

REASONS FOR THE COMPULSORY NATURE OF THE UKRAINIANS' REPATRIATION, FROM THE WESTERN ZONES OF OCCUPATION TO THE USSR, AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1945 – 1951)

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Rezumat: *Cauzele caracterului forțat al repatrierii ucrainenilor din zonele occidentale de ocupație în URSS, după al Doilea Război Mondial (1945-1951).* În anii celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial, milioane de oameni au suferit din cauza mobilizării obligatorii, ca urmare a acțiunilor militare, a captivității sau a concentrării prin muncă forțată. Ucrainenii au reprezentat o mare parte a celor dislocați. În ultima etapă a războiului și în primii ani după încheierea lui, toți ucrainenii aflați în zona de ocupație sovietică au fost repatriați, obligatoriu, în URSS. Lupta politică s-a declanșat atunci când cetățenii sovietici aflați în zonele controlate de aliații occidentali nu și-au arătat dorința de a se întoarce în „Patria sovietică”. Refugiații politici ucraineni nu aveau suficiente motive pentru a reveni în URSS: frica de pedeapsă din partea sistemului pentru cei ce căzuseră în captivitate sau fuseseră duși la muncă forțată, neacceptarea sistemului totalitar sovietic, protestul împotriva represiunilor, persecuțiilor și asupririlor naționale specifice anilor de dinaintea războiului. Regimul sovietic a făcut tot posibilul pentru a-i aduce înapoi în URSS pe toți cetățenii săi și pentru a preveni, astfel, părăsirea țării, din motive politice. Cetățenii repatriați au devenit subiectul muncii silnice, făcându-se vinovați de a se fi aflat, cândva pe teritoriul inamicului.

Résumé: *Les causes du caractère forcé du rapatriement des Ukrainiens des zones occidentales d'occupation en URSS, après la Seconde Guerre Mondiale (1945-1951).* Les années de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, des millions d'hommes souffrirent à cause de la mobilisation obligatoire, à la suite des actions militaires, de la captivité ou de la concentration par travail forcé. Les Ukrainiens représentèrent une grande partie de ceux qu'on disloqua. Pendant la dernière étape de la guerre et les premières années après sa fin, on rapatria obligatoirement en URSS tous les Ukrainiens qui se trouvaient dans la zone d'occupation soviétique. La lutte politique se déclencha lorsque les citoyens soviétiques restés dans les zones contrôlées par les alliés occidentaux ne voulurent point revenir dans la “Patrie soviétique”. Les réfugiés politiques Ukrainiens n'avaient point de motifs suffisants pour retourner en URSS : la peur de la punition de la part du système pour ceux qui ont été prisonniers ou menés à travail forcé, la non-acceptation du système totalitaire soviétique, le proteste contre les répressions, les persécutions et les oppressions nationales

spécifiques aux années précédant la guerre. Le régime soviétique fit tout son possible pour ramener en URSS tous ses citoyens et prévenir, de cette manière, le délaissement du pays, pour des raisons politiques. Les citoyens rapatriés devinrent le sujet des travaux forcés, étant coupables d'avoir été, jadis, sur le territoire de l'ennemi.

Abstract: *During the years of the Second World War millions of people suffered from the compulsory shifts due to the military actions or captivity or due to the remove to the compulsory labour. Ukrainians made an essential part of those who were removed. At the final stage of the Second World War and during the first years after its end all the Ukrainian which appeared on the territory of the soviet zone of occupation were obligatorily repatriated to the USSR. The political fight started when the soviet citizens from the Western Allies' zones of occupation did not wish to return to the "Soviet Motherhood". Ukrainian political refugees did not have enough reasons to return to the USSR: fear of punishment by the system for the stay in the captivity or at the compulsory work, non-acceptance of the soviet totalitarian system, protest against repressions, national vexations and pursuit which were specific to the pre-war years. The Soviet regime tried all possible ways to return its citizens to the USSR, and by this not to allow political fleeing from the country. The repatriated citizens became subject to compulsory work with the guilt of staying in the enemy territory.*

Keywords: *repatriation, Ukrainians, Western Allies, zones of occupation, USSR, repression, Second World War.*

Introduction

During the years of the Second World War, millions of people suffered from the compulsory removal: whether due to the military actions or military captivity, or being taken as forced labour for the Nazi Germany. Ukrainians made an essential part of those who were removed. And it was no mere chance as it was in Ukraine where massive battles took place in the result of which there were a lot of injured and captured, for the period of three years the territory of Ukraine was occupied by Germany and its citizens voluntarily and by enforcement were removed by Nazi to work to Germany. As a result, among those who left the country were those who wanted to avoid repressions of the soviet system at the final stage of the war and after it, for example, the warriors of the Ukrainian rebel army, political opponents of the soviet system, persons which cooperated with German occupation regime during the war years.

