ON THE ISSUE OF SUPPLY CRISIS IN THE USSR IN 1938 – 1941:
ACCORDING TO THE DOCUMENTS OF THE RUSSIAN STATE ARCHIVE
OF SOCIO-POLITICAL HISTORY

Abstract. The article focuses on the analysis of the issue of supplying population with food and basic necessities in the USSR in 1938 – 1941. The purpose of the article is to elucidate the peculiarities of the food crisis, commodity shortages during the period under analysis period and complete inefficiency of the Soviet economic model, inability of the authorities to satisfy the elementary needs of citizens. The Methodology of the Research: the article is based on the theory of totalitarianism and the principles formulated by Karl Friedrich; traditional general scientific and special historical methods have been used. The research is based on source science methods, in particular the method of internal criticism of sources, as well as on the requirements of archeography. The scientific novelty of the article consists in the inclusion of original documentary material from the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History. The Conclusion. Owing to the measures taken in the first half of 1941, it was possible to somewhat improve provision of population in some cities and districts, for example, Lviv. The Soviet authorities could never get rid of queues, shortages, low-quality products and other fundamental vices of a prescriptive, tightly centralized economy. As before, the norms for the release of goods into the same hands, determined by the Soviet People’s Committee of the USSR, were in effect. During the 1930s, a tendency to reduce these norms was clearly visible, because the main attention in the economic policy of the Stalinist regime was devoted to the rise of heavy industry, each time neglecting the issues of light and food industries development. A significant disproportion in industry development of Group A (production of means of production) and Group B (production of consumer goods) became a distinctive feature of the Soviet economy, which negatively affected supply of food and industrial goods to the population, and a general standard of living of the of the USSR citizens.

Key words: the USSR, the Stalinist regime, supply crisis, card system.
The Problem Statement. At all stages of the history of the USSR, there were acute problems with the supply of goods, in particular providing population with the most necessary food and consumer goods. In 1929, cards for bread were introduced in the USSR, during the years of 1931 – 1935 in the country there operated a card system for basic food and non-food products, which testified to the fundamental problems of the Soviet economy (Nikolaiuk, 2020, pp. 4–20).

After the cancellation of cards, abandonment of a strict regulation in the field of trade, supply under the conditions of open, so to speak, “free trade” improved somewhat. However, already at the beginning of 1938, signs of another crisis appeared, which significantly affected the population’s standard of living and led to actual introduction of products rationed distribution in some cities of the country.

The purpose of the article is to elucidate peculiarities of food crisis, goods deficit in 1938 – 1941, caused by inefficiency of the Soviet economic model and inability of the authorities to satisfy basic needs of citizens.


The Basic Material Statement. At the beginning of April of 1938, in a note of S. Kosior, the head of the Commission of Soviet Control under the RSC of the USSR, addressed to
the head of the Soviet government, V. Molotov, it was written: since February, in Moscow, especially near the central shops, “long queues were observed, mainly for cotton fabric, ready-made clothes, shoes”. S. Kosior emphasized that the majority of those who stood in the queues were not Moscow residents, that the increase in sale of manufacture, the expansion of store network “helped little”, and that “the queues became even longer” at that time. In the end, S. Kosior insisted that these queues “began to acquire a scandalous and politically dangerous character...”.

Detailed information about the queues in Moscow was provided in a note of S. Krylov, the acting head of the trade and cooperation group of the Soviet Control Commission under the USSR Central Committee, to S. Kosior, the head of the CRC under the USSR Central Committee about the results of checks in Moscow stores on the night of April 1 – 2 and in the morning of April 2, 1938 (see: Document No. 1). In the note it was stated: according to police estimates, about 20,000 people gathered in queues near the Central Department Store, 4,000 – near Mostorg No. 1 (former GUM), 1,200–1,500 – near Lenin Department Store, and 900–950 people – near Shop No. 2 (The Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History, f. 82, d. 2, c. 686, pp. 2–7).

Archival sources indicate that the problem with queues affected not only the capital of the USSR. In addition, in the notes sent to the Soviet People’s Committee of the USSR from other places there was mentioned “difficult situation with payment of salaries”, the presence of large arrears in wages, non-fulfillment of plans “for importation of manufactured goods and flour sale”, etc. In December of 1938, a member of the editorial board of “The Pravda” newspaper, L. Rovinsky, informed the government that “major interruptions in the supply of bread to the population” had begun in Kharkiv, dozens of houses were not heated, and many plants and factories stopped operating due to a lack of electricity (RSASPH, f. 82, d. 2, c. 686, pp. 9–13).

