

Confiscated Voices: The Case of Soviet Postal Censorship on the 1947 Operation Zapad

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One of the tasks of the Soviet secret services was to gather information, monitor and analyze public moods or, in the language of documents, “reaction of the population”. An information report was prepared for each important event, which revealed the positive and especially negative reaction of various segments of Soviet society. If necessary, such monitoring was made among certain groups: intelligentsia, scientists of the Academy of Sciences or servicemen of the Red Army.

Chekist measures and operations were also the subject of an analysis of public sentiment by Soviet secret services. The “authorities” were obliged to monitor the “population's reaction” to the preparation, conduct and consequences of forced evictions and migrations. The most massive Soviet deportation after WWII from Western Ukraine in October 1947, codenamed “Zapad” (“West”), was not an exception, as a result of which 26,332 families or 77,791 people were deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan, of whom 19,070 men, 37,865 women and 20,856 children under the age of 15. The operation was carried out in order to completely defeat the Ukrainian liberation movement.

Sources of information about public moods could differ both in origin, completeness of data obtained, reliability, and representativeness (presentation of different assessments and views on the activities of “authorities”). During the struggle against the Ukrainian liberation movement after the Second World War on the territory of Western Ukraine, the Chekists received information: 1) during the interrogation of members of the anti-communist Resistance Movement; 2) from trophy documents obtained during Chekist-military actions; 3) from reports of employees of “authorities”; 4) from agents and 5) as a result of political control measures.

In historiography, “political control” is interpreted as a systematic collection of data with subsequent analysis of information obtained from various sources about public sentiments, public response to government activities, behavior and intentions of extremist, anti-government groups or organizations¹. Researchers V. Lytvynenko and V. Ogorodnik note that political control measures included the following mandatory elements: the collection of information by the authorities about the relevant mood of the population, censorship, political investigation and repression². One of the key tools of political control was the perustration of postal and telegraphic correspondence (“PC”).

In contrast to the information received by the Soviet secret services about the public's response to the deportation in October 1947, correspondence materials containing information about Operation “Zapad” that had not yet been the subject of special research. Individual scientific investigations into the mass deportation of 1947 practically do not reflect the information obtained as a result of the measures of the “PC”³. It is worth noting that today there is only one published archival document that contains the results of the Chekist revision of the correspondence of the civilian population of Western Ukraine⁴. Another reason is the dispersion of the results of the perustration of correspondence on various fonds of the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine, namely: in F. 2 “Directorate for Combating Banditry of the NKVD – Directorate 2-N MGB, 4th Directorate of the NKVD-KGB of the UkrSSR, Kyiv”, F. 16 “Secretariat of the DPU of the UkrSSR-KGB of the UkrSSR, Kharkiv, Kyiv” and F. 71 “UMDB – KGB in Lviv and Drohobych oblasts”.

¹ Цит за.: *Литвиненко В., Огороднік В.* Відділи військової цензури та політичного контролю НКВС–НКДБ СРСР у Червоній армії та Військово-морському флоті (кін. 1930-х – березень 1946 рр.) // 3 архівів ВУЧК–ГПУ–НКВД–КГБ. № 1. 2014. С. 99–100. URL: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/za_2014_1_6 (дата звернення: 24.01.2020).

² Там само. С. 100.

³ *Бажан О.* Операція «Захід»: до 75-річчя депортації населення Західної України у віддалені райони СРСР // Україна ХХ століття: культура, ідеологія, політика. 2013. Вип. 18. С. 338–347; *Його ж.* Операція «Захід» – апогей депортаційних акцій радянських спецслужб на західноукраїнських землях (1940–1950-і роки) // Реабілітовані історією: у 27 т. Львівська область. Кн. 2: м. Борислав, Бродівський район. Львів: Астролябія, 2014. С. 127–141; *Марчук І.* Операція «Захід» на території Рівненської області // Реабілітовані історією: у 27 т. Рівненська область. Кн. 7. Рівне, 2017. С. 219–228; *Мусієнко І.* Депортації населення з території Північної Буковини та Хотинщини в 1941–1951 роках // Український Альманах 2010. Warszawa, Варшава : Об’єднання українців в Польщі, 2010. S. 187–200.

