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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/monderusse/7907>

DOI: 10.4000/monderusse.7907

ISSN: 1777-5388

Publisher

Éditions de l'EHESS

Printed version

Date of publication: 15 December 2012

ISSN: 1252-6576

Electronic reference

David Shearer, « Alain Blum, Yuri Shapoval, Faux coupables », *Cahiers du monde russe* [Online], 53/4 | 2012, Online since 28 October 2013, Connection on 22 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/monderusse/7907> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/monderusse.7907>

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REFERENCES

Alain BLUM, Yuri SHAPOVAL, **Faux coupables. Surveillances, aveux et procès en Ukraine soviétique (1924-1934)**. Paris : CNRS, 2012, 352 p.

- 1 Alain Blum and Yuri Shapoval have produced an insightful study of Soviet surveillance practices during the 1920s and early 1930s. Their book details the mechanics of political police surveillance and the kinds of information that went into surveillance reports. The authors describe how that information was used in the evolving system of political repression under the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, and the corrosive effects of police surveillance on personal and social relations. The book offers a valuable contribution for these reasons, alone, and even more so for the focus of their study, and the sources available to the authors.
- 2 The study focuses on two particular individuals, and their networks of professional and social contacts. Mykhailo Sergeyevich Grushevsky (1866-1934) was a prominent Ukrainian academician, political activist, and historian, and Sergey Oleksandrovich Yefremov (1876-1939), was, likewise, a prominent Ukrainian academician, and a figure at the center of the major purge trial, in 1930, of the purported Union for the Independence of Ukraine. Blum and Shapoval were able to obtain detailed access to the Soviet political police files of these individuals, and have examined these files in comparison to the private letters and diaries of both men. The book follows each of these individuals through the 1920s and early 1930s using both kinds of sources. As a result, Blum and Shapoval piece together a narrative of these two individuals as observed by the police, and as recorded in their own words and experience.
- 3 Having access to the surveillance files of the Soviet political police is unusual in any case, but these particular sources give Blum and Shapoval a new perspective on the

evolving anti-Ukrainian bias within the regime. As the authors point out, the 1930 purge trial of Ukrainian “nationalists” was the opening wedge of the full-scale Stalinist assault on the Ukrainian national intelligentsia. As well, along with the industrial trials of 1928, the 1930 anti-Ukrainian trials were one of the first such mass trials in which evidence and conspiracy were completely concocted. As the authors remind, the SR and Menshevik trials of the early 1920s were against groups that had, in fact, opposed the regime. Thus, as analyzed by Blum and Shapoval, police surveillance files provide a unique insight into how police and regime officials constructed conspiracy through the criminalization of daily experience and associations. This latter is one of the most important aspects of this study, and the authors exploit their sources thoroughly and judiciously.

- 4 The first chapter of *Faux Coupables* follows Grushevsky during the revolutionary years 1917 to 1919, when he headed the Ukrainian Central Rada, or parliamentary council, under the short lived Ukrainian Peoples Republic. By then, already a renowned historian and ethnologist, Grushevsky leaned toward the moderate nationalist and Socialist Revolutionary movements. With the collapse of the Ukrainian government, Grushevsky lived abroad in exile in Prague and Vienna, from 1919 to 1924. Soviet political police kept track of his activities while in exile, and in 1924, Grushevsky negotiated his return to Soviet Ukraine. Withdrawing from active political work, he became the dean of his own historical school within the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, located in Kyiv. Chapters two and three follow Grushevsky as he tried to assimilate back into a Ukraine by then under Bolshevik control. During the 1920s, a number of Ukrainian intellectuals, Grushevsky included, still held illusions about national aspirations within a Soviet federated constitution, and Grushevsky vacillated between intellectual resistance to Russian-Bolshevik influence and “collaboration” with the new Soviet Ukrainian regime.
- 5 Grushevsky and Yefremov maneuvered for as much freedom as possible for Ukraine within the Soviet political, institutional, and constitutional framework. As Blum and Shapoval note, however, they were rival academics, although their rivalry was not so much ideological as personal, tinged on both sides with no small amount of vanity. Chapter three, especially, follows the ins and outs of bureaucratic and professional politics within the Ukrainian Academy, among Ukrainian intellectuals, in general, and between different historical schools. This chapter includes an excellent summary of polemical arguments that flared up between Grushevsky, as an exponent of a Ukrainian nationalist school of history, and the Russian-Bolshevik historian Mikhail Pokrovsky, a member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Commissar of Education of the Russian Republic, and head of the Academy of Red Professors in Moscow.
- 6 Blum and Shapoval base much of their narrative about Grushevsky and Yefremov, and about the intellectual debates and rivalries among Ukrainian intellectuals, on the information contained in the police surveillance files. As a result, chapters three and four are not just about intellectual and professional squabbles, but about how police kept track of those squabbles. Based on their reading of informant reports, the authors show that police were not particularly interested in the private or intimate lives of those under surveillance. Most information in surveillance reports are straight-forward accounts of professional meetings, professional contacts, who was in favor of what position in the daily running of the Academy, who agreed and disagreed. As chapter four shows, informants were recruited from among colleagues, students, and others

associated with Grushevsky and Yefremov on a daily professional basis. Surveillance reports are, by and large, the banal stuff of daily life in public. Until 1929, at least in the case of Grushevsky, there is no real editorializing about his political position.