In 1939, the difficulties with providing goods for the population worsened significantly, especially after the beginning of World War II. There were long queues not only for industrial goods, but also for bread and other foodstuffs. M. Kovalev, a resident of Kyiv, wrote indignantly to the Council of Soviets of the USSR: “Disgraceful things are being done”. Lines of many thousands gather at consumer goods stores and ready-to-wear in the evening. The police line up queues a block away in the alley...”. The author of the letter insisted: under such conditions, “speculation flourishes, arbitrariness of policemen, and they say, that it is not without bribes”; an honest man can buy the most necessary “only from speculators at a double price” (Sovetskaya povsednevnost i massovoe soznanie..., 2003, p. 159).

Immediately after the beginning of World War II, the People’s Commissar of Trade of the USSR O. [Aleksandr] Liubimov addressed a letter to the head of the Union Government, V. Molotov, in which he raised the issue of introducing a card system for food and consumer goods. However, the country’s political leadership categorically rejected even talk about curtailment of “free trade” and transition to a rationed supply. With the outbreak of the Soviet-Finnish Winter War, the commodity deficit reached its peak and turned into a real food crisis. The war clearly deepened contradictions that developed at consumer market, but the causes of crisis were rooted in something else – in the very nature of the Soviet system.

The aggression of the USSR against Poland, seizure of the eastern Polish voivodeships by the Red Army, forcible annexation of Western Volhynia and Eastern Galicia to the USSR was accompanied by the deployment of the so-called socialist transformations, implementation of the destructive policy of Sovietization, and ruthless destruction of established way of
life of millions of people. In the autumn of 1939, local population experienced significant interruptions in the supply of food and industrial goods, shortages of bread, sugar, flour, clothes and shoes, even salt and matches (see: Document No. 2). According to the NKVD authorities, in December of 1939 in Lviv, 500–1,500 people stood in lines for bread and sugar at some shops (Baran & Tokarskyi, 2009, pp. 73, 77; Baran, 2011, pp. 383–410; Baran, 2012, pp. 477–494).

In January of 1940, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Ukraine(b) approved the Resolution of the Soviet People’s Committee of the USSR “On Getting Rid of Queues for Buying Food Products in the Cities of Moscow and Leningrad” (see: Document No. 3). The Resolution provided for a number of tough measures aimed at combating the so-called speculation of products and preventing queues and mass gathering of customers near shops in the capital. It is worth emphasizing: since the size of commodity resources for different regions of the USSR was determined by the Union Centre, the largest market funds were allocated to the Russian Federation (about 60%). At the same time, Moscow was in a special position, receiving the main part of the market funds of the USSR, including about 40% of meat and eggs, more than 25% of cheese and fats, 15% of sugar, fish, cereals, pasta, etc. Leningrad was also in need of increased provision of foodstuffs.

Moscow, Leningrad, Kyiv, Minsk and Tbilisi belonged to a special group of cities concerning “supply of planned and regulated industrial goods”, although, of course, the lion’s share of the mentioned regulated industrial goods belonged to Moscow. Due to the growing shortage of goods, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) raised the prices of fabrics, knitwear, underwear, and glassware as early as 1939. In January of 1940, prices were increased for one of the most scarce products – sugar, and a few months later – for food, fish, fats, cheese, potatoes, vegetables, dairy products. The aggravation of the commodity deficit also led to a noticeable increase in prices at collective farm markets, which played an important role in the supply of townspeople, especially vegetables, potatoes, and meat and dairy products (RSASPH, f. 82, d. 2, c. 686, p. 1; Baran & Tokarskyi, 2009, pp. 76, 77; Osokina, 1997, pp. 184, 187–190; Rubinshteyn, 1964, pp. 358, 359).

The situation of the population noticeably worsened, including the western lands of Ukraine. L. Beria, Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR, reported to V. Molotov, the Chairman of the Soviet People’s Committee of the USSR about major disruptions in the trade in sugar, salt, kerosene, soap, and matches in Ternopil, Volyn, Drohobych, Lviv, and Rivne regions (see: Document No. 4). Even Lviv was severely affected by the food crisis, although the authorities paid special attention to this city. According to the recollections, at the beginning of 1940 there were cases when “there was no bread at all for one week in Lviv”. It is not surprising that people of Lviv bitterly joked: you can throw out the letter “m” from the alphabet, because there is no milk, butter, meat, flour, carrots, sorrel, but it is not worth preserving this letter for the sake of shaggy (Hryciuk, 2000, p. 70).