⁴ Документ, який містить, поміж іншим, матеріали «ПК»: «...нам дорікнули у ЦК КП(б)У, що ми мало беремо...»: До 70-річчя масової депортації населення Західної України під кодовою назвою «Захід» / вступ. ст. та публ. О. Бажана // 3 архівів ВУЧК–ГПУ–НКВД–КГБ. 2012. № 2. С. 207–210. URL: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/za_2012_2_8 (дата звернення: 10.12.2019).

Despite the fact that the materials of the postal censorship for 1947–1948 have been preserved incompletely, the information potential of the data collected by the Soviet secret services as a result of the “PC” measures makes it possible to study a number of issues related to both the preparatory phase of Operation “Zapad” and especially with the assessment of the consequences and the general effect of the deportation on the inhabitants of Western Ukraine.

It is worth noting that the history of Soviet political control measures is largely revealed for the period before and during World War II and focuses primarily on general issues of censorship⁵. The functioning of units of “authorities” of political control, the implementation of correspondence perustration and their archival heritage is discussed in detail in the works of V. Litvinenko and V. Ogorodnik⁶, R. Podkur and V. Chentsov⁷, as well as A. Smykalin⁸.

In Soviet Ukraine, the system of political control was formed on the basis of normative acts of the RSFSR, which, beginning on October 27, 1917, the Bolshevik regime regulated censorship and destroyed freedom of speech. First in the format of military censorship, and since 1922 in the format of political control over the printed word. In particular, the Directorate of Political Control of the State Political Administration (PC GPU) of the RSFSR, established in June 1922, carried out perustration of postal and telegraph correspondence, control over the production of all printed materials, films and photographs, printing houses, bookstores and more. The structural subdivisions of the Soviet secret services, which supervised the correspondence, underwent changes and subordination at the same time as the changes in the “authorities”. During the German-Soviet war, political control was replaced by military censorship, but the tasks remained the same⁹. In 1943, a special Department “V” (отдел “В”) was created in the central

⁵ *Бабюх В. А.* Политическая цензура в советской Украине в 1920–1930-е гг. : монография. Казань: Изд-во КНИТУ, 2012. 224 с.; *Блюм А. В.* Советская цензура в эпоху тотального террора: 1929–1953. Санкт-Петербург: Академический проект, 2000. 312 с.; *Горяева Т. М.* Политическая цензура в СССР. 1917–1991 гг. Москва: Российская политическая энциклопедия (РОССПЭН), 2009. 407 с.

⁶ *Литвиненко В., Огородник В.* Відділи військової цензури та політичного контролю... С. 96–345.

⁷ *Подкур Р., Ченцов В.* Документы органов государственной безопасности УССР 1920–1930-х годов: источниковедческий анализ. Тернополь: «Збруч», 2010. 372 с.

⁸ *Смыкалин А.С.* Перлюстрация почтовой корреспонденции и почтовая военная цензура в России и СССР : монография. Москва: Издательство «Русайнс», 2015. 268 с.

⁹ Детальніше про історію підрозділів «ПК» див.: *Литвиненко В., Огородник В.* Відділи військової цензури та політичного контролю... С. 100–144; *Подкур Р., Ченцов В.* Документы органов государственной безопасности УССР 1920–1930-х годов... С. 75–93.

office of the NKGB of the USSR and the Ukrainian SSR, the task of which was to review postal and telegraphic correspondence¹⁰.

Order of the NKGB USSR № 00466 of November 22, 1945 set January 1, 1946 as the date of full return from wartime measures – military censorship and official censorship of international and all-Union correspondence of civilians – to measures of political control¹¹. The normative document stated that the principle of selective covert control of correspondence was introduced in most of the territory of the Soviet Union. At the same time, in the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian SSRs, as well as in the western regions of the Ukrainian and Belarusian SSRs, the original correspondence was to be reviewed in full and in secret¹².

