

science, and scientists, and can easily be assigned to undergraduates. The work has good illustrations, copious footnotes, an extensive bibliographical essay, and a comprehensive index. It belongs in every library, and on the shelf of every scholar of Soviet society and culture.

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Myroslav Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion, 1917-1928*. Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1992, 265 pp., \$24.95 (cloth).

Meticulously researched, Shkandrij's study skillfully relates the cultural and the political contexts as it unmistakably identifies the major issues that dominated the literary discussion of the 1920s. The author offers a synthesis of the literary, intellectual, and political views vigorously debated in Soviet Ukraine and abroad and illustrates the debate's wide-ranging implications for Ukraine's difficult relationship with Russia, the "fatal force from the North," as Xvyl'ovyj called it. At stake, as Shkandrij convincingly shows, was the integrity and independence of the Ukrainian nation, struggling to seize the opportunity and secure its place within the new, post-revolutionary order.

The author divides his study into three sections titled "Sources," "History," and "Undercurrents." In the first, he discusses the fundamental issues that informed the pre-1920s period: federalist and separatist positions regarding Ukraine's political relationship to Russia; nativist and Europeanist views regarding cultural orientation; and utilitarian and aesthetic conceptions of literature. These issues remained germane to the discussions of the 20s, initially often led by Modernist writers adjusting to the new Marxist order. The national tenor of the discussions alarmed the Russo-centric Communist Party of Ukraine (and later the RCP(B)) interested, Shkandrij argues, not merely in the class struggle in Ukraine but in thwarting Ukrainian separatism (11). Even after Ukrainization became official party policy in 1923, antagonism between Russian and Ukrainian elements in the CPB(U) remained high.

From this background the author proceeds to the second section in which he presents the literary discussion of 1925-28 that pitted the aesthetically-oriented groups VAPLITE, the Neoclassicists, and Lanka against the peasant writers organization Pluh (Plow) and the orthodox Marxists of the journals *Hart* and of *Žovten'*. Shkandrij carefully elaborates the points at issue, brilliantly raised by Xvyl'ovyj, a leading spokesman for VAPLITE, in his polemical pamphlets. Xvyl'ovyj insisted that aesthetic quality should serve as the measure of a work, not an author's social origins or proletarian content and that artists be granted creative freedom. He pleaded for a cultural orientation toward Europe and "away from Moscow." The first two points led to charges of "formalism" and "élitism." The last point proved to be fatal—it outraged Stalin and the party.

Viewing the growing Ukrainian national revival as a sign of Ukrainian separatism and bourgeois nationalism, from 1927 the RCP(B) began to steadily roll back the achievements of Ukrainization (96). Under the guise of defending the rights of the Russian minority in Ukraine, the Communists introduced the official doctrine of the "friendship of peoples" according to which no national culture could be treated as superior to any other. Xvyl'ovyj was forced to recant (February 1928) and the independent literary groups, VAPLITE and MARS, had to self-liquidate (1928). For a brief spell they formed again under new guises, but by 1931 the independent groups were supplanted by VUSPP (All-Ukrainian Union of Proletarian Writers) which soon consolidated its control over cultural affairs in Ukraine, until it was "no longer possible . . . to question the directives of VUSPP or the party within the Soviet Ukraine" (135).

Shkandrij extends his examination of the debate over national identity to Ukrainians outside the Soviet Ukraine. The party's campaign against Shumsky, Xvyl'ovyj, and Ukrainization dismayed emigre socialists and was vocally condemned by the CP of Western Ukraine at international forums as blatant Russian chauvanism. The campaign also influenced the Ukrainian nationalist, Dontsov, who urged Ukrainians to reject Russian asiatic despotism and turn to European models of nationhood, a call that spurred the growth of the nationalist view of a Ukrainian state.

In "Undercurrents" Shkandrij considers the positions taken by the avant garde—Ukrainian Futurists, the painters Malevich and Boychuk and his group ARMU, Dovženko, and the theater director Kurbas—in the debate over tradition, cultural orientation, and the audience. He argues that the Futurists and the Constructivists were the most radical by denying the national element any place in the new proletarian and international art, while Boychuk sought a synthetic approach to the Ukrainian tradition, using it as a means to elevate Ukrainian culture and the audience, still largely peasant. The aesthetic conservatism of the audience was the reason that the anti-realist innovations of Dovženko and Kurbas were not understood, despite their high level of achievement in developing independent Ukrainian art.

Shkandrij's conclusions logically arise from the scrupulous attention he gives each of the three sections. Pylypenko (the leader of Pluh) and Xvyl'ovyj were indeed both seeking to develop Ukrainian culture—the former began with the peasant masses while the later began with the intelligentsia. The literary discussion did become a discussion of political issues, as abundantly clear in the critiques of all camps, especially given the absence of an alternative political body. And undoubtedly the RCP(B)'s policies toward Ukraine arrested the normal process of social, political, and cultural stratification in Ukrainian society, a process being renewed only now, some seventy years later.

Certainly, there are no disagreements with the conclusions of Shkandrij's excellent study with its emphasis on the political ramifications of the literary discussion. Two additions would be useful—a consideration of literary works that informed the debate and the Russian context. The former would provide a fullness to the period and a point of reference for the aesthetic and polemical pronouncements of the literary groups. The later would illuminate the extent to which similar aesthetic concerns (expressed in attacks on the Russian Futurists and Pil'njak) informed the criticism launched by the party against fellow travellers and the avant garde in Ukraine. Shkandrij's volume, which acknowledges Luckyj's contribution, broaches a wide range of questions that are seminal to an understanding of the Ukrainian dilemma that still resonate today.

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