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Files on the Workers' Opposition in the Central Archive of the Federal Security Service of Russia

On 22 March 1995, I applied to the Director of the *Central Archive of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation* (TsA FSB RF) for permission to work with NKVD materials on Workers' Opposition leader Aleksandr Shliapnikov.¹ Shliapnikov's political biography was the focus of my doctoral dissertation.² In my letter, I addressed the Director by title but not by name. Because I had been reading Russian imperial-era *Department of Police* (Okhrana) internal documents in the *State Archive of the Russian Federation* (GARF), I attempted to employ their formal style when writing my request for access. I dropped my letter in a box in the main FSB reception area at no. 22 Kuznetsky Most. I am not sure why my request was approved while so many others were denied. At the time my dissertation supervisor Alexander Rabinowitch was researching the Bolsheviks in 1918 in the FSB archive. Shliapnikov's daughter Irina (b. 1930) had already inspected the files I wanted to see. On 30 March, I received at home a telephone call from an FSB archive employee (*sotrudnik*) who declined to identify himself by name. He had first called the *International Research and Exchanges Board* (IREX) office in Moscow, where staff gave him my home phone number and home address.³ He confirmed receipt of my request and said that he would transfer it to another employee who would call with the answer. He also remarked that I seemed familiar and asked if I had applied before. I truthfully assured him that I had not. Irina Shliapnikova delivered to the FSB archive a notarized letter of permission on 20 April. On 27 April my "courier" acknowledged that he received it and made an appointment with me for 28 April in the FSB archive reading room; he brought for me to read one volume of an archival-investigatory file. Each volume was stored in a locker managed by the reading room attendant until I was finished working with it, then I had to request of the courier delivery of a new volume; this took anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. I worked with the files until my departure in December 1995.

The volumes I saw were from the case file of the Moscow Group of the Workers' Opposition (R33718, *delo* 499061, 56 vols.) and from the *Military Collegium of the Soviet Supreme Court* (R27744, *delo* 3257). Later I received access to Worker Oppositionist Sergei Medvedev's files by obtaining permission from Medvedev's daughter Irina (b. 1926). Of the 56 volumes, I saw 14 (in addition to the volume on Shliapnikov from the *Military Collegium*).⁴ The reading

¹ Here I use the names of the organization and its archive as they have been since April 1995, although in March 1995 when I applied, it was to the *Central Archive of the Federal Counterintelligence Service* (TsA FSK).

² My complete biography of Shliapnikov was recently published as: Alexander Shlyapnikov, 1885-1937. *Life of an Old Bolshevik*, Leiden, Brill, 2015 (Historical Materialism Book Series. 90).

³ My dissertation research was funded by an Individual Advanced Research Opportunity grant from the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) and by a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad fellowship.

⁴ A summary of the case against the Moscow group of the Workers' Opposition was published in A. N. Iakovlev (ed.): *Reabilitatsiia. Politicheskie protsessy 30-50-kh godov*, Moskva, Politizdat, 1991, pp. 104-122.

room was new, with about 20 desks. The courier and the reading room attendant were very polite. I was not allowed to have the phone number of the reading room and had to ring a buzzer next to the locked door to achieve admission from a staff member. There was no sign outside the building indicating that the reading room of the archive was inside. I was not permitted to consult inventories. Instead, the courier decided how much access to grant me, based on conversations with me about the types of materials I needed to see. I was free to take as many notes as I wished from the files brought to me and to copy documents by hand in entirety, but I could not receive photocopies; my courier told me that only rehabilitated victims of repression and their relatives could have these. No one inspected my notebooks. I am confident that pages were not removed from the volumes I saw. I was not permitted access to operational files, containing agents' reports on Shliapnikov. I also could not see volumes on people other than Shliapnikov or Medvedev who had been arrested on the case of the Moscow Group of the Workers' Opposition. Given that these 56 volumes related only to the Moscow group, there must be other case files relating to alleged groups of the Workers' Opposition in Omsk, Rostov-on-Don, Kiev, Odessa, Baku, and Kharkov. I could ascertain no information about the materials I was not allowed to see, because my courier answered my questions concisely and conservatively.

While I worked in the FSB archive reading room, I encountered only a few researchers who were not victims of repression or their relatives. Besides Alex Rabinowitch, these included *Memorial Society* researchers, Washington, DC *Holocaust Museum* staff, a researcher commissioned by Israeli citizens who were victims of Stalinist terror to take notes on their case files, and a Stanford History Ph.D. candidate who received access to some Cheka files.