As of January 1, 1946, a new organizational and staffing structure of departments and divisions “V” and checkpoints “PC” in the UkrSSR in accordance with the order of the NKGB USSR № 00497 of December 19, 1945. In particular, in Western Ukraine, organizational units of general 677 people, provided by the order, were created in the following 26 settlements: Brody, Volodymyr-Volynskyi, Horodenka, Drohobych, Dubno, Zhovkva, Kalush, Kovel, Kolomyia, Kostopil, Krasne, Kremenets, Lutsk, Lviv, Novoselytsia, Rivne, Sambir, Sarny, Sokyryany, Stanislav, Stryi, Sudova Vyshnya, Terebovlya, Ternopil, Chernivtsi, Chortkiv¹³. From the specified number of personnel in checkpoints “PC” the staff at 405 persons was provided.

In early January 1946, the order of the NKGB USSR № 008 announced the “Instruction on the work of political control bodies of the NKGB (“PC”)”, which regulated the main tasks and rules for the secret control of postal and telegraphic correspondence. One of the tasks of this work was to “*identify the political sentiments and responses of various segments of the population to domestic and foreign political events*”¹⁴.

The correspondence perustration was subject to strict secrecy not only in view of the danger of revealing the method of Chekist work, but also by the very fact of the existence in the Soviet Union of secret postal censorship¹⁵. In the “PC” checkpoints, the selection of documents for perustration was to be carried out according to the tasks approved by the NKGB chiefs¹⁶.

¹⁰ Литвиненко В., Огороднік В. Відділи військової цензури та політичного контролю... С. 125.

¹¹ ГДА СБУ (Галузевий державний архів Служби безпеки України). Ф. 9. Оп. 1. Спр. 5-сп. Арк. 350.

¹² Там само. Арк. 350зв.

¹³ Там само. Спр. 47-сп. Арк. 209–227.

¹⁴ Там само. Спр. 224-сп. Арк. 32зв.

¹⁵ Там само. Арк. 34.

¹⁶ Там само. Арк. 35–36.

All letters, read and reviewed by the “PC”, depending on their content, had to be either passed to the addressees, or confiscated (the letter “K” was used for conspiracy purposes), or sent to the relevant NKGB units for operational use. The information thus obtained was to be recorded in the memoranda either as a copy of a separate letter or as an extract¹⁷. Systematic informational messages on topical issues, such as economic recovery, sowing, political sentiment, or reactions to important domestic political events, had to be prepared regularly and sent to the relevant Soviet secret services or party authorities (without disclosure of “PC”)¹⁸. The instruction also provided for daily, monthly and quarterly reporting on the results of postal censorship¹⁹.

Monthly reports on the work of the “PC” checkpoints of the Ministry of State Security of the Ukrainian SSR (from intra-Union correspondence) were prepared in 3 copies. The first was sent to the head of Department “V” of the MGB USSR M. Gribov, the second – to the Secretariat of the MGB UkrSSR, and the third went to the file of Department “V”. As such documentation had a short shelf life (up to 5 years)²⁰, the materials of the “PC” items were preserved only in the archives of other units of the Soviet secret services.

Preparations for the future operation “Zapad” began with the issuance of the directive of the MGB UkrSSR № 50 of May 14, 1947 and the creation on June 1 of the same year at the Directorate 2-N MGB UkrSSR a group to coordinate and control this activity²¹.

As early as July 1947, in the monthly reports of the MGB UkrSSR on the results of the work of the “PC” checkpoints, the Chekists recorded in correspondence the “reaction of the population” to the preparatory measures for the future eviction of Ukrainian underground families. Thus, in July, 96 such messages were selected for thematic information²², in August – 62²³, and in September – 158²⁴.

Beginning in September 1947, monthly reports also provided excerpts from correspondence mentioning preparations for the eviction of “families of repressed OUN members”. Such extracts indicated the addressee, the date of the letter (if the date was missing in the text, it was determined by a postmark), a short illustrative quote translated into Russian, the addressee and the actions of employees of

¹⁷ Там само. Арк. 38.

¹⁸ Там само. Арк. 39зв.

¹⁹ Там само. Арк. 41зв–42.

²⁰ Там само. Спр. 252-сп. Арк. 184–185зв.

²¹ Там само. Спр. 595. Арк. 32–33.

²² Там само. Ф. 16. Оп. 1. Спр. 611. Арк. 41.

²³ Там само. Спр. 616. Арк. 3.

²⁴ Там само. Спр. 619. Арк. 211.