Under such conditions, the authorities sought to support the nomenklatura employees, in particular, they made additional payments at canteens for the food of managerial employees (see: Document No. 7), restored the work of departmental distributors, closed canteens and shops that served the party, Soviet, and military elite, and later, due to the aggravation supply crisis, employees of certain branches of industry as well. Horlov, the head of the Main Directorate of Moscow canteens, restaurants and cafes, informed the Deputy Chairman of the RSC of the USSR A. [Anastas] Mikoyan, that part of large restaurants in the centre of Moscow – “Aurora”, “Livorno”, “Prague”, etc., were turned into closed canteens. Thus, the restaurant “Aurora” “was transferred to the closed canteen of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) staff on November
26, 1938... 

26, 1938... ”, restaurant “Livorno” – the canteen for employees of the Moscow City Committee of the Communist Party since February 7, 1939. Canteen in street Kirova street, 24 was used as a closed canteen for employees of the NKVD of the USSR. Horlov wrote that the Department of Affairs of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) and the Department of Affairs of the Central Committee of the VLKSM also insisted on the transfer of premises for the organization of closed canteens (RSASPH, f. 82, d. 2, c. 686, pp. 23–25).

In the spring of 1940, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party(b) approved the Resolution of the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR on the organization of a closed atelier in Moscow for the tailoring and sale of ready-made clothes, underwear, knitwear, and shoes for authorities staff of the Union People’s Commissariat and other central institutions. The atelier was organized by the People’s Commissariat of Trade of the USSR, the service of officials in it was carried out by using name cards issued by the People’s Commissariat of Trade based on lists compiled by the Affairs Department of the Soviet People’s Commissariat of the USSR. In the Resolution it was stated: “To determine the limit for tailoring and purchase in a closed atelier of ready-made clothes, underwear, knitwear and shoes for one collection book during the quarter in the amount of 2,000 krbs.”

The Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party(b) and the Soviet government also made other decisions aimed at proper supplying the power elite, in particular, construction of another 10 dachas for the People’s Commissars of the USSR in 1940 (for this, 4.75 billion krbs were allocated from the reserve fund of the USSR Central Committee) (RSASPH, f. 17, d. 3, c. 1022, pp. 43, 45).

In some cities of the USSR, a card system was actually introduced, although official decisions regarding this were not adopted by the political leadership of the state (see: Document No. 5). In the spring of 1940, the Prosecutor of the USSR M. [Mikhail] Pankratyiyev reported to V. Molotov, head of the RSC of the USSR, that a card system was introduced for the sale of bread in the city of Kostroma (population 125,000). The cards were made in a printing house, they were called “pre-order”. In the cards it was indicated: address, last name of a consumer, number of family members, norm of bread per person per day (600 g, including 30% wheat bread), as well as the store to which a consumer was attached. The cards were distributed to apartments by special “authorized people”, in the cards there was written the amount of bread according to the number of family members. In the shops of Kostroma, bread was sold almost entirely according to the card system, the norm of bread was 600 g, and in some shops – 700–800 g. Free sale of bread (without cards) was carried out only in two shops, where a ton of baked bread was delivered, which was about 1% of its daily sales (RSASPH, f. 82, d. 2, c. 889, pp. 91, 92).