The files I examined included NKVD interrogation protocols of Shliapnikov and Medvedev, handwritten statements by Shliapnikov, protocols of his trial by the *Soviet Supreme Court Military Collegium*, and materials confiscated from Shliapnikov, Medvedev, and others. Materials confiscated from Medvedev were more voluminous than those for Shliapnikov. Irina Shliapnikova told me that her father had destroyed many letters before his arrest. Shliapnikov and Medvedev had shared the same apartment with their families in the 1920s, before Shliapnikov's family moved to a cooperative building. Materials relating to factional struggles in the 1920s remained in the old apartment; Medvedev was inclined to store documents rather than discard or destroy them.

Here I offer a brief inventory of the contents of the volumes I consulted:

*R27744 (USSR Supreme Court Military Collegium), delo 3257, volume 1, Materials on the accusation of A. G. Shliapnikov. 124 ll.*⁵

August 1936 report by Georgii Molchanov on the case against Shliapnikov; September 1936 documents on his arrest and search; his biographical data form (*anketa*); protocols of 1936-7 interrogations of Shliapnikov, Kensorin Gidlevskii, [Leonid] Faivilovich, Iakov Kharit [about the wrong Shliapnikov], and Vasilii Shmidt; the indictment against Shliapnikov; September 1937 Military Collegium protocols; Shliapnikov's death sentence; 1958 and 1963 reinvestigation reports made due in response to appeals by Shliapnikov's son Iurii (b. 1926); protocol excerpt changing Shliapnikov's 1935 prison sentence to internal exile; notification made to Shliapnikov's wife.

⁵ I was told that volume two contained "official" (*sluzhebnye*) materials.

*R33718, delo 499061, on the accusation of the Workers' Opposition, Moscow Group (56 vols.)*⁶

Vol. 3, investigatory materials on A. G. Shliapnikov. 94 ll.

Documents on Shliapnikov's January 1935 arrest and search; his biographical data form; prison officials' reports about his behavior; his interrogation protocols from 2-3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11 January and 11 February 1935; protocol of confrontation between him and Georgii Safarov on 14 February 1935; note on items conveyed from his wife to him in prison; statement by Shliapnikov about his 11 January interrogation; 1963 request from his daughter Irina for a certificate that he lived with his family in Moscow until his arrest and copy of the certificate.⁷

Vol. 4, investigatory materials on A. G. Shliapnikov. 63 ll.

Protocols of Shliapnikov's interrogations on 16 January, 15-16, 17, 23, and 28 March 1935; Shliapnikov's 17 January partial "confession"; protocol of confrontation between Shliapnikov and Illarion Vardin-Mgeladze on 28 January 1935; statements by Shliapnikov on 28 January confrontation, 15-16 and 17 March 1935 interrogations;⁸ excerpt from 26 March 1935 NKVD protocol sentencing him to concentration camp.

Vol. 5, investigatory materials on S. P. Medvedev. 80 ll.

Protocol of Medvedev's search; Medvedev's biographical data form; protocols of his interrogations on 31 January, 4, 5, and 15 February, and 4, 11, 13, 14, and 25 March 1935; biographical data form and 4 February 1935 interrogation protocol of Aleksandr Nikolaevich Medvedev.

Vol. 12, material evidence on A. G. Shliapnikov. 99 ll.

Correspondence between Shliapnikov and Medvedev (December 1924, January 1925, August 1926); 18 January 1926 report and complaint by I. S. Kastritskii on how CC members including Viacheslav Molotov "disorganized" and manipulated voting at a 15 January 1926 party assembly at the factory Krasnyi Treugol'nik in Leningrad; 1926-7 correspondence between Shliapnikov/Medvedev and others including Ivan Nikolaenko and Mariia Trifonova.

Vol. 13, material evidence on S. P. Medvedev. 125 ll.

Correspondence between Shliapnikov and Medvedev (September 1922, December 1924, January 1925, July and August 1934); typed copy of manifesto entitled "Situation of the October Achievements and Pressing Political Tasks of the Working Class of Russia," dated 28 May 1925; illegal newspaper *Rabochii put' k vlasti*, no. 5 (April-May 1928); November 1932 letter from Medvedev to Nikolaenko; undated correspondence between Mariia Trifonova and Medvedev; letter from Medvedev to an oppositionist in Baku (January 1924);

⁶ I understood that volumes 1-2 contained operational documents.

⁷ The files contained handwritten originals and typed copies of interrogation protocols, summarising interrogators' questions and Shliapnikov's answers. The protocols were dated but do not indicate the time of day or length of interrogations. Shliapnikov corrected protocols by hand and usually signed that he had read them and found them accurate.

⁸ These were addressed to Prokuror Ivan Akulov and NKVD chief Genrikh Iagoda.

1977 request by Medvedev's daughter Irina for his rehabilitation; 1977-78 Procuracy and Supreme Court documents on Medvedev's case.

Vol. 14, material evidence on Nikolaenko, Shliapnikov, Medvedev, and others. 107 ll., plus packet of documents numbered I. 108.