Soviet Union made all possible not to allow political flight from the West as the fact of emigration from the "prosperous country of the communist regime"

itself was painful ideological blow to the international image of the USSR. That is why, in February of 1945, during the meeting of the leaders of the anti-Hitler coalition in Yalta, Stalin insisted upon the repatriation to USSR of all citizens living in the territories occupied by the western allied members, underlining that the provision had to be assured in the corresponding agreements. It is clear that absolutely all the citizens of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, including Ukrainians, were subject to immediate return. This process happened at the final stage of the war, when repatriation of the soviet citizens to the USSR began. It started with the USSR's zones of occupation and later from the Western Allies' zones of occupation. After the end of the war, repatriation to the USSR turned to the refoulement. The situation of Ukrainians from the territory of the western zones of occupation was a little bit better, as they had a choice whether to return to the USSR or to become political refugees. Those who did not wish to return to the territory of the Soviet Ukraine represented more than half a million. The Soviet system made all possible even by means of refoulement to repatriate to the USSR all "the displaced persons of the soviet origin", who in the result of the war appeared beyond the borders of the USSR.

This study reveals and illustrates the reasons of the Ukrainians' unwillingness to return to the USSR after the end of the Second World War, analysing the reasons of the compulsory nature of the repatriation, its methods and mechanisms. Some aspects of the process of repatriation in the USSR after the Second World War were studied by M. Kunytskiy¹, Yu. Makar and S. Rudyk², and L. Strilchuk³. The repressive measures of the Soviet Power concerning Ukrainians who were repatriated from the western zones of occupation were also considered by I Bilas⁴ and B. Yarosh⁵. Nevertheless, the reasons of the

¹ Куницький М.П., *Примусова репатріація радянських громадян до СРСР після Другої світової війни (український вектор)* [Mandatory repatriation of the soviet citizens to the USSR after the World War II (Ukrainian vector)], Луцьк, 2007, 248 с.

² Макара Ю.І., Рудик С.Я., *Проблеми видачі українських втікачів і переміщених осіб Радянському Союзові після Другої світової війни* [The issues of extradition of the returnees to the USSR after the World War II], in «Питання нової та новітньої історії зарубіжних країн Європи та північної Америки» [«The problems of the modern and early modern history of the foreign countries of Europe and Northern America»], 1995, Випуск 4, с. 140 – 149.

³ Стрільчук Л., *Українські політичні біженці та переміщені особи після другої світової війни* [Ukrainian refugees and displaced people after the World War II], in «Літопис Волині: журнал» [«Volyn Chronicle: journal»], 2004, Число 3., с. 139 – 167.

⁴ Білас І., *Репресивно-каральна система в Україні 1917 – 1953* [Repressive and punitive system in Ukraine in 1917 – 1953], Київ, 1994, 420 с.

compulsory nature of the repatriation were factually not studied.

Reasons for non-acceptance by the Ukrainians of the soviet reality

To clearly characterize and analyse the reasons of unwillingness of some Ukrainians to return to the USSR after the end of the Second World War it is necessary undertake a detailed consideration of the political, social and economic situation which, in fact, caused the compulsory repatriation. The 20s – beginning of 40s of the XX century in the history of Ukraine, as well as generally in the history of the USSR, are known as the period of the mass expulsion of people and even of the nations. Soviet system cruelly persecuted and physically eliminated all the ideological opponents of the regime, the representatives of different political parties, other than the communist party, Ukrainian intelligentsia, clergy, the representatives of the so called bourgeois class, and even the country-people. Besides deportation and removal to special settlement – which undoubtedly were a terrible crime committed by the soviet power in relation to the population – there were also a number of other unpopular measures which entailed dissatisfaction, protests and non-acceptance of the power as it was. The methods of *sovietisation* attempted to bring spiritual life under the influence of one ideology reduced to poverty cultural processes and under the control of the totalitarian regime. Monotony suppressed culture and hindered its development. All-union elements of culture were put above those national and religious. A brutal atheistic pressure on the population began despite everywhere were still devout believers.

Such criminal and unpopular measures included first of all collectivization of the individual farms. The policy of submission of the rural areas to the totalitarian regime included several stages: the first stage was confiscation of the lands of the landowners, state officials, monasteries and settlements; realization of the aims of the second stage was hidden and delayed to later, having mustered the support of a part of the population to hold collectivization of the lands⁶. The beginning of the collectivization was accompanied by propaganda of the benefits of the collective farming comparing to individual. However, collectivization did not deliver positive results. Peasants did not wish to enter into collective farms voluntarily. That is why, even in 1928, in collective farms there were less than

⁵ Ярош Б., *Тоталітарний режим на західноукраїнських землях. 30-50-ті роки XX століття (історико-політологічний аспект)* [Totalitarian regime on the Western Ukrainian lands. 30-50-ies of the 20th century (historical and political aspects)], Луцьк, 1995, 171 с.

⁶ Іван Білас, *op. cit.*, p. 49 – 52.

2% of all the peasant homesteads holding not more than 2, 5% of all the areas under crops and 2, 1% of the cereals plantings⁷.

Stress speeds and tyrannical methods of collectivization lead to tragic results. Collectivization resulted in the disorganization and degradation of the agricultural sector. It was only in the 50-ies when it became possible to achieve the level of the production of the agricultural goods of 1928. However, physical elimination of the part of the Ukrainian peasantry was the most fundamental loss. Especially numerous casualties were suffered by the Ukrainian rural communities during the years of Famine-Genocide in the period of 1932–1933, which became a national tragedy for Ukrainians. Famine-Genocide of 1932–1933 is a terrible crime of the Stalin's totalitarian system committed against Ukrainian people. This crime can be classified as Famine-Genocide which had both social and national nature.