- 7 Blum and Shapoval highlight the significance of this kind of information gathering. The point was not to try to catch Grushevsky or Yefremov in some kind of conspiratorial, secret gatherings, or to trap them into saying something compromising. The purpose of monitoring was, precisely, and simply, to build a picture of their associations, the networks of people that they knew and saw on a daily basis, as part of their professional work, their teaching, their writing, their travels. Here, in this analysis of information and how it was gathered, lies the core of the book. At the beginning of chapter five, the authors identify three basic categories, or “identities” of information that interested police (p. 126-129). One’s “biographical identity” included biographical information, or the personal history of the subject, with key moments noted. A second category included information relating to one’s “identify of action,” or current activities, and a third category of “relational identity” cataloged information about a subject’s associations. Cataloging is the key word here, and Blum and Shapoval note the relatively mundane, even tedious, nature of information contained in most reports.
- 8 Police made nothing of this kind of surveillance until a political decision was made to “activate” information toward the purpose of political repression. In the case of Yefremov and Grushevsky, that decision came from Stalin himself, who kept close track of police surveillance. As Stalin became increasingly worried about Poland, he became concerned about Ukrainian nationalist sentiments that could be potentially exploited by Poland. In chapter five, appropriately titled, “When a group of friends becomes a party of conspirators,” Blum and Shapoval examine the process by which daily routine and associations were politicized and criminalized. They show how, in the hands of senior police officials, simple, even banal, facts of observation were manipulated, in hindsight, to form the picture of long-term conspiracy. Work relations, meetings, daily routine became the material out of which to find patterns of relationships, which were then infused with political and ominous conspiratorial meaning. In the case of Grushevsky, this process began in 1929, when senior Ukrainian police officials, including the infamous head of the Ukrainian OGPU, Vsevelod Balitsky, began to write summary reports about the scholar’s anti-Soviet activities. As the authors show, conspiracy was created on the basis of real associational relations, and on the facts of biography, but then given new meaning by the police.
- 9 Word choice reflected this criminalization process. The word “entourage” turned into “group,” then “click,” to become, in the final analysis, the “cell” of a new counter-revolutionary party (p. 136). In this process, imagined conspiracies turn into social facts within the documents of the police. When confronted with these “facts,” and under the severe stress of interrogation and even torture, many of those accused could be convinced of the reality of the accusations against them, as “proven” by the documents. Here was the real power of the police surveillance files and how police used them. Accused persons, under stress, exhausted and disoriented, were constantly confronted by real, undeniable facts of association. Faced by these facts, many who managed to survive their confrontations with the state’s repressive system admitted that they, themselves, began to believe in the truth of the conspiratorial charges brought against them. This insight into how police used factual information to extract false confessions is not entirely new, but the detail of analysis available to Blum and

Shapoval gives significant weight to this aspect of the psychological process that led innocent people to confess to fictional conspiracies.

- 10 Yefremov seemed to have had a keener awareness than Grushevsky of what was happening in 1929 and 1930, as the OGPU began its assault on Ukrainian intellectuals. Grushevsky was aware that the Ukrainian OGPU kept information about him, but, according to Blum and Shapoval, Grushevsky did not fully understand the threat to him until after the arrest and trial of Yefremov. When finally arrested in 1931, Grushevsky first denied any conspiratorial activities, then confessed, only to recant after his release and transfer to Moscow. Although he did not go to prison, Grushevsky never worked again. His health weakened, and he died in a sanatorium in 1934. His school of Ukrainian history was broken, in part by arrest, but in part by the fear and realization of informants working among fellow colleagues and students. Yefremov was convicted for anti-Soviet nationalist activity. He languished in the Gulag camp system until his death in 1939.
- 11 The five substantive chapters, and a short conclusion, make up about half the book, while the second half is filled with useful appendices. The 319 documents that the authors used as sources are listed in a table, and posted online, as well, at a site given in the text. A second appendix provides extracts of surveillance reports, and a letter from 1931 by Grushevsky addressed to Stalin. Appendices also include a bibliography, list of trials discussed in the text, a glossary of key names and political parties, and an excellent list of biographical sketches.