Department “V” regarding the letter itself. For example, in the report for September 1947, 2 extracts were submitted: the first from Drohobych, and the next from Stanislavskiyi oblast, both documents were confiscated²⁵:

“Komi ASSR, st. Pechora, LK, p/s 274/18, Skiminin V.

3/IX.47 “...This morning the MGB came to our village, convened those who have a convict in the family and described the composition of the family. They asked how old the children, the elderly, were, whether there were cows, horses, how much land, whether they had handed over the farm. Something terrible is happening. Ivan TIZEVSKY said that these families would be deported to Siberia. Such recordings are made in all villages... The time has come for us to have to disappear, there is no other way out...”

Stanislav oblast, Zhovtnivskiyi district
Silets village, Skimina A.S.

/From. “V” UMGB Stanislav oblast doc. “K” together with the memorandum was sent to the Zhovtniv Raion Department of the MGB on № 12/2644 dated 3/IX.47”²⁶.

In addition, in inquiries and special reports prepared on the basis of “PC” checkpoints on “spreading rumors” and “response of the OUN underground and their families” on future deportation – which the heads of regional departments of the MGB of western regions of Ukraine sent in September and October 1947 – the leadership of the “authorities” indicated that the local population was aware of the impending mass forced evictions. For example, in the Drohobych oblast, in August, 47 letters were found with information about the forthcoming deportation to Siberia²⁷. In the Ternopil oblast from August 27 to September 3, 7 such reports were installed²⁸, and by September 10, their number had increased to 11²⁹.

The information contained in the excerpts from the letters allows further research of the personal survival strategies used by those who were the target group for future deportation:

OSTAPYUK V.V. from Lanovets district, in “A” [address] – OSTAPYUK G.M. Karaganda region, Dolyna post office, mailbox letters “LK” 246 – X 288047 writes: *“Here all those, who have prisoners, rewrite cattle, fields, people and how old. Every woman is trying to save herself as best as she can. Many file for divorce. Ksenia SLEVINSKA has gone through divorce our Khrystyna has also requested it and so did the others. I don't know what to do, I'm sorry for Volodia who will starve to death. Those who left for the Urals in 1944 have all died. I am also thinking of filing for divorce. Someone will come to you that you would sign and, please, sign. Don't think that I am filing for divorce in*

²⁵ Там само. Арк. 243–244.

²⁶ Там само. Арк. 244.

²⁷ Там само. Ф. 2. Оп. 1. Спр. 677. Арк. 16–20.

²⁸ Там само. Спр. 676. Арк. 195–196.

²⁹ Там само. Арк. 198–201.

*order to get married, but there is a black cloud above us and I am forced to because I want to live, you are alone, and I am with a child and I do not want to watch his starvation*³⁰.

Similar reports were received from other areas³¹. In particular, in the special report of UMGB of the Rivne oblast one of the first mentions of the future eviction was revealed according to the materials of the “PC”. Thus, in a letter dated June 26, 1947, a resident of Rokytne raion of Rivne oblast. Uliana Shevchuk wrote in a letter to Hryhoriy Shevchuk to the Unarsky village council, Nizhnyoudynsk raion, Irkutsk oblast:

*“... Do not forget us, as long as we live, we will not forget you. God help us to stay on our land... We are restless now, so now they are squeezing us us, if someone who is a little involved anywhere, he is recorded for Siberia...”*³².

In another letter, a resident of the village Budy Petro Kyrilovets from the same district of Rivne oblast wrote on June 30, 1947 to Kuzma Shevchuk in the Yaroslavl oblast, settlement Perebory, LK p/s 229/1:

*“... We don't have interesting news, as I wrote to you in the first letters that many families are being prepared for eviction... We live like a soul without a body, you know we hang like a cue on a pear, that's our life...”*³³.

Typically, the heads of regional MGB departments indicated at the end of each report that they reiterated the need for stricter adherence to secrecy and precautionary measures in preparation for the deportation operation.

At the same time, the measures of the “PC” recorded the facts of non-compliance with the conspiracy by employees of the MGB USSR sent to Western Ukraine. In the memorandum of September 15, 1947, an excerpt from a letter sent by one of the Chekists on the way from Lviv to Alla Berezhna to Leningrad, Drovyanoi lane, 20, apt. 13:

“13 / IX-47 p...” Hello Allochka.

... My present day is a collection of things and necessary accessories for departure for a special order from the city of Lviv, to the district of Lviv oblast, for an operational government task I receive the development of persons..., and the eviction of their families from this region.

To perform this work, armed to the teeth and instructed to the “lose consciousness” [...]

What caused my trip: since I worked and was associated with this work on paper, and now from the Ministry of State Security of the USSR received an order for several people like me, who were equipped for the above, but it is not only

³⁰ The underlining in the quote is reproduced according to the notes made in pencil // ГДА СБУ. Ф. 2. Оп. 1. Спр. 676. Арк. 192.

³¹ ГДА СБУ. Ф. 2. Оп. 1. Спр. 673. Арк. 149–152; Спр. 676. Арк. 77; Спр. 727. Арк. 43–44.

³² Там само. Спр. 673. Арк. 25.

³³ Там само.

*from our part sent, but from other Departments come, receive tasks and go to the specified place. [...]"*³⁴

The monthly report on the work of the “PC” checkpoints of the MGB UkrSSR for October 1947 has not yet been discovered. However, in the case of reports and special messages of the UMGB of Drohobych oblast monthly reports on the work of the relevant checkpoints in the cities of Drohobych, Sambir, Stryy, Khodoriv and Sudova Vyshnia have been preserved. These data provide an opportunity to reconstruct the nature of the information found during the verification of correspondence and the dynamics of growth in the number of reports on the preparation and conduct of deportation. Thus, in the Drohobych oblast 24 reports were detected in August, 107 in September, 611 in October, and 960 in November³⁵.

According to the work of the checkpoints “PC” in Drohobych oblast in October-November 1947, 3 special reports were prepared: “On the response of part of the rural population in connection with the eviction of families of convicted members of the OUN” (98 documents were found during October 21-28)³⁶, “On the spread of rumors in personal correspondence about the future mass evictions of the population of the western regions of Ukraine” (157 documents were found during October 25-November 15)³⁷ and “On the spread of rumors about the re-eviction of family members of OUN-UPA” (report to the Secretary of the Drohobych Oblast Committee of the CP(b)U, November 1947)³⁸.

In monthly reports and special messages, the Chekists provided the most typical, in their opinion, examples of the reaction of the population of Western Ukraine to the deportation of “Zapad”. In some letters, the addressees tried to use “Aesopian” language or allegory. For example, the word “wedding” was used to denote eviction:

“Recipient: Kemerovo, Kemerovo raion,
p/s LK 82-ANTONIK
Mykhailo Vasyliovych

23.X.47 “Dear son-in-law! 21.X. in our village there was a big but sad wedding, also in other villages there were weddings... Marynka and Kas`ka with the child went far where you are, in general it is difficult to describe what this terrible night was...”

³⁴ Там само. Спр. 676. Арк. 75.

³⁵ Там само. Ф. 71. Оп. 2. Спр. 119. Арк. 335зв., 393, 439зв., 469.

³⁶ Там само. Арк. 435–437зв.

³⁷ Там само. Арк. 448–453.

³⁸ Там само. Арк. 454–456.

Sender: Drohobych raion, Rykhtychi
Stare Selo Village
SHUDLO Ruzya Oleksiivna”³⁹.

Interestingly that the use of verbal codes was one of the methods of OUN conspiracy, the need for which was mentioned in the manual “Conspiracy” (probable author – Vasyl Kuk). This methodical material was also presented in the “Collection of educational materials for the education of OUN youth. Part 1. 1949” The table of meaning deciphered by the Chekists, among other things, indicated that under the word “wedding” the Ukrainian underground encrypted “actions”⁴⁰.

As a result of Operation “Zapad”, the population of the western oblasts had the impression that the Soviet regime had plans to continue evicting and deporting 30 to 50 percent of the local population:

“RECIPIENT: KRYVKO Anastasia Ivanivna
Narva City LK p/s № 7

“... 3.XI.47 Dear Nastya! On October 21, all the families of those arrested and convicted were taken away, but that is not all, they will now evict those who were in Germany. A total of 26,000 people were deported from our region, and 50% of the total population will be evicted, and the rest must be registered in the collective farm.

SENDER: RUDKO Anna Mykolayivna
Drohobych oblast, Mykolayiv raion, the village Pischne
m/m № 002022 / Karim.
Document “K”»⁴¹.

Village residents directly linked collectivization and deportation. The materials of the “PC” checkpoints clearly state that joining the collective farm was perceived as a salvation from eviction, “because collective farmers are not evicted”. Nevertheless, in the vast majority of letters, the addressees write that they will not enroll in the collective farm even under the threat of taking their family to Siberia. In the special message “On the negative reaction of the rural population to the organization of collective farms in the region” the issue of deportations is thoroughly reflected in the correspondence:

“RECIPIENT: KAZYUTA Stepan Volodymyr.
Chelyabinsk oblast Burat-Kilitim P. Y. M. 46 Zh

“... [...] Say you need to enroll in a collective farm, but people don't want to. They say we will go east, but we will not go to the collective farm”.

³⁹ Там само. Арк. 435зв.

⁴⁰ Таблица коду ОУН № 1 і № 2 від 06.09.1960 р. (переклад) // ГДА СБУ. Ф. 13. Оп. 1. Спр. 376. Т. 59. Арк. 27. URL: <http://avr.org.ua/viewDoc/11862> (дата звернення: 24.01.2020).

⁴¹ ГДА СБУ. Ф. 71. Оп. 2. Спр. 119. Арк. 450.

SENDER: KAZYUTA Volodymyr Step.
Drohobych oblast Dublyany raion, village Bile
m/m № 002177/Kar. document “K”⁴².

In addition to those who were categorically opposed to joining the collective farm, there were those who were ready to “enroll” in it to save themselves from deportation to “remote areas of the USSR”:

“RECIPIENT: LYUTYK Dmytro Yakymovych
Komi ASSR, city of Ukhta
p/s LK 226/23

“... They say either go to the collective farm or to Siberia. I will go to the collective farm just to stay [..]”

SENDER: LYUTYK, Drohobych oblast, post Drogobych
m/m № 002191 / Document. “K”⁴³.

Since November 1947, minor changes have probably been made to the structure of the monthly reports of the MGB, which allows us to investigate in more detail the issues raised in private correspondence in connection with Operation “Zapad”. In particular, to monitor the dynamics of frequency distribution of topics and how these data were used by “authorities”.

An analysis of the saved monthly reports from November 1947 to June 1948 shows that the deportation caused a kind of information explosion. The number of letters confiscated in November 1947 with reports of mass evictions is 3-6 times higher than any other topic for which correspondence was confiscated in 1947–1948. In the next 2 months, reports of the operation decline, instead appearing a number of new issues raised by the residents of Western Ukraine in their correspondence: the escape of deportees from exile, the theft of evicted property, and repeated future evictions. Detailed frequency distribution of the number of messages by subject and methods of their use in the work of the Soviet secret services are given in Table. 1⁴⁴.

Months	11.1947	02.1948	03.1948	04.1948	05.1948	06.1948
Content of messages:						
Subjected to “K” (confiscated total):	51118	25758	25460	23468	19718	21350
eviction and arrests of OUN and UPA families	33339	1078	222			
escapes and returns of members of OUN-UPA families deported from the western	273	282		209	256	405

⁴² Там само. Арк. 459.

⁴³ Там само. Арк. 459.

⁴⁴ На основі даних: ГДА СБУ. Ф. 16. Оп. 1. Спр. 629. Арк. 62–64; Спр. 641. Арк. 75–80; Спр. 645. Арк. 96–100; Спр. 649. Арк. 94–99; Спр. 652. Арк. 160–166; Спр. 655. Арк. 117–124.

regions of Ukraine						
stealing of property of OUN and UPA family members, administratively evicted		183	73	47	32	
transition to illegal status of family members of OUN and UPA members		25	176			
negative messages about the eviction of the families of OUN and UPA members				—*		
evasion of administrative eviction of members of OUN and UPA families				10	80	14
allegedly planned re-administrative eviction of family members of OUN participants					56	499
Transferred for operational use (total):	4176	6009	6519	7277	5934	6869
escape and return of members of OUN-UPA families deported from the western regions of Ukraine	345	476		215	295	505
evasion of administrative eviction of members of OUN and UPA families		140	166	123	91	
illegal stay of family members of OUN and UPA participants			25		257	
allegedly planned re-administrative eviction of family members of OUN participants						19
Used for thematic information (total):	21602	20079	29728	37567	23980	26415
arrests and evictions of OUN and UPA family members	5249					
escape and return of evicted family members of OUN and UPA participants		328		102	249	388
evasion of administrative eviction of members of OUN and UPA families		986				
stealing of property of the families of OUN and UPA members who were administratively evicted		191		49	36	
incitement to return of deported families of OUN and UPA members			79			
allegedly planned re-administrative eviction of family members of OUN participants					56	16

Table. 1. Thematic issues concerning forced evictions, defined by the items of the “PC” in November 1947—June 1948.

In the monthly report of the MGB UkrSSR for November 1947, there was no separate thematic section on evictions, but information on deportations was

* The report indicates only the subject of the item without specifying quantitative data.

contained in other parts, for example, in anti-Soviet quotations of the so-called “nationalist character”:

“Gorkivska Railroad, Sukhobezvodne station, LK № 242/13,
ZASYLKINA F.P.

“... Don't be sad, be strong in spirit as you once were. You have to be sure of victory, we will soon get rid of this yoke. Your mother was taken away, but don't be sad, something will happen, because this bullying will soon come to an end, we will be released once and for all. [...] Slavka”.

Volyn oblast, Kolkiv raion,
s/s Chortorysk, SOKOL Sison.

(From “V” UMGB of Volyn oblast the document “K”, together with the special report № 9/1526 is sent to the Head of Division 2-N UMGB of Volyn oblast)”⁴⁵.

Of particular importance to the operational work of the Soviet secret services were reports of evasion, deportation, and the escape and return of deported families from exile. The following letters made it possible to identify those who had managed to avoid repression and to locate their possible whereabouts:

“South Kazakhstan oblast, St. Aris, K/S
Bayrakum, STETS M. T.

“... Many of those who were taken to the Kemerovo region on October 22, 1947, have already returned. Marina FEDORCHAK's daughter-in-law also arrived. She ran away. The road costs her 800 rubles. She sold everything and came almost naked with her three children...”

Ternopil oblast, Kozova raion,
Secondary school, FEDORCHAK O.V.

(From “V” UMDB of Ternopil oblast document “K”, the memorandum was sent to the RD MGB Kozova for № 9/877 from 25/3.48 and used in a special message for № 9/1111 from 26/IV.48)”⁴⁶.

Since July 1948, the structure of monthly reports on the work of the “PC” checkpoints of the MGB has undergone regular changes. From now on, a detailed list of individual issues was submitted only for confiscated correspondence. Accordingly, in July 1948 – January 1949 were reported on 3 issues – a kind of consequence of Operation “Zapad”: escape and return from evictions, repeated deportation and eviction of the kulaks (for details on the frequency distribution of messages, see Table 2)⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ ГДА СБУ. Ф. 16. Оп. 1. Спр. 629. Арк. 72

⁴⁶ Там само. Спр. 649. Арк. 114.

⁴⁷ Там само. Спр. 659. Арк. 215; Спр. 662. Арк. 225; Спр. 665. Арк. 279; Спр. 669. Арк. 105; Спр. 670. Арк. 250–252; Спр. 682. Арк. 238–239.

Months	07.1948	08.1948	09.1948	10.1948	11.1948	01.1949
Content of messages:						
Subjected to “K” (confiscated in total):	24217	22320	26023	31523	29498	26702
escape and return of members of OUN and UPA families deported from the western regions of Ukraine	506	510	297	321	458	395
allegedly planned re-administrative eviction of family members of OUN members	166	70	481	1070	1386	319
eviction of kulaks from the western regions of the USSR, which is carried out					209	33

Table. 2. Thematic issues concerning forced evictions, defined by the items of the “PC” in July 1947–January 1948.

It is important to note that the so-called “rumors” of an alleged planned re-eviction were by no means mere rumors. On February 6, 1948, the MGB UkrSSR S. Savchenko sent a request to the MGB USSR with a request to authorize the continued eviction of OUN families as retaliatory actions for insurgent activity. The corresponding order of the MGB USSR № 00386 was issued on October 20, 1948. Therefore, the dynamics of the increase in the number of reports of planned evictions fully corresponded to the reality of the chekists plans and actions.

As a result of the agent actions of the UMGB of the Ternopil oblast was established that the special migrants were writing letters to their relatives and acquaintances asking them to provide the OUN information about who had carried out their eviction and to take revenge on them. After a partial review of incoming correspondence from the places of deportation by local “PC” checkpoints from March 4 to 7, 1948, 56 “anti-Soviet” messages were found⁴⁸:

«Ternopil oblast, Pidhaytsi raion

[G]Nylche village, SHTOGRYN Ivan Pavlovych.

22.II.48 “... *I am very surprised that such people still live among us, who profit from someone else's good. Oh, God, why did you take our best sons and leave the unworthy to be called Ukrainians. But it will all end soon, they will be fed by the damp earth, and as long as our Ukraine will not be good as long as there are people who encroach on the good of their brother, for which he worked so hard, shedding that good with blood and sweat. We will soon shake hands with each other in a friendly way and it will sound from our lips – “Glory to Ukraine”...*

Kemerovo oblast, Stalin,

⁴⁸ Там само. Спр. 643. Арк. 190–194.

mine Zisyanovka, SHTOGRIN
Vasyl Yevhenovych.”⁴⁹

MGB of the USSR reported on the situation and provided examples of messages. The structure addressed the special report to the Head of Department “V” of the MGB USSR M. Gribov and asked that the chekists in the places of sending correspondence, especially in the Kemerovo oblast, should be more responsible viewing letters sent to Western Ukraine⁵⁰.

During the postal censorship, some of the letters were sent for operational processing. After revealing information about harmful (from the Chekists point of view) behavior of the population of Western Ukraine, MGB took a series of measures to identify specific persons (if they were unknown) and repress them. For example, in May 1948 in Drohobych, eight letters were found and seized from the villages of the then Pidbuzky, Drohobych and Khodoriv districts. Locals wrote that priests in their sermons asked to provide comprehensive assistance to convicted Ukrainian insurgents and deported families⁵¹. Maria Khomyn from the village of Novyi Kropyvnyk wrote in one of her letters to her sister in the city of Korkino (Chelyabinsk oblast):

“... Dear sister! On big Easter day, a priest in our village read a sermon about those who were convicted and deported to Siberia, about those who are in prisons. He said that our people are in great sorrow. Listening to the priest and feeling the grief of the poor people, all who were in the church cried. The priest said: “The Lord will save us from this cursed sorrow, people will stop carrying the heavy cross and a joyful day will come for all the people.”⁵²

After questioning the locals, one of the clergy was identified — Father Volodymyr Marushchak, who was arrested on July 15, 1948 on charges of repeated “anti-Soviet agitation”. As a result, Father V. Marushchak was sentenced to 25 years in labor camps, where he died on September 19, 1954⁵³.

An analysis of the materials of the postal censorship from the end of the spring of 1947 to the beginning of 1949 shows that the preparation of Operation “Zapad” did not go unnoticed by the inhabitants of Western Ukraine. From the end of June 1947, information about future forced evictions began to circulate in the correspondence. Direct information resonance lasted until March 1948, and indirectly – until the beginning of a new stage of the deportation campaign of “OUN families” in October 1948.

⁴⁹ Там само. Арк. 193.

⁵⁰ Там само. Арк. 194.

⁵¹ Там само. Спр. 680. Арк. 42–48.

⁵² Там само. Арк. 48.

⁵³ АП УСБУ у Львівській обл. Ф. 5. Спр. П-35773. Арк. 62зв–63.

Soviet secret services meticulously monitored the spread of messages about the preparation, conduct, and consequences of the October 1947 mass evictions and sought to prevent the dissemination of this information. In particular, the MGB UkrSSR confiscated at least 39,605 letters mentioning deportations, which never reached the addressees.

The “PC” materials reflect the significant and long-lasting informational resonance of Operation “Zapad” and, for the most part, the negative assessment of the repressive activities of the Soviet regime. Quotations and excerpts from the correspondence of the population of Western Ukraine in the summer of 1947–early 1949 show the significant information potential of this set of archival sources for further research.

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