1926-27 correspondence between Shliapnikov/Medvedev and others including Nikolaenko, Trifonova; 1933 letters from Shliapnikov to Stalin; manuscripts probably authored by [Boris?] Kolesnikov with the titles: "The Nature of the Soviet Government," "The Differentiation of the Peasantry and Our Agrarian Policy," "Results and Perspectives of Industrialization," "The Revolution and the Party on the Eve of the Fifteenth Party Congress," and "The Development of Agriculture and the Evolution of Class Relations in the Countryside"; Shliapnikov's recollections of a speech he made at a Gosplan party cell on 27 January 1933; 1933 letters from Shliapnikov to Bauman and Moscow purge commissions;

A packet of documents numbered as 'list 108' (about 80 pages) – postcards and letters between Shliapnikov and Medvedev in 1934; postcards from Trifonova and Ivan Pivon' to Medvedev in 1934; 1926 letters from Nikolaenko to Shliapnikov and Medvedev; July 1927 letter from Shliapnikov probably to Nikolaenko; Shliapnikov's diary entries about events in October-November 1932 in Kislovodsk, thoughts recorded in April-August 1932, and about his involuntary trip to Kola in March-April 1934; June 1933 letter to Medvedev from Nikolaenko; excerpt of Marx's *Class Struggle in France*, copied by Medvedev; June and November 1934 letters from Medvedev to Nikolaenko; 1928 manuscripts in unknown hand: "The Situation in Germany" and "To German Workers."⁹

Vol. 36, materials confiscated from S. P. Medvedev. 123 ll.

Reminiscences of A. Mitrevich (mislabeled as those of Medvedev) about the workers' movement in Russia, 1913-23, including information on repression of trade union oppositionists; telegrams and letters regarding a conflict between Medvedev and Mikhail Tukhachevskii while Medvedev was Commissar of the First Army in 1919.

Vol. 37, materials confiscated from S. P. Medvedev. 428 ll.

Internal party reports about forced collectivization and dekulakization, including protocols from Penza party meetings; copies of published material; 1926-7 internal party documents and resolutions from Penza; Medvedev's notes on Perepechko's paper about Marx and Engels on the peasant question; documents on Ukrainization; published articles by Shliapnikov and proposals he made at party and union meetings in 1919-20; protocol of session on reorganization of Ukrainian metals industry, 6 August 1922; resolution accepted at Metron factory party cell meeting, 19 December [1923]; 1926 report on party activity, workers' moods at André Marty factory in Odessa; material on purge commission work; material on Safarov's terrorization; A. Mitrevich's reminiscences.

⁹ Shliapnikov's diary was published by I. A. Shliapnikova and A. A. Chernobaev (eds): "My ne reshaem nyne dazhe svoei sud'by': vospominaniia i pis'ma A. G. Shliapnikova, 1934 g.", *Istoricheskii arkhiv* (2002), 1, pp. 3–31.

Vol. 38, materials confiscated from S. P. Medvedev. 242 ll.

Shliapnikov's article on Fourteenth Party Conference results, "About several features of the current moment," May 1925 (two drafts), with Medvedev's suggested revisions; Shliapnikov's economic proposals, presented to the Politburo on 11 May 1921; draft resolution offered to the Fifth Congress of the Metalworkers' Union on trade unions' role and tasks; Kolesnikov documents.

Vol. 39, materials confiscated from S. P. Medvedev. 340 ll.

Excerpts from Party Central Control Commission interview with Aleksandr Serebrovskii and letter from Shliapnikov and Medvedev in response to Serebrovskii's statements; letter from Sel'man in Baku to Shliapnikov and Medvedev, 23 July [192?]; letter probably from Kolesnikov, 12 January 1926; letters from M. Lobanov to Shliapnikov and Medvedev; letters from Medvedev to Lobanov; 26 November 1920 letter from Grigorii Zinov'ev to Perepechko; declaration to the Politburo about the economic crisis; letter to Shliapnikov from ---dina in Kiev after April 1927.

Vol. 40, materials confiscated from S. P. Medvedev. 283 ll.

Issues 1-3 and 5 of the newspaper *Rabochii put' k vlasti*, a letter to Shliapnikov and Medvedev from its editors, proposing a meeting, and Medvedev's notes about the newspaper; *Workers' Truth* newspaper no. 2 and appeal, May 1923; letter from Shliapnikov to Mamchenko, 6 July 1921; protocols and draft proposals of those who would sign the "Letter of the 22" to the Comintern Executive; Shliapnikov's proposed guidelines on negotiations at the Genoa Conference; letter from Shliapnikov to the Orgburo, protesting his assignment to requisitions work; 26 June 1927 letter possibly from Zinov'ev to Shliapnikov, Medvedev, Smirnov, Timofei Sapronov, and Lev Trotskii; Vasilii Paniushkin's 1921 letter resigning from the party; draft of Shliapnikov's article "O propavshei gramote" with revisions in Shliapnikov's or Medvedev's hand.

Vol. 41, materials confiscated from S. P. Medvedev. 400 ll.

August 1921 letter from Communist Workers' Party of Germany (KAPD) secretary to Shliapnikov and Shliapnikov's response; March 1922 letter from Zubar to Medvedev; letter from Paniushkin to Eleventh Party Congress commission; March [1922] letter from Broveri to Shliapnikov; March 1922 letter from Khrapkov to Shliapnikov; materials on the 22; excerpts from Shliapnikov's speech to the closed session of the Eleventh Party Congress; February 1922 protocols from a meeting of those who would form the 22; excerpts of 30 March 1922 protocol of Morze Radio factory workers and of 23 February 1922 Politburo session with Medvedev's notes; 13 March 1922 protocol of Nizhgub Kanrai Railroad district party members' meeting, with resolution supporting the 22; list of envelopes sent by Shliapnikov to the CC and CCC in 1921 and in the first months of 1922; letter from F. Mitin to Medvedev and Shliapnikov's reply, summer 1921; undated pages of the Baku letter, handwritten by Medvedev; 26 June 1927 letter from unknown person inside wrapper marked "material for characterization of comrade 'T'"; transcript of session of commission appointed by Party Central Committee to investigate the acceptance of D. B. Riazanov's resolution at the Fourth Congress of Trade Unions on 19 May 1921 (chaired by Frunze with Dzerzhinskii, Stalin, and Kiselev as members); booklet consisting of Miasnikov's articles and his letters to Lenin, published in Perm, September or October 1921; February 1928 letter from Medvedev to Stalin; Workers' Group article "Alarming Questions [Trevozhnye voprosy]" about the Workers'

Opposition and Lenin; 29 October 1926 statement by Shliapnikov and Medvedev, edited in Medvedev's hand.

Vol. 42, materials confiscated from S. P. Medvedev. 232 ll., plus leaflets.

Medvedev's notes from meetings of the Workers' Opposition and 22; [1926] letter from Medvedev to Shliapnikov about an accidental meeting with Aleksandr Serebrovskii and reported conversation; June 1921 letter from Shliapnikov to Medvedev, about political negotiations with Zinov'ev and Lenin; Medvedev's recollections about meeting with Petr Karavaev at the Moscow Party Control Commission in August 1933; Medvedev's notes about an October 1932 meeting with Iaroslavskii about Vasili Kaiurov's allegations and the Martem'ian Riutin affair; Medvedev's autobiographical notes [1923?]; Medvedev's notes on Trotsky's speech in the Party Central Control Commission [after the Fifteenth Party Congress]; Medvedev's notes on the situation in Germany in December 1923; Medvedev's notes about his November 1933 purge session; Medvedev's notes about Denisenko's "Istoriia odnogo pokhoda" and Grazkin's letter; Medvedev's notes from a 1921 Shliapnikov speech about the work of the VSNKh Metals Section.

Vol. 43, materials confiscated from S. P. Medvedev. 328 ll., plus broken glass negative photos of Medvedev's children.

Identification cards; autobiography of Mariia Medvedeva [1922], who was S. P. Medvedev's wife; March 1927 letter to Medvedev from Denisenko; August and October 1933 letters to Medvedev from T. V. Dmitrieva; 1918 or 1919 recommendation of Medvedev made by a Commissar Zinov'ev [not Grigorii]; letters and postcards from Shliapnikov to Medvedev, August 1924, January 1930, March 1930, March 1931, October 1932, December 1933, and August 1934; summer 1926 telegram from Shliapnikov to Medvedev; letters to Medvedev from his sister and niece the Lushinas, his daughter Aida, and Z. S. Zhukova; August 1934 letter to Medvedev from A. M. [probably Mitrevich]; Medvedev's 1934 Medvezh'ia Gora work booklet; undated letters from Trifonova and Pivon'; September 1923 letter to Medvedev from Mitrevich; August 1930 letter from Nikolai to Shliapnikov and Medvedev; June 1930 letter from Nikolai Maksimov to Shliapnikov and Medvedev; note to Medvedev from Fedor Bulkin; notes from meetings of the Workers' Opposition and 22; January 1931 letters to Medvedev from the Lenin Institute, about the Workers' Opposition.

Given that the Central Archive of the FSB RF is still difficult to access and that some of the materials from which I took notes might be of use to other researchers, I intend to donate photocopies of my notes to the Library and Archives of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University in California, upon publication of my biography of Aleksandr Shliapnikov.