The Ukrainian intellectuals focused on the collectivization, as for example I. Bahryanyi who wrote about this: "During 1929 – 1932 in the process of the so called collectivization, the *sovietism* declared war to the well-to-do peasantry and did it by means of the slogan "elimination of the class of the Ukrainian kulak"⁸. In practice, it meant physical elimination of a great number of people who were honest workers and cereal-farmers and first of all of the Ukrainian peasantry. Such an elimination of "the class of the Ukrainian kulak" factually was an elimination of the Ukrainian nation because peasants made 70 % of it. As a matter of fact, with this slogan of the physical elimination millions of the Ukrainians were eliminated and they were not only the so called "kulak" but poor men, intellectuals, and workers too.

The totalitarian state was asserting itself by means of violence and terror. During the 30s, there were several waves of repressions in Ukraine which were held on the basis of the ungrounded accusations of the "subversive activity", "bourgeois nationalism" and under the slogan of the fight with "the rests of the enemy classes and parties". During the period of 1930–1941, in Ukraine, more than 100 different "organizations", "centers", and "groups" were found.

The scientific intelligentsia suffered from the cruel crackdown. For example, 250 persons were repressed in the Academy of Sciences among which there were 19 academicians. A wave of repressions also included military staff. For example, in Kharkiv military district more than 45 divisions and brigade commanders were repressed, and in Kyiv military district more than one thousand officers were arrested. The most massive repressions took place during the period of 1936–1938, basing on the incomplete data about 170 000

⁷ Богдан Ярош, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁸ Багрянний І., *Чому я не хочу повертатися в СРСР?* [Why don't I want to come back to the USSR?], Вінніпег, 1946, 32 с.

persons who were affected in Ukraine⁹.

The distrust of the inhabitants of the western region of Ukraine was even more. Immediately after arrival to the Western Ukraine, the Bolsheviks announced about their “liberating” intentions, spreading terror among the local population. Daily work, cultural and political life stopped. Every new day brought new arrests, uncertainty and fear. During 1940-1941, the former landowners, owners of the enterprises, sellers, leaders and members of the political parties, policemen’s families and officers of the Polish army were removed from the western regions of Ukraine to the special settlements¹⁰. From the end of 1939 till June 1941, in the Western Ukraine, four large-scale deportation operations were held (February, April, June 1940 and May – June 1941). The deportation policy – which was realized by Bolshevik power during 1940–1941 and recognized as “the most effective means of political and social and economic changes in the region” – spanned the most numerous percentage of the population. Generally speaking, from the former lands of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, from 311 to 329 thousands of people were evicted; 223 thousands of people were from the western regions of Ukraine¹¹.

At the meetings organized everywhere in the western Ukrainian lands, the representatives of the soviet power promised the population a “heavenly life in the collective farming”. However, from the very beginning of its establishment, the soviet regime did not dare to start organization of the collective farming. Simultaneously with the processes of collectivization at the Western Ukraine the establishment of the bodies of the soviet government was in process as well as implementation of the new administrative system which was supposed to correspond to the soviet example in full. It is worth mentioning that beginning from the first steps after the reunion Stalin’s totalitarian system did not account for the national peculiarities determined by the customs and traditions. At the same time, despite the help of the whole country in the development of the production, culture, and education it was possible to notice significant efforts of the new administration to unify management of the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres of the Western Ukraine. Mass usage in the Western Ukraine during the stated period of the managers of any level preferably from the eastern regions of the republic was first of all politically substantiated. All that happened under the circumstances when Communist Party of the Western Ukraine, its management and rank-and-file members were cast political aspersions on. Many

⁹ Шабала Я. М., *Історія України: Навчальний посібник* [History of Ukraine: a study guide], Луцьк, 2006. – 268 с.

¹⁰ Михайло Куніцький, *op. cit.*, p. 38 – 39.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

communists of the Western Ukraine disappeared without a trace during the "purges" of the 30s. To form local party bodies consisting of the "escaped" members Communist Party of the Western Ukraine by the traditions of the Stalin's personnel policy was rather dangerous.

Soviet regime ruthlessly destroyed traditional public and political structures of the western region. In order to do this, the government used military force and political repressions. Political organizations, parties, public alliances, cultural unions were immediately banned or taken under control¹². Bolsheviks' government paid special attention to the anti-religious propaganda too. As it is known, the religion and the church always played special role in the life of the Ukrainians. Church was a kind of a barometer of the public mood of the Ukrainian community, especially in the Western Ukraine where the outpourings and aspirations existing in the society crystallized and revealed. That is why it is no wonder that the Christian morale was a ruling ideology. No political party had such an influence on the masses as the church had.

German and soviet war made the situation in Ukraine even worse. All those who were occupied by Germany, after war aroused mistrust of the government: accusations of the condoning attitude to the German occupants or even worse of the cooperation with them. Part of the population of the Western Ukraine (during the war years and after its end) entered Ukrainian Rebel Army (URA). As is known, the main task of URA was to create an independent Ukrainian state and to fight militarily both against fascists and soviet totalitarian system. Thus, after liberation Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic from German occupants, the soviet government started military fight against URA; and again a wave of repressions ran down in the Western Ukraine.

The Ukrainians who served in the Red army also found themselves at low ebb, namely those who in the result of the military actions appeared in the military captivity. Soviet government especially suspiciously regarded those who stayed in the prison camps: the government considered them as German agents and traitor etc. During the years of war, all those who stayed in the grip of the enemy got (at the best case) into the penal battalions, explaining why the prisoners of the concentration camps were not encouraged with optimism.

Besides military prisoners on the territory of Germany and its allies at the end of the war, there were a lot of soviet citizens including Ukrainians. They were the people who voluntarily or involuntary were removed by the fascists to the compulsory works. Those who were in the territory of the soviet occupation were forced to return to the USSR, but those who lived in the Western Allies'

¹² Людмила Стрільчук, *op. cit.*, p. 141-142.

zone of the occupation had the chance to avoid the mandatory repatriation. Speaking about the reasons of the unwillingness to return to the Soviet Ukraine, every social group had its own reasons but all of them rejected the soviet system.

Mandatory nature of the repatriation of the Ukrainians from the Western zones of occupation

The soviet power tried to send back to USSR the maximally possible number of citizens. The process began by the Resolution of the Council of the People's Commissars dated 04. 10. 1944 about returning of the soviet citizens to their "Motherland". According to this resolution certain measures were undertaken and they were aimed at the creation of the corresponding structures of the republican, regional and state level¹³. On the 23rd of October of 1944, the Repatriation Office – headed by the general-colonel Filip Golikov – was in charge of voluntary and mandatory repatriation of the citizens to the Soviet Union. During the years of its functioning, the office submitted to the highest management of the country 58 reports on the development of the repatriation (spaced 10 days apart). Unfortunately, the information was schematically unanimous and not perfect from the point of view of statistics.

At the beginning of November 1944, Golikov gave an interview to the correspondent of TASS, where described the policy of the soviet regime on the issues of repatriation of the soviet citizens. In particular, he mentioned "the persons with a hostile attitude to the Soviet State as well as those who are trying with the help of cheating, provocation, etc. to poison consciousness of our citizens and make them believe that their soviet Motherland forgot about them, refused them and does not consider them soviet citizens. These people are intimidating our compatriots telling them if they return to their Motherhood they will be yield to repressions. It is not even worth objecting such nonsense... Soviet country remembers and takes care of the citizens who fell in the German slavery. They will be treated at home as the sons of their Motherhood. In the Soviet circles, they believe that even those soviet citizens who did actions under German pressure and terror contradicting the interests of the USSR will not be brought to justice if they are faithful in performance of their duty of returning to their Motherland"¹⁴.

The interview given by F. Golikov was later used as a special appeal of the

¹³ Холодницький В., *Репатріаційна політика Радянської влади на території Чернівецької області у 1944 – 1945 рр.* [Repatriation policy of the Soviet authorities in the territory of Chernivtsi region in 1944 – 1945], in «Вісник центру Буковинознавства» [«Bulletin of the Bukovina history centre»], 1993. Випуск 1, с. 172 – 183.

¹⁴ Людмила Стрільчук, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

Government of the USSR to the army prisoners and interned persons. It was with hope accepted by the displaced persons although did not answer all the questions which bothered them. Finally, this problem was solved by the Decree of the USSR Presidium of the Supreme Council dated 07.07.1945 on "amnesty in connection with the victory over the Hitler's Germany". According to this Decree the war prisoners were announced non-triable, as they were imprisoned alive.

There existed a thought for a long time that practically all persons which were repatriated to the Soviet Union whether voluntarily or forcefully were repressed, discriminated and pursued. Speaking of the life of the dozens of thousands of the displaced persons (especially officers) it was tragic and this fact is proved documentarily. At the same, it must be admitted that a great number of the repatriated managed to avoid repressions.

To accept repatriated persons from the 1-2 Byelorussian and 1-4 Ukrainian fronts, 100 of camps were created, and every camp was designed to accept thousands of people. Among them there were 39 camps to check the civilians: 45 camps in the territory of Byelorussia and 55 camps in the territory of Ukraine. For the acceptance and check of the civilians, 30 camps of the mentioned 100 camps were designed and all the civilians were directed to them (16 such camps were functioning in the territory of Ukraine). At the same fronts, 46 transit points were opened, functioning for the acceptance of the civilians liberated by the Red Army, among which 16 in the territory of Byelorussia, and other 30 in the territory of Ukraine. For the entrance of the repatriated behind the demarcation line, 9 access-and-check points were opened¹⁵. The general measures were stipulated not only by the necessity of the thorough check of the displaced persons but also by the attempts to make a process of repatriation an organized one and to not allow the chaos and anarchy.

A little bit different was the situation with repatriation of the soviet citizens (including Ukrainians) which appeared in Western Allies' zone of occupation. The mentioned problem turned to be rather pressing for the allies as the vast majority of the soviet citizens which were taken away to forced labour or war prisoners stayed in the territory engaged in their combat operations. It is known that the legal acts regulating issues connected with those heaps of people were passed a little later and that complicated the repatriation of the "Soviet people". That is why all of them – after the release from the fascist captivity by the allies or yielding themselves to prisoners to the allied armies – appeared in the camps for the Soviet prisoners of war and for displaced persons. According to the calculations of the scientists, at the end of the war, 4.755.942 Soviet

¹⁵ Земсков В. Н., *Рождение второй эмиграции* [Birth of the second emigration], in «Социологические исследования» [«Sociology studies»], 1991, № 4, с. 3-24.

citizens from abroad¹⁶ (more than half a million were Ukrainians) were in the focus of the soviet power that wanted them back to the USSR.

The USA, Great Britain and the USSR officially nailed down the oral agreements concerning the repatriation by the written agreement. The most suitable moment for that was the Crimean conference which started on the 5th of February 1945 in Yalta. Then, the term “forced repatriation” appeared in the texts of the agreements signed by USA, Great Britain and USSR. The archive documents clearly testify that the top soviet leadership, beginning with the autumn of 1944, was worried by the messages from the English-American sources that the majority of the soviet war prisoners seemed not to wish to return to the USSR; even so, the correctness of this information was doubtful¹⁷. They grounded on the fact that the majority of the soviet war prisoners (as a rule) originated from the workers’ and peasants’ community and they (if to think logically) could not have any objective reasons not to return to the USSR. Meanwhile, the abovementioned agreements provided that all the soviet citizens released from captivity by the English-American allies are subject to returning to the USSR, even if they are not willing to¹⁸. Although the truth was – as it was found out later – that having the status of the winners they did not have concurrent views concerning whom to consider as “all soviet citizens”, the Soviet diplomacy insisted that such citizens are all those who as of the day of the beginning of the Great War II lived to the east of the so called “Curzon line”, or the former Polish citizens (Ukrainians) who originated from the territories annexed to the USSR in 1939¹⁹.

While the political fight over the issue of repatriation was in process, the Soviet citizens were waiting for the shaping of their future in the camps, in the western zones of occupation. The formation of these camps began in summer of

¹⁶ Михайло Куницький, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

¹⁷ *Листування з радою Міністрів, міністерствами і центральними організаціями Союзу РСР з питань репатріації* [Correspondence with the Council of Ministers, ministries and central organizations of the USSR on the issues of repatriation], in *Центральний державний архів Вищих органів влади та Управління у м. Києві (ЦДАВО Укр.)* [Central state archive of the Highest Agencies of the State and Management in Kyiv (TsDAVO of Ukr)], Ф. Р-2, оп. 7, спр. 5785, арк. 135, 137, 149.

¹⁸ Lubomir U. Luciuk, Bohdan S. Kordan (eds.), *Anglo-American perspectives on the Ukrainian Question. 1938 – 1951. A documentary collection*, Kingston (Ontario) – Vestal (Nev-York), The Limestones Press 1987, p. 163.

¹⁹ Рудик С. Я., *До питання про причини, джерела та характер третього етапу української еміграції до країн Північної Америки* [On the question of the reasons, sources and nature of the third stage of the emigration of the Ukrainians to the countries of the Northern America], in *«Питання історії нового та новітнього часу»* [«Issues of the modern and early modern history»], 1994, Вип. третій, с. 79-92.

1944 and some of them were granted the right of self-management, inner autonomy, but with interdiction of the mob punishment. In the most of those camps, the administration consisted of the imprisoned soviet officers and the representatives of the allied armies stayed there as the inspectors and responsible for the outside guard²⁰.

During the war with Germany and the first months after its end, the English and American forces extradited to the USSR "the eastern displaced citizens", mostly collaborators; however, beginning from September-October 1945 they started adhering the principle of the voluntary repatriation which spread to the so called "Eastern" too. Analysing the state of affairs, namely mass refusals to return to the USSR, attempting at all costs to avoid mandatory repatriation; in addition, the Western Allies were reconsidering their position concerning the mandatory repatriation of the citizens of the USSR to their "Motherland". That is why the persons which appeared in the zones of occupation had an opportunity to avoid mandatory return to the USSR.

As the processes of repatriation lasted more than five years and drastic changes connected with the beginning of the "Cold War" took place in the international politics, at that stage the mandatory repatriation was considered by the West as one of the mechanisms of the political and ideological fight with the Soviet Union and stretched far behind the "pure" repatriation of the citizens.

Repressive and punitive measures of the Soviet system against mandatory returnees

The hard lines in the lives of the compulsory labourers and war prisoners of the World War II, as well as the difficult and painful processes of repatriation, checks and screenings were not the last challenges for many Ukrainians. Even those who managed to survive the tests of the Soviet repatriation missions, and those who were able to avoid Soviet concentration camps during the post war period found themselves in an unenviable state. The stigma "returnee" fixed to people by the Soviet system turned to be a sizable hurdle on their life journey. The decisions of the highest organs of state power and the new instructions of the Soviet system's punitive bodies were intensifying the repressions against

²⁰ Стрільчук Л., *Примусова репатріація радянських громадян та створення таборів для переміщених осіб у перші повоєнні роки* [Mandatory repatriation of the soviet citizens and opening of the camps for the displaced persons in the first postwar years], in «Збірник навчально-методичних матеріалів і наукових статей історичного факультету» [«The source book of the study and methodological materials and scientific articles of the history department»], Луцьк, 1998, Випуск 3, с. 129 – 134.

former war prisoners and civilians repatriated from Germany. The peculiarity of this intensification was usage of all those who underwent checkout for the mandatory works²¹. Besides the filtration points, other new checkout and filtration camps were established. These were situated mostly in the European part of the country²². Waiting for the end of the checkout, the imprisoned persons were forced to work hard at the enterprises where the production processes were harmful for their health as well as in the metallurgic and coal industry, in the mines, quarries and pits.

One of the documents illustrates the mandatory allocation of the returnees to different production industries: "2.143.870 persons were taken into German captivity from the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic; 633.630 were men, 728.199 women, and 123.238 children younger than 16 years old. Only 732.855 people returned: 243.700 men, 489.155 women (among them, 218.908 able bodied men and 452.717 able bodied women), and 30.834 children under 16 (16629 lost their parents). Among a total of able bodied returnees, 131.714 people were sent to work in the production industry (53.165 men and 78.549 women); other 475.013 people were sent to work in the farming industry (135 265 men and 339725 women); 11.343 people were sent to the other activities (4.962 men and 6381 women), and 4.922 people were mobilized to the Red Army"²³.

The archives contain a lot of documents that confirm the fact of the mandatory employment and resettlement of the returnees and the quotations say the following: "We were repatriated from France although we originate from the Western Ukraine; then we were sent to work as miners in Ordzhonikidze, in a mine named after V. Lenin... our numerous requests to allow us to return to the Western Ukraine where our families lived were not answered... (the letter was signed by 9 people). Date: 29.03.1947"²⁴. Other similar letters written by the returnees got refusals. For example: "...our answer to your letter is that if you wish to move to Poltava for permanent residence, then you need to have an allowance issued by the regional executive committee of Poltava region and a

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

²² Михайло Куницький, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

²³ *Матеріали з питань трудового та побутового влаштування репатріантів (доповіді, записки, листи, тощо)* [Materials on the issues of employment and settlement of the returnees (reports, notes, letters, etc.)], ЦДАВО Укр., Ф. Р-2, оп. 7, спр. 4240, арк. 135.

²⁴ *Матеріали з питань трудового і побутового влаштування репатріантів по Українській РСР* [Materials on the issues of employment and settlement of the returnees to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic], ЦДАВО Укр., Ф. Р-2., оп. 7, спр. 5823, арк. 11.

Certificate on the opportunity of provision you with dwelling space ... Zozulenko. Date: 22.12.1947"²⁵, or "We are sending for your consideration a notice submitted by Bondarenko. A citizen Bondarenko informs that his daughter, repatriated from the Western Germany, is working at the station Chystyakovo, at the station gang. A manager of the personnel department, citizen Goncharov heartlessly treats repatriated citizens which work and under checkouts, calls them "German bitches" and is threatening: "I will send you away to the East, to taiga!" ... Citizen Bondarenko repeatedly (after the refusal) asks to allow his daughter Bondarenko H. to her parents and family... Zozulenko. Date: 25.04.1947"²⁶. The persons sent for the checkout and filtrations were kept in "zariba zones"; they did not have the right to go to the city or to send a letter to their relatives. Those who were engaged in the checkout as well as those who underwent those checkouts were planned to get a certain monetary payment, but a significant part of that payment was deducted in favour of the state.

Another example characterizing the regime in those camps, order and methods of checkout and filtration is a letter written by a person kept in camp No. 48: "...here are people of different ages and of all nationalities. All of them were in the captivity in Germany, Romania, and Finland or lived in the occupied territory... The people imprisoned in these tuberculosis niduses have been waiting for the decisions determining their fates for months or even years; they are kept imprisoned factually without a court decision and without any investigation... for example, a person has been kept in the camp for six months and only even the seventh months come that person is called for examination. When the examination is over, another half of the year should pass until that person is called again. And only when that person starts airing his/her grievance then they answer: "Your duty is to sit and wait, we'll finish a checkout and then we'll see what to do with you"²⁷. Another example is the following: "They are

²⁵ Рада Міністрів Української РСР. Управління справами. 1947 рік. Матеріали з питань трудового і побутового влаштування репатріантів по Українській РСР [Council of the Ministers of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Executive Secretariat. 1947. Materials on the issues of employment and settlement of the returnees to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic], ЦДАВО Укр., Ф. Р-2., оп. 7, спр. 5830, арк. 123.

²⁶ Матеріали з питань трудового і побутового влаштування репатріантів по Українській РСР [Materials on the issues of employment and settlement of the returnees to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic], ЦДАВО Укр., Ф. Р-2., оп. 7, спр. 5823, арк. 205.

²⁷ Матеріали про роботу збірно-пересильних пунктів у справах репатріації в областях Української РСР [Materials on the work of the collection and transit points on the issues of repatriation in the regions of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic],

working in the mines and are eating anything – sometimes it's rotten potato or half-rotten tomatoes and when good food is brought it does not get as intended, although almost all the payment is deducted to pay for the food. The deductions are made from the payment to a good worker, and they make, let's say, 1500 roubles... at this, the miner gets in hand 200 roubles per months. And that person has no right to spend this money to buy milk or some nutritious food from the market... In short, how can that person continue working in the mine, keeping to such a starving diet? It's impossible even to imagine. People are half-starved, dirty, wearing ragged clothes, without linen, lousy, living in barracks where there are millions of bedbugs and other parasites. When somebody is complaining, he/she is immediately told off – they are usually reminded that this it's not Germany or Finland. It turns out that here, on the native land, it is possible to go a long way, in the sense of abuse of people... those who served in the army of the enemy are worth of special attention, but those who were kept on the captivity and survived are tortured here...they are not the workers, they are special squads. When a weak person has not handled workload he/she is left in the mine, hungry, for the second shift, and when the person has not handled the second workload – then he/she is dragged to home"²⁸. The copy of this letter was sent by the general Golikov to the Deputy Commissar of the Internal Affairs of the USSR, Chernyshov. On this letter, there is a notice of one of the responsible executives of the Repatriation Office Agency: "I have a lot of such examples"²⁹.

Checkout and filtration camps were mostly located in the regions of the big industrial cities, coal mines, constructions and pits. All those who got there were engaged in the production. In the places where there was a special need for the work force, the term of the checkout stretched for many years. For example, the camps in the regions of Pechora, Vorkuta and other locations existed until 1950 and the checkout and filtration camp on the chemical factory in Leningrad existed until 1953. The most often one can find in the archive funds of the Central State Archive of the Highest Agencies of the State and Management the documents containing the following: "Explanation on the impossibility to fire from work: The returnees can fire from the enterprise on the grounds general for all workers according to the Code of Laws on Labour. There are no legal grounds for your resignation so the manager of the enterprise is entitled to

ЦДАВО Укр., Ф. Р-2., оп. 7, спр. 5832, арк. 198.

²⁸ *Матеріали з питань трудового і побутового влаштування репатріантів по Українській РСР* [Materials on the issues of employment and settlement of the returnees in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic], ЦДАВО Укр., Ф. Р-2., оп. 7, спр. 5823, арк. 122.

²⁹ Людмила Стрільчук, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

refuse to resign you. According to the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, dated 25.08.1946, No. 1897, you, being a returnee by the agreement with the manager of the factory can be granted the right to move your family to the place of your employment”³⁰. It has become a kind of a pattern for the refusal of the requests of the returnees to resign from the enterprise and move to their families. Yet, in the archives there are a few documents with information on allowing the resignation and moving to the worker's family; for example, “Repatriation Office at the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic ordered to resign a citizen Virbst in case of confirmation of his family status”³¹. But such documents are very rare. The situation of the former war prisoners was even more complicated as they were sent inland to the checkout camps of NKVS. They were kept in “zariba camps”, having no right to go behind the borders of the zone or to send a letter to their relatives.

Every region had its own district commissioner in charge of acceptance and settlement of the returnees. As a rule, the heads of the personnel departments of the regional executive committees were appointed the commissioners. There was a secret instruction to the repatriation commissioners in the regional centers. The essence of the instruction was by any reason not to accommodate the returnees in the regional centers and in Kyiv. In this connection, we can come across numerous complaints filed by the people which underwent the checkout and filtration, but could not settle down in the cities where they lived before the war; the citizen Herman H. V. was refused to get the permanent residence in Kyiv, even if he spent some time in the transit and filtration camp from the Kyiv region³².

Most of the people which were repatriated during the first post-war years to the USSR were, as a rule, very ill and weak. Actually it was a natural phenomenon as their majority was starving for years and the absence of the medical care, constant nervous tension, and the stress affected them negatively. Fatalities on their way to the transit and clearing stations or already in the territory of the stations were often.

Besides checkouts, the Soviet power had the task of mentally re-educating

³⁰ *Матеріали з питань трудового та побутового влаштування репатріантів (доповіді, записки, листи, тощо.)* [Materials on the issues of employment and settlement of the returnees (reports, notes, letters etc.)], ЦДАВО Укр., Ф. Р-2., оп. 7, спр. 4242, арк. 10.

³¹ *Матеріали з питань трудового і побутового влаштування репатріантів по Українській РСР* [Materials on the issues of employment and settlement of the returnees in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic], ЦДАВО Укр., Ф. Р-2., оп. 7, спр. 5823, арк. 59.

³² *Ibid.*

and forming a corresponding ideology for returnees. The report on the “culture-into-masses work” with the returnees of Sambir ZPP-323 contains the following information: “On 09.02.1946, the returnees and commissioners of the regions (agitators) presented 208 reports in which 26.835 returnees took part, also 84 lectures were rendered in which 5.906 returnees participated too; besides 26.490 discussions were held and 300.130 returnees took part in them”³³. Whole array of agitators were working in the collection and transit and in the transit and filtration camps; their main task was to persuade the returnees to work in the production sphere and in the farming, as they needed work force mostly. In addition, the agitators were trying to explain the returnees that the methods of the repatriation were correct and the only possible.

At the end of 1945, at the transit and clearing station were created the “information desks” in order to help the returnees who were trying to find their relatives: “At the ZPP-323, 25 information desks are functioning and helping the returnees, answering to their questions. The information desks, as a rule, are headed by the regional agitators. As of 09.02.1946, 46.976 returnees were rendered their services and 3.117 received help in their search of the relatives (by means of enquires sent to the regional executive committees and regional offices of NKVS)”³⁴.

Meanwhile, the returnees were suffering from the rough conditions in the checkout and filtration camps, unsatisfactory meal, mental tension, threatening and bullying. The situation with provision of the returnees with the goods of the first necessity is clearly illustrated by the telegram from the commandant of ZPP-325 in Kovel, sent to Zozulenko: “...because of the delay with carriages, more than 700 extra people are kept in Kovel camp for 13 days – all of them arrived to Ukraine from France. People are suffering from illnesses, the limit of food products is exhausted, and the persons are starving. The sentiments of people are extremely negative and I am asking for your directive to immediate placing of the carriages (50 carriages) to Kovel station. Otherwise, there might be a strike. The commander of the camp, Kinchadze. Date: 08.09.1947”³⁵. In his turn, Zozulenko sent a telegram to Kovel, containing the following: “...to raise the spirits, we are proposing the

³³ *Матеріали з питань трудового та побутового влаштування репатріантів (доповіді, записки, листи, тощо)* [Materials on the issues of employment and settlement of the returnees (reports, notes, letters, etc.)], ЦДАВО Укр., Ф. Р-2., оп. 7, спр. 4242, арк. 31.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, арк. 30.

³⁵ *Матеріали про роботу збірно-пересильних пунктів у справах репатріації в областях Української РСР* [Materials on the work of the collection and transit points on the issues of repatriation in the regions of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic], ЦДАВО Укр., Ф. Р-2., оп. 7, спр. 5832, арк. 61.

following slogan on the placards of the people who meet the new arrivals in the camp: "Long live the Soviet Socialist Ukraine – an integral part of the USSR" – make 50 of them, and "Brotherly greeting to the Soviet citizens who are returning to their Motherland!" – 50 units... Zozulenko. Date: 10.09.1947"³⁶.

It would be a big mistake to consider that all returnees were sent to the mandatory work. Some of them, although it was a less part, were sent to the places where their families lived. According to the legislative documents, the returnees who successfully underwent checkout and filtration, were paid a one-time financial aid the amount of which was defined by the same filtration committees; the returnees were also provided with accommodation in the cases when they were not sent to their families. However, as the documents show, not all the returnees received the same amounts or any money at all. Some of the returnees were given retirement benefits and other following the decisions of the committees were deprived of them. Thus, the archive documents contain numerous complaints of the returnees, accusing that they did not get the retirement benefits or other small amounts. It often happened that the returnees had to start their life practically from the very beginning, as they did not have even the most necessary belongings. Among the archive documents there are a lot complaints of the returnees on the impossibility to get higher education or a job in the specialty, or to settle in the accommodation where they lived before (in the cities).

The returnees – civilians and war prisoners who were set free by the allies – were treated specifically. They were considered to be foreign intelligence agents. The repressive actions against the former war prisoners and returnees were elaborated and results-oriented. From the very first days of their freedom, they got into the "system of Gulag": humiliation, hunger, unsanitary conditions – all those measure were supposed to persuade them that they were guilty. Another goal was to influence the public opinion, form the ideology that something was wrong with those who returned from captivity. Finally, there was another aspect connected with the necessity of free of charge entrants into the labour force of those institutions of Gulag that could not exist without the slave labour³⁷.

CONCLUSIONS

Mandatory repatriation of the Soviet people and Ukrainians confirmed antipathy and antagonism in relation to the Soviet regime, and added to the impressions which were during the 20s-30s of the 20th Century with a great vengeance imposed on the Ukrainians by the Bolshevik regime. Study of the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, арк. 35.

³⁷ Михайло Куницький, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

documents and materials (related to the processes of the mandatory repatriation, checkouts and filtration of the soviet people) allow us to conclude that the actions of the party and state leadership of the USSR in relation to the returnees were more political ungrounded repressions which spread to absolutely everybody including war prisoners, grown up civil returnees as well as all the soviet military men – “surrounded” – which appeared in the territory recovered from enemy occupation. Some even more severe kinds of punishment were applied in relation to those who served in the German army, policy, punitive and intelligence agencies of Germany.

A significant part of the former Soviet war prisoners and civil returnees from amongst those that were deported by the German occupation were groundlessly convicted by a court (or in its absence) to imprisonment and exile on the basis of one article of the Criminal Code related to the “state crime”. Repatriation as well as the following checkout and filtration of the returnees became another criminal aspect of the Soviet regime against its citizens. Instead of bringing to the border of the USSR and letting people go to home, to their families, the Soviet repatriation authorities put the sick, weak and disillusioned people to the rack of the humiliating checkouts which were far too severe.

Checkout and filtration camps (which often did not correspond even to the level of the concentration camps) became a kind of a prison for many months. The hardship and suffering of the returnees continued, as they were sent for work in industry and farms without any preparation or interest for their needs or wishes. It was simply convenient for the state to fill in the vacuum of the labour force deficit. Years passed before the returnees could move to their families and managed to get rid of the miserable mark of “returnee”.