuk, joined Shcherbitskii in showering complaints on Moscow. There was a wave of ideological resolutions, meetings, a press campaign, and many arrests. Shelest was summoned to Moscow to a Politburo meeting, put

The *Komunist Ukrainy* article on Shelest cannot be dismissed as another hatchet job on a disgraced leader. It presaged a new wave of arrests and a vigorous campaign for ideological purification. There were numerous personnel changes in the Ukraine, including a shakeup in the editorial board of the journal, beginning with the number that carried the article. Furthermore, the "review" has the earmarks of a programmatic statement, intended to instruct those who deal with history, either professionally, or in related fields.

The instructions have the most direct application for Ukrainian historians, who have been given chapter and verse on some themes, as well as vague warnings on others. Historians of the other non-Russian nationalities can get considerable, but less precise instructions, for while they have no exact parallels for the Zaporozhian Sich or the Pereiaslav treaty, they must write about heroes, annexation, "progressive consequences," cultural relations, and the role of Lenin.

The main impact of the article for Soviet historians must be confirmation that very little has changed. *Partiinost'* remains firmly enthroned officially in historiography, even though some illusions of relaxation have appeared in recent years. For example, after a period of unprecedented coordination and control in the early 1960s, the party began to speak less frequently to questionable interpretations. Another illusion of moderation was the party's retreat from the projected fusion (*sliianie*) of Soviet republics. Fusion was to achieve not only the disappearance of Union Republic boundaries, but the "withering away" of national differences. The idea was abandoned in the late 1960s after long debate. Clearly the party still prefers to subordinate historical writing to the requirements of nationality policy, and the mere appearance of this denunciation of such a prominent person as Shelest demonstrates the precarious state of the policy. The exposé of Shelest's nationalist deviationism belies the oft repeated official claim for the existence of a definitive solution to the nationality question in the Soviet Union.

in the "penal chair," and accused of "provincialism and national narrow-mindedness." The Politburo's cautious policy of letting him down easy was dictated by the fact that Shelest still had the support not only of a majority of the *obkom* first secretaries in the Ukraine, but also received a sympathetic hearing from non-Russian party leaders. He remained under KGB surveillance and was not allowed to return to the Ukraine.