Despite strict measures taken by the authorities, neither queues at shops nor buying and reselling of goods could be overcome. The resolution of the Soviet People’s Committee of the USSR “On Fighting Queues for Food Products in the Cities of Moscow and Leningrad” was extended to other cities of the country, including Kyiv, Kharkiv, Stalino, Voroshlovgrad, Odesa, and later – to Vinnytsia, Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolayiv, Poltava, Chernihiv and many other cities throughout the Soviet Union. In July of 1940, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party(b) adopted a decision “On the Fight against Speculation in Moscow”, which provided for the application of additional, even tougher measures (see: Document No. 6). People who were detained twice or more for buying or reselling goods in Moscow were subject to arrest; cases of people arrested for speculation were considered at the Special Meeting of the NKVD of the USSR (RSASPH, f. 17, d. 3, c. 1020, p. 36; c. 1022, p. 148; Baran, 2014, pp. 267–292).
Korolyev and Tsaryev, the employees of Volsky city planning department (Saratov region) wrote to the deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Volsky constituency A. [Andrei] Vyshynsky about long queues for bread – both in the city and at factories. They wrote about the queues, which had been gathering since two or three o’clock in the morning, and people stood in them until the morning. “That is, people stand for 7 – 8 hours in 35 – 40 [degrees] below zero. Along with the adult population, there are also children in the queues”. At the same time, almost half of the bread on sale was high-grade bread at the price of 1 krb 50 kopicks, 2 krb 70 kopicks and more expensive per kilogramme (the price of rye bread was lower than 1 krb). “A large part of the population does not have the opportunity to buy this bread, because a worker with an average monthly salary of 200 – 250 krb and a family of 4 – 5 people cannot afford buying this bread”. In addition, in the letter it was stated that “there are no cereals, flour and other types of food in the trading network” (Sovetskaya povsednevnost i massovoe soznanie, 2003, p. 161).

The Conclusion. Owing to the measures taken in the first half of 1941, it was possible to somewhat improve provision of population in some cities and districts, for example, Lviv (Baran & Tokarskyi, 2009, pp. 83–86). However, the Soviet government could never get rid of queues, shortages, low quality products and other fundamental vices of a directive, tightly centralized economy (Kulchytskyi, 2021, pp. 167–185). As before, the norms for selling goods to one hands, determined by the Soviet People’s Committee of the USSR, were in effect (see: Document No. 8). During the period of the 1930s, a tendency to reduce these norms was clearly visible, because in the economic policy of the Stalinist regime the chief focus was on promotion of heavy industry, each time neglecting the development issues of light and food industries. A significant disproportion in the development of Group A industry (manufacturing of production means) and Group B (production of consumer goods) became a distinctive feature of the Soviet economy, which negatively affected the supply of food and industrial goods to the population, and a general standard of living of the citizens of the USSR.

The publication presents a selection of documents from the funds of the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (the former central party archive, in particular in 1956 – 1991 it was called the Central Party Archive of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism under the Central Committee of the CPSU; in 1991 – 1999 it was called the Russian Centre for storage and study of documents of recent history; since 1999 – a modern name).

The selection includes documents from Fund 17 – Central Committee of the CPSU, descriptions: 3 – Minutes of meetings of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b); 117 – Materials for the minutes of the secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b), as well as Fund 82 – V. Molotov, Description 2.

The texts of the documents are submitted without any corrections. The publication preserves the spelling and punctuation of the originals.

Selection of Documents

No. 1

Excerpt from a note of the acting head of the trade and cooperation group of the Soviet Control Commission under the USSR Central Committee to S. Kosior, head of the CRC under the USSR Central Committee, about the results of inspections in Moscow stores on the night of April 1 – 2 and the morning of April 2, 1938 April 3, 1938
По западной Украине.

Состояние товарооборота в Западных областях Украины совершенно неудовлетворительное, основная масса частных магазинов закрыта.

Организована кооперативная сеть, значительно расширявшаяся по сравнению с дооценным временем, например во Львове в 9 раз она не перекрывает убыль других торговых предприятий.

Совершенно недостаточно развернута государственная торговля, количество государственных магазинов исчисляется, буквально, единицами.

Облторготделом с 15 декабря открыто 5 торговых единиц, торгующих продуктами: сахаром, кондитерскими изделиями, кофе, чаем, вином, водкой. Кооперативы торгуют крупой, хлебом, кондитерскими изделиями, овощами, спичками, солью.
Оборот одного кооперативного магазина в среднем 300–350 руб. в день. Торготделы очень слабо осведомлены о состоянии торговли и очень плохо организовывают это дело. Во Львове Облторготдел, Гормторготдел не в курсе хода разверстывания товарооборота и не имеют сведений об удельном весе госторговли в общем товарообороте. В Дрогобычской области еще нет торготдела. Отдельные контюры оценивают удельный вес госторгов и кооперации в размере 20–30 % (цифры эти очень приблизительные).

Государственные и кооперативные организации совершенно не торгуют промтоварами. Большинство частных магазинов торговавших промтоварами национализированы: товары стянутые на базы организаций НКТорга в продажу не выпускаются, впредь до установления цен.

Вся торговля промтоварами фактически сосредоточена в руках спекулянтов и продажа идет с рук.

По данным четырех областей Западной Украины, на складах НКТорга имеется национализированных товаров на сумму около 20 млн рублей в довоенных ценах.

К числу достаточных следует отнести: овощи, крупу ячменную, и в некоторых областях колбасные изделия. Совершенно недостаточно сахара, крупяных и мучных изделий, муки, водки, табака, махорки, спичек, растительного масла, мыла хозяйственного, соды питьевой и стиральной, сельдей и консервных изделий.

Во Львове кооперативные организации отпускают в одни руки не больше 250 грамм сахара. Имеются случаи, когда вместе с сахаром продается принудительный ассортимент в виде суррогата чая.

Из Тарнополя сообщают о полном отсутствии железно-скобяных изделий, подков, гвоздей, последнее создает затруднение с гужевым транспортом. Из Тарнополя-же сообщают об отсутствии мебельных кустарных изделий, в связи с тем, что кустарии прекратили работать, а организация промысловой кооперации проходит медленно.

Из Ровно сообщают о прекращении подвоза крестьянами сельскохозяйственных продуктов на рынок, в связи с тем, что в городе не организована встречная торговля промтоварами. Почти из всех областей сообщают о значительных перебоях в торговле хлебом. Так, например: в Перемышле выдают хлеб только коллективам.

Цены на товары в государственной и кооперативной торговле держатся на уровне близком к довоенному. По существу регулированием цен никто не занимается.

Из областей сообщают, что твердых цен нет, и что в кооперативной торговле существуют расценки против довоенных цен примерно на 25 %. Товары, завозимые в Западную Украину продаются по общезависленным ценам для других районов СССР, однако, этих товаров недостаточно.

В связи с очень ограниченным завозом товаров, государственной и кооперативной сетью завозятся, главным образом, товары местного производства и в связи с тем, что государственная и кооперативная торговля далеко не удовлетворяет спроса населения, цены на частных рынках резко возросли не только после довоенного уровня, но и по сравнению с ценами на 1-ю декаду декабря.

Source: RSASPH, f. 82, d. 2, c. 686, pp. 28–30.
No. 3
Resolution of the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR “On Getting Rid of Queues for Food Products in the Cities of Moscow and Leningrad”, approved by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b)
January of 1940

Совет Народных Комиссаров Союза ССР ПОСТАНОВЛЯЕТ:
1. Предложить органам милиции не допускать образования очередей до открытия продовольственных магазинов.

Разрешить органам милиции лиц, приезжающих в Москву для скупки продовольственных товаров, нарушающих общественный порядок и создающих очереди, привлекать к административной ответственности, штрафуя на месте в размере до 100 рублей, в особо злостных случаях привлекать к уголовной ответственности по 73-й статье УК РСФСР.

2. В целях борьбы со скупкой продовольственных товаров разрешить органам милиции у всех лиц, закупающих продтовары свыше установленных норм отпуска в одни руки, отбирать излишек товара сверх нормы с возвратом по стоимости.

В случаях закупки продтоваров одним лицом в количестве, более чем вдвое превышающем норму отпуска в одни руки, разрешить органам милиции, кроме отобрания излишка товара против нормы, налагать на месте штраф до 100 рублей.

Лиц, неоднократно подвергнутых штрафу за скупку товаров сверх нормы и несмотря на это продолжающих такие закупки, привлекать к уголовной ответственности по ст. 105 УК РСФСР. Лиц, закупающих продовольственные товары с целью перепродажи, привлекать к уголовной ответственности за спекуляцию по ст. 107 УК РСФСР.

3. Предложить Наркомюсту СССР обеспечить рассмотрение народными судами г.г. Москвы и Ленинграда дел о спекуляции и незаконной скупке продовольственных товаров в 5-дневный срок по поступлению дел в суд.

Обязать органы Прокуратуры рассматривать указанные дела немедленно.
4. Обязать органы Суда и Прокуратуры провести показательные процессы над злостными спекулянтами продовольственными товарами с опубликованием материалов в печати.

5. Обязать Наркомторг СССР, Московский городской и Ленинградский городской исполнительные комитеты проверить и упорядочить работу торговой инспекции, пресекая злоупотребления со стороны работников торговли, а органам милиции усилить работу по выявлению и привлечению к административной и уголовной ответственности работников торговли, допускающих сделки со скупщиками и спекулянтами и нарушающих установленные нормы отпуска продовольственных товаров в одни руки.

6. Совнаркуму РСФСР обязать исполкомы областей, прилегающих к г. Москве и Ленинграду, предупредить председателей и секретарей сельских советов и колхозов о недопустимости выдачи населению всякого рода справок и документов для поездки в г.г. Москве и Ленинград с целью закупки продовольственных товаров.

7. Предложить НКВД, совместно с НКПС, принять меры, затрудняющие выезд населения в г. Москве и г. Ленинград из некоторых местностей, откуда имеет место большой прииток скупщиков продуктов.

8. Предложить Отделу Торговли гор. Москвы упорядочить планирование и распределение фондов продовольственных товаров по торговым точкам районов, учитывая населенность каждого района.

Source: RSASPH, f. 17, d. 3, c. 1018, pp. 113, 114.
A note of L. Beria, the People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR, to V. Molotov, the Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR, on the state of providing the western regions of Ukraine with food and industrial goods

February 25, 1940

No. 4

To V. Molotov, the Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR,

on the state of providing the western regions of Ukraine with food and industrial goods

February 25, 1940

By additional notice of the Management of the NKVD of the Western Regions of the Ukrainian SSR, the position in relation to the supply of the population of the Western Regions of the Ukrainian SSR with a series of food and industrial goods remains tense. Significant disruptions are observed in the trade of sugar, salt, kerosene, soap, matches in the Tarnopil, Volyn, Drohobycz, Lwów, and Rivne regions.

In the Volyn region in January 1940, instead of planned 600 tons of sugar, only 250 tons were received; soap instead of 180 tons received 52 tons. From the allocated for the city of Lučka in the first quarter of 1940, 1,700 tons of kerosene were received, instead of 526 tons.

In the Drohobycz region in January 1940, the plan was to supply 41% of the population with sugar, salt, matches, and kerosene. In the Volyn region in January 1940, the plan to ensure the supply of sugar was only 41%. In some regions, the January 1940 year received sugar, salt, matches, and kerosene.

In the Rivne region in the first quarter of 1940, the Rivne consumer society was supposed to deliver: salt – 3,040 tons, actually delivered 609 tons; matches – 4,050 boxes; sugar – 1,250 tons, actually delivered 320 tons.

In rural areas in the Rivne region, matches and soap are completely unobtainable. In the Lwów region, daily sales of sugar are 10 tons, whereas the demand is 40 tons. In state stores, kerosene and matches are not on sale. The monthly demand for 850 tons of kerosene is covered only in 30 tons. The shortage is covered by matches for 120-130 days.

In the Stanislavov region, the position of supply has somewhat improved, however, there is still a shortage of fats and consumer goods.

The Stanislavov region in February 1940 should have delivered to the Stanislavovsky Gostorg 8.2 tons of animal fat, only 1.2 tons were delivered; for the same time, instead of 10 tons of vegetable oil, only 4 tons were delivered.

The allocated for the first quarter of 1940 in the Stanislavov region industrial goods worth 6,955 thousand rubles, due to the lack of wagons, have not been delivered.

The supply of rural population with food products to city markets is carried out poorly. Market prices for food continue to be high. Speculative element tries to inflate prices on goods.

In the Drohobycz region, the price of 1 kg of meat is 35-40 rubles, 1 kg of butter 80-90 rubles; in the Volyn region, 1 kg of sugar is 40 rubles, 1 kg of salt is 35-40 rubles, 1 liter of kerosene is 2-3 rubles, 1 cubic meter of wood is 200-250 rubles; in the Lwów region, a kilogram of soap is worth up to 120 rubles; in the Rivne region, a bobbin of threads up to 25 rubles.

Tense supply position affects the population of the Western Regions of the Ukrainian SSR. […]

Source: RSASPH, f. 82, d. 2, c. 688, pp. 37–40.
No. 5
Report note of V. Merkulov, the Deputy People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR, to A. [Andrei] Andreyev, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b)
June 14, 1940

По сообщению УНКВД Ярославской, Калининской областей и НКВД Мариийской АССР, в связи с перебоями в торговле продовольственными товарами, торгующие организации системы Наркомторга и Центросоюза, допускают извращения принципов советской торговли.

Постановление Экономического Совета при СНК СССР от 1/ХІІ – 39 г. «О порядке торговли хлебом», разрешающее в сельской местности производить торговлю хлебом через столовые и буфеты, нарушается.

Большинство торгующих организаций в сельской местности работу продуктовых магазинов перевели на закрытую форму торговли.

В ряде городов и районов, указанных областей введена карточная система, предварительные заказы по доставке хлеба на лом с прикреплением населения к определенным магазинам и ограничением нормы отпуска хлеба.

Так, в городе Костроме Ярославской области с санкции секретаря ГК ВКП(б) тов. Ишанова в торговле хлебом введена карточная система с прикреплением населения к определенным магазинам и с ограничением нормы отпуска хлеба (500 грамм на человека).

В городе Солигаличе снабжение населения продовольственными товарами, организовано через буфеты учреждений, при чем значительная часть населения снабжением не охвачена.

Работники Мышкинского РК ВКП(б) вместо борьбы с нарушением принципов советской торговли, сами ввели выдачу у себя в аппарате талонов на отпуск прод. товаров.

В городе Нерехта, по указанию РК ВКП(б) один из магазинов города перевели на закрытую систему торговли, для партактива.

В городе Бежецке Калининской области до последнего времени хлеб населению доставлялся на дом по количеству членов семьи с дополнительным взиманием за доставку по 5 копеек за килограмм. В настоящее время Горисполком эту практику отменил и дал указания торгующим организациям раскрепетить население города к магазинам по территориальному признаку. Каждый магазин имеет списки прикрепленных с указанием количества членов семьи, по которым отпускают хлеб. При отсутствии справки домоуправления о количестве членов семьи, дирекция магазина в списки не включает.

В городе Красном Холме торговля хлебом производится по организациям, согласно составленных заранее списков. Работники нарсуда, прокуратуры, отделений Госбанка и связи хлеб получают в помещении Нарсуда. В артелях инвалидов «Труженик» хлеб продается в красном уголке.

В Луковниковском районе, поступивший для открытой торговли сахарный песок, продавался в помещении Районного Комитета ВКП(б) для узкого круга районных работников и служащих райорганизаций.

В Оленинском районе по распоряжению секретаря РК ВКП(б) Сидорова производилась торговля сахарным песком в помещении РК ВКП(б) для слушателей лекций по истории ВКП(б).

В Мариийской АССР торговая хлебом производится путем прикрепления населению к определенным магазинам, с обязательным представлением в торговую организацию справок домоуправлений о количестве членов семьи. На основании этой справки торгоовая точка заводит бланк-заказ на имя потребителя, который по этому документу получает ежедневно определенную норму хлеба.

Source: RSASPH, f. 17, d. 117, c. 119, pp. 68–70.
No. 6
Resolution of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b)
“On the Fight against Speculation in Moscow”
July 5, 1940

Для усиления борьбы со спекуляцией промышленными и продовольственными товарами в гор. Москве дополнительно провести следующие мероприятия:

1. Лиц, задерживаемых органами милиции два и больше раз за скупку или перепродажу продовольственных и промышленных товаров в гор. Москве, арестовывать.

2. Аресту подвергать также лиц, прибывающих в гор. Москву из других городов и областей СССР, уличенных в скупке продовольственных и промышленных товаров в спекулятивных целях.

3. Арестовывать лиц, занимающихся скупкой и перепродажей промышленных и продовольственных товаров, прикрывающих свою спекулятивную деятельность работой в советских учреждениях и колхозах.

4. Дела на лиц, арестованных за скупку и перепродажу продовольственных и промышленных товаров, рассматривать на Особом Совещании НКВД СССР.

Source: RSASPH, f. 17, d. 3, c. 1025, p. 22.

No. 7
Excerpt from the Memorandum of the People’s Commissar of State Control of the USSR L. Mekhlis to the head of the USSR National Academy of Sciences V. Molotov about the facts of abuse and waste of industrial goods by the leadership of the Committee on Geology at the USSR National Academy of Sciences
October 29, 1940

Всего в 1940 году Управлением Делами Комитета было выдано 78 пар обуви, 931 предмет белья и 123 метра шерстяных тканей. […]

Доплата в столовых за обеды руководящих работников незаконно производилась в повышенном размере: вместо допустимых 80 рублей, доплачивалось по 100 и 121 р. 70 коп. в месяц. Главный бухгалтер отдела снабжения МИХЕЛЕВ незаконно получил пособие 1000 рублей при отсутствии фонда премирования. […]

По системе Комитета по Делам Геологии за первое полугодие смета по административно-управленческим расходам перерасходована на 433 тыс. руб. (5,9 проц.). […]

Source: RSASPH, f. 82, d. 2, c. 681, pp. 33, 34.
### No. 8

Extract from the certificate on the norms of selling food and some industrial goods
(in kg) per person

**October of 1940**

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<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Соль в сельских местностях</td>
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<tr>
<td>Мыло хозяйствен. (шт.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Мыло туалетное (шт.)</td>
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Предлагаемые с 20 октября 1940 г. 0,5

Source: RSASPH, f. 82, d. 2, c. 686, pp. 36, 37.

**Footnotes**

1 On February 11, 1934 the Soviet Control Commission under the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR was established to replace the People’s Commissariat of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection of the USSR. The heads of the commission were V. Kuibyshev, M. Antipov (repressed), S. Kosior (repressed), Z. Bielenky (repressed), R. Zemliachka.

2 The People’s Commissariat of Trade of the USSR was created on January 15, 1938 as a result of the renaming of the People’s Commissariat of Internal Trade of the USSR. The People’s Commissariat was headed by M. Smirnov (repressed), O. [Aleksandr] Liubymov.

3 According to the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of December 4, 1939, Volyn, Drohobych, Lviv, Rivne, Stanislav, and Tarnopol regions were created as part of the Ukrainian SSR.

4 According to the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR dated August 9, 1944 on clarifying the names of a number of cities in the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR, the city of Tarnopol was named Ternopil (respectively – Ternopil region).
Art. 73 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR provided punishment for resistance of citizens to representatives of the authorities: resistance connected with violence – deprivation of liberty for a term of not less than one year; not related to violence – imprisonment or correctional labour for a term of up to six months or a fine of up to 500 kr.

Art. 105 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR provided punishment for violation of the rules governing trade: if they do not specifically provide for prosecution in an administrative order, – correctional labour for a term of up to one year or a fine of up to 2 thousand kr.; if committed by a person who was a member of the authorities bodies of a cooperative or credit institution, – correctional labour for a term of up to six months or a fine of up to 500 kr.

Art. 107 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR provided for punishment for the purchase and resale by private individuals for the purpose of profit (speculation) of agricultural products and items of mass consumption – imprisonment for a term of not less than five years, with full or partial confiscation of property.

The People’s Commissariat of Justice of the USSR was created on July 20, 1936. It was headed by M. Krylenko and M. Rychkov.


The People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the USSR was created on July 10, 1934. It was headed by H. Yahoda (repressed), M. Yezhov (repressed), L. Beria (arrested and executed after Stalin’s death), S. Kruhlov.

The People’s Commissariat of Communications of the USSR was created on July 6, 1923. It was headed by F. Dzerzhynsky, Ya. Rudzutak, M. Ruhymovych, A. [Andrei] Andreyev, L. Kahanovych, O. Bakulin, A. [Andrei] Khruliov, I. Kovaliev.

Union of Consumer Societies, Body of Consumer Cooperation. During the period under analysis, the central body of consumer cooperatives of the USSR was called the Central Union of Consumer Societies of the USSR (Central Union), in the Ukrainian SSR – the Ukrainian Union of Consumer Cooperative Organizations (Ukoopspilka). At local places, the governing bodies of consumer cooperative were regional and district consumer unions, respectively. In the second half of the 1930s, the consumer cooperative served only villagers.

During the indicated period of time, A. [Andrei] Andreyev simultaneously held the positions of secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party(b) (1935–1946), chairman of the Party Control Commission under the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party(b) (1939 – 1952), and chairman of the Union Council of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (1938 – 1946).

CC – city committee.
DC – district committee.

A repressive body of the Stalinist regime that operated under the NKVD of the USSR in 1934–1946, and under the Ministry of State Security of the USSR in 1946 – 1953. Sentences were formulated without court decision.

The People’s Commissariat of State Control of the USSR was created on September 6, 1940, in place of the Commission of Soviet Control under the USSR Central Committee. The People’s Commissariat was headed by L. Mekhlis and V. Popov.

The Committee for Geological Affairs at the USSR Academy of Sciences functioned in 1939 – 1946. It was headed by I. Malyshev.
19 For comparison: according to official data, the average salary of workers and employees of the USSR as a whole in the national economy was 339 krb. in 1940, and 357 krb. per month in 1941.

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