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**THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE AUTHORITIES AND THE PEASANTS
ON THE TERRITORY OF SOVIET UKRAINE IN THE SECOND HALF
OF THE 1940S (ACCORDING TO DOCUMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT
OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT OF STATE SECURITY – MINISTRY OF STATE
SECURITY OF THE UKRAINIAN SSR)**

Abstract. *The purpose of the article is to reveal the main directions of the confrontation between the authorities and the peasants on the territory of Soviet Ukraine in the second half of the 1940s (according to the documents of the Secretariat of the People's Commissariat of State Security – Ministry of State Security (NKVD-MDB) of the Ukrainian SSR). The research methodology is based on the principles of historicism, objectivity, comprehensiveness, critical and systematic approaches. General scientific, historical and source-study methods have been used: analytical, logical, synthetic,*

typological, historical comparative and heuristic. **Scientific novelty.** The features and information potential of the reporting documents of the NKVD-MDB of the Ukrainian SSR, which are concentrated in the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (SSA SSU) in the fund of the Secretariat of the State Police of the Ukrainian SSR-KGB of the Ukrainian SSR, were clarified to reveal the little-studied problem of the confrontation between the authorities and the peasantry on the territory of the Ukrainian SSR in the second half of the 1940s. **Conclusions.** Thus, through poor management of agriculture, merciless tax pressure, and deliberate disregard for the needs of the population in the most essential things, the authorities pushed the peasants into desperate conscious and spontaneous resistance. Anti-Soviet and anti-collective farm agitation spread throughout Ukraine as the main form of conscious peasant resistance. Peasants in the western regions of Ukraine also joined the organized armed struggle against national enslavement and the introduction of collective farm slavery.

Condemned to hunger and poverty, ordinary people were forced to steal, rob, sabotage, and even kill in order to survive or seek revenge. The mechanism for combating the resulting wave of crime was harsh and inevitable criminal prosecution. The meager and often unreliable in-kind payment for the hard labor in collective farms led to widespread, open sabotage of work. The state's use of administrative deportation for failing to fulfill the minimum number of workdays forced peasants to make a difficult but clear choice between ungrateful work on the collective farm and hardship in exile.

Keywords: peasantry, famine, Ukrainian SSR, NKVD-MDB, source, research methodology.

ПРОТИСТОЯННЯ ВЛАДИ І СЕЛЯН НА ТЕРИТОРІЇ РАДЯНСЬКОЇ УКРАЇНИ У ДРУГІЙ ПОЛОВИНІ 1940-Х РОКІВ (за документами секретаріату НКДБ-МДБ УРСР)

Анотація. *Мета статті* – розкрити основні напрями протистояння влади і селян на території радянської України у другій половині 1940-х років (за документами секретаріату НКДБ-МДБ УРСР). *Методологія дослідження* базується на засадах історизму, об'єктивності, всебічності, критичного та системного підходів. Використано загальнонаукові, історичні та джерелознавчі методи: аналітичний, логічний, синтетичний, типологічний, історико-компаративний та евристичний. **Наукова новизна.** З'ясовано особливості та інформаційний потенціал звітних документів НКДБ-МДБ УРСР, які зосереджені в ГДА СБУ у фонді Секретаріату ДПУ УСРР-КДБ УРСР для розкриття малодослідженої проблеми протистояння влади і селянства на території УРСР у другій половині 1940-х рр. **Висновки.** Отже, недолугим управлінням сільським господарством, нещадним податковим тиском та свідомим ігноруванням потреб населення в найнеобхіднішому, влада підштовхнула селян до відчайдушного свідомого і стихійного спротиву. Всією Україною ширилася антирадянська й антиколгоспна агітація як основна форма свідомого селянського опору. Селяни у західних областях України ще й долучилися до організованої збройної боротьби проти національного поневолення й запровадження колгоспного рабства. Приречені на голод і злидні, звичайні люди були змушені красти, грабувати, шкідити і вбивати, аби вижити чи помститися. Механізмом подолання спровокованої злочинності стала жорстока й невідворотна кримінальна відповідальність. Мізерна та ще й не гарантована натуральна оплата тяжкої колгоспної праці спричинила її масовий відвертий саботаж. Застосування державою адміністративного виселення за невідпрацювання мінімальної кількості трудовнів спонукали селян до важкого, але очевидного вибору між невдячною роботою в колгоспі і поневірянням на чужині.

Ключові слова: селянство, голод, УРСР, НКДБ-МДБ, джерело, методологія дослідження.

Problem Statement. The establishment of de facto state serfdom on the territory of Ukraine was considered by the Bolshevik occupation regime as a necessary condition for the further comfortable development of the “communist paradise”. However, Ukrainian peasants did not want to become the latest serfs. Thus, in response to the first attempts to create communes and predatory food distribution, a large-scale peasant insurrectionary movement for the restoration of the Ukrainian People's Republic began in the fall of 1920. It reached

its peak in the spring and summer of 1921, and its last outbreaks were recorded in the fall of 1925. The authorities achieved temporary reconciliation with the peasants not only by applying brutal repressions to them and organizing the first famine of 1921 – 1923, but also by further compromising the introduction of a more acceptable food tax in monetary form against the backdrop of the announcement of an amnesty for all who fought against the Soviet government in Ukraine and the declared “Ukrainization” of society.

The new Bolshevik offensive on the “bourgeois” Ukrainian village occurred in 1928 – 1932 and was accompanied by “dekulakization” and complete collectivization, as well as merciless repressions to overcome or forestall mass, mostly spontaneous, peasant resistance. Manifestations of disobedience included numerous terrorist attacks against representatives of local authorities, arson of administrative buildings, vandalism, women’s “bagpipes” and anti-Soviet uprisings, which in some places covered entire districts. This time, the peasants were subdued, first of all, by the criminal organization of the Holodomor-genocide in Ukraine of 1932 – 1933.

The end of the Soviet-German war of 1941 – 1945 led to the restoration of the collective farm system on the territory of Soviet Ukraine “liberated” by the Red Army and its establishment on the lands of the western and southern regions annexed to it. Repeated collectivization was implemented by the totalitarian regime as rudely and without alternative as the previous one, and even under conditions of complete devastation of agriculture, lack of material resources and labour. Once again, the need arose to comprehensively overcome the new mass peasant resistance. The drought and other post-war difficulties did not last, and the use by the criminal authorities of an effective tool proven over the years of subjugation of Ukrainian peasants became the main factor in the emergence of the third great famine in Soviet Ukraine, the peak of which fell on 1946 – 1947.

Review of Sources and Publications. The vast majority of articles, monographs, and collections of documents published during the period of Ukraine’s independence concerning the state of the domestic agricultural sector in the second half of the 1940s primarily focus on the topic of the postwar Holodomor. Contemporary researchers examine various aspects of the causes, course, and consequences of the 1946 – 1947 famine. Notable contributions in this field include the works of Ya. Antoniuk, (Antoniuk, 2016), I. Bilas (Bilas, 1992; Bilas, 1994), Ya. Vermenych, V., O. Androshchuk, V. (Vermenych, Androshchuk, 2014), I. Voronov, Yu. Pyliavets, (Voronov, Pyliavets, 1991), K. Horburov (Horburov, 2006a; Horburov, 2006b), S. Kulchytskyi, (Kulchytskyi, 1998; Kulchytskyi, 1991), I. Makoviichuk, Yu. Pyliavets (Makoviichuk, Pyliavets, 1990; Makoviichuk, Pyliavets, 1992), V. Marochko (Marochko, 1998), A. Perkovskiy and S. Pyrozhekov (Perkovskiy, Pyrozhekov, 1990), R. Pyrih (Pyrih, 1998), O. Rabenchuk (Rabenchuk, 1996; Rabenchuk, 2006), M. Senkiv (Senkiv, 2004), V. Serhiichuk (Serhiichuk, 1998; Serhiichuk, 2003), Yu. Shapoval (Shapoval, 1998; Shapoval, 1997), among others.

Certain aspects of the implementation of famine mechanisms by the Soviet state are reflected in the comprehensive works of V. Baran, V. Danylenko (Baran, & Danylenko, 1999), O. Veselova (Veselova, 1998a), Yu. Shapoval & F. Slaveski (Shapoval, & Slaveski, 2025), among others. Special mention should be made of the significant scholarly contributions of the renowned researcher of Holodomor issues, Oleksandra Veselova. She is the author and co-author of numerous thematic publications – among them: O. Veselova (Veselova, 1997; Veselova, 2007; Veselova, 2008; Veselova, 2003; Veselova, 1998b; Veselova, 2006a; Veselova, 2006b; Veselova, 2001; Veselova, 2006c) and P. Panchenko (Veselova,

Panchenko, 1995; Veselova, Panchenko, 1996a; Veselova, Panchenko, 1996b), O. Veselova and V. Marochko, O. Movchan (Veselova, Marochko, & Movchan, 2000; Veselova, Marochko, & Movchan, 2008). Noteworthy are also the studies devoted to the regional specifics of how the Holodomor unfolded. It is also appropriate to mention the dissertation research of V. Kalinichenko (Kalinichenko, 2001) and T. Dolynianska (Dolynianska, 2006), L. Konovalenko (Konovalenko, 2005), V. Kostash (Kostash, 1994), among others (Holod 1932 – 33, 1946 – 47. Vinnytska oblast ... 1998; Holod 1946 – 1947 pp. v Ukraini ..., 2019; Holod 1946 – 1947 rokiv na Poltavshchyni ..., 1996; Holod 1946 – 1947 rokiv na terytorii Mykolaivshchyni ..., 1997). Additionally, there are thematic publications specifically focused on the Holodomor of 1946 – 1947. The works of T. Boriak (Boriak, 2020), I. Yakubovskiy (Yakubovskiy, 2021), I. Soliar, V. Ilnytskyi (Soliar, & Ilnytskyi, 2024), O. Stasiuk (Stasiuk, 2021), O. Honcharenko, and A. Ivanenko (Honcharenko, Ivanenko, 2023) are of particular methodological importance.

Informative and still little-known are the documents of the secret and non-secret records of the state security bodies (hereinafter referred to as the state security) of the Ukrainian SSR, which are currently stored in separate funds of the Branch State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (hereinafter referred to as the State Security Service of Ukraine). Special research focus is worthy of materials from Fund No. 16 entitled “Secretariat of the State Security Service of the Ukrainian SSR-KGB of the Ukrainian SSR”, which, in particular, contains special messages, memos, informational notes, monthly and quarterly reports on the perllusion of intra-Union and international correspondence, which in the post-war years, signed by the heads of the NKVD-MDB of the Ukrainian SSR, were sent to the NKVD-MDB of the USSR and to the party and state leadership of the republic. Along with information and reporting documentation, chronologically arranged archival files include individual state resolutions, as well as official instructions and orders of the NKVD-MDB of the Ukrainian SSR addressed to regional departments (Haluzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv SBU... 2009).

In his article “Documents of Soviet Security Services on the Famines of 1921 – 1923, 1932 – 1933, and 1946 – 1947 in Ukraine”, Vasyl Danylenko noted that, through the joint efforts of staff from archival and research institutions in Ukraine, the most representative documents from the large volume of materials of the Ministry of State Security (MGB) of the Ukrainian SSR from 1946 – 1947 were selected and published (Try holodomory v Ukraini v XX st. ..., 2003).

As early as June 1994, in response to public demand, a separate volume titled “Materials on the Economic Difficulties in Ukraine During the Postwar Period (Famine of 1946 – 1947)” was added to the printed collections archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), aimed at a broad audience of researchers (SSA SSU, f. 68, d. 1, c. 4, p. 323). This compilation was formed from photocopies of thematic documents from the Secretariat Fund of the GPU of the Ukrainian SSR-KGB of the Ukrainian SSR. Shortly thereafter, a portion of these materials (24 documents) was included in a joint collection of documents from state and departmental archives, compiled by the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, arranged in chronological order (Holod v Ukraini 1946 – 1947 ..., 1996). Currently, in commemoration of another anniversary of the third Holodomor, a new comprehensive documentary edition based on materials from the aforementioned and other collections of the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (SSA SSU) is being prepared for publication.

Another thematic selection of information and reporting documents of the fund No. 16, prepared in January–March 1946 based on materials from the perllustration of correspondence,

is represented in the publication by Vitaliy Litvinenko and Valeriy Ogorodnik on the activities of the military censorship and political control departments of the NKVD-NKGB of the USSR (Lytvyenko, Ogorodnik, 2014). Numerous excerpts from the relevant documents of the MGB of the Ukrainian SSR for July 1947–December 1948 were used in a subsequent publication by Andriy Kohut in the context of his study of the reaction of the population of the western regions of Ukraine to the implementation of Operation “West” (Kohut, 2020). In the quoted correspondence of the peasants, in particular, the forced necessity of choosing between joining the hated collective farms and eviction to remote places of the USSR is mentioned (Kohut, 2020, pp. 164–165).

The study of the above-mentioned documents remains relevant. Their information potential, in addition to recording post-war poverty and famine, allows us to shed light on the forms of active and passive resistance of peasants to their re-enslavement and subjugation by famine, state mechanisms for overcoming such resistance, the population’s reaction to the repressive measures of the authorities or their inaction and incompetence in solving pressing problems on the ground, etc.

The purpose of the article is to reveal the main directions of the confrontation between the authorities and the peasants on the territory of Soviet Ukraine in the second half of the 1940s (according to the documents of the Secretariat of the People’s Commissariat of State Security – Ministry of State Security (NKVD-MDB) of the Ukrainian SSR).

Research Results. The Soviet totalitarian regime planned to quickly rebuild the war-damaged national economy by brutally exploiting its own people. The government mobilized the country’s able-bodied population for labor feats and self-sacrifice, without caring about providing at least minimal human conditions for existence. According to government orders and international agreements, tens of thousands of repatriates, as well as prisoners of war and specialists from Germany and immigrants from Poland, were forcibly involved in the revival of industry and agriculture of the Ukrainian SSR.

Numerous reports of intolerable living conditions and starvation in the post-war years among workers, teachers, students, families of military personnel, demobilized front-line soldiers, war invalids, large families, repatriates, and other vulnerable groups and categories of the population are the subject of separate studies.

The post-war reconstruction of the republic’s agriculture took place under extremely unfavorable conditions of severe political and economic pressure, poor-quality personnel, and the absence of proper state support. Documents of the NKVD-MDB bodies of the Ukrainian SSR of the second half of the 1940s are replete with such information.

In a special report dated January 12, 1946, prepared based on materials from the military censorship of the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR and cautiously titled “On the shortcomings in the work of individual collective farms in a number of regions of the Ukrainian SSR,” Deputy People’s Commissar (hereinafter referred to as the People’s Commissar) of State Security of the Ukrainian SSR Danylo Yesypenko informed the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) Demyan Korotchenko about the catastrophic situation in agriculture described by the peasants. During a perusal of correspondence for December 1945. 539 letters to relatives of military personnel were discovered from peasants in the Kyiv, Poltava, Kharkiv, Sumy, and Dnipropetrovsk regions with reports of unharvested crops from the fields, inability to fulfill grain procurement plans, failure to issue grain for workdays, death of neglected livestock, and general reluctance to work on collective farms (Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (SSA SSU), fund 16, description 1, case 560, pp. 20–22).

Similar and other reports on the situation in the republic's agriculture and the lives of peasants have since been sent to the highest authorities in Moscow and Kyiv on a regular basis. In the full report of the military censorship offices of the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR for December 1945, prepared on January 25, 1946, signed by D. Yesypenko for the leadership of the NKVD of the USSR, under the heading "reports on shortcomings in the work of collective farms," 4,009 letters were traced. Only complaints about food shortages (5,398) and material and living conditions (5,898), as well as reports of banditry and robbery (16,455) were more numerous (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 561, pp. 213–223). The numerical indicators of the above categories of the population's response to life's hardships dominated and steadily grew over the next few years.

The impoverished collective farms experienced an acute shortage of the most necessary: technical equipment, fuel and lubricants, draft power, sowing material and workers. Despite this, the collective farmers had to implement unrealistic grain procurement plans. Thus, in a report dated March 21, 1946, the Deputy People's Commissar of State Security of the Ukrainian SSR Pavlo Drozdetskyi provided the leadership of the NKVD of the USSR with detailed statistics on the progress of the grain procurement plan by region, indicated the reasons for its significant underperformance, and informed about the intelligence and operational measures taken to improve the situation (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 567, pp. 14–22).

At the same time, peasants were often deprived of the promised in-kind payment for the days of work worked on collective farms, while their subsidiary farms were subject to predatory taxation. This is evidenced by numerous peasant complaints, spread over time, revealed by perusal of correspondence in their correspondence, primarily with relatives who were military personnel. In one of such letters, quoted in a special message from the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR to the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) dated March 19, 1946, a peasant woman from the Kherson region Brusilov complained to her son, a Red Army officer: "... The taxes are as follows: 40 kg of meat, 200 eggs, 170 liters of milk. Where can we get them? We buy our own bread. We worked on the collective farm, had over 200 days of work, but we were not given anything for them, and we were taxed. We don't have chickens, so where can we get eggs and meat from..." (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 566, pp. 272 rev.).

The documents under study also confirmed the negative "political sentiments" of the Polish immigrants who arrived in the Ukrainian SSR under the Lublin Agreement. According to a report by P. Drozdetskyi dated March 15, 1946 to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (Bolsheviks) and the National Committee of the State Security Service of the USSR, the immigrants sent to the collective farms of the southeastern regions of the Ukrainian SSR found themselves in unbearable living conditions and were met with a hostile attitude from the collective farm management. For the days of work they had worked, they were provided with poor-quality food: unripe wheat, frozen potatoes and cabbage. As a result of this attitude, a significant part of the newcomers left voluntarily for the western regions of Ukraine with the subsequent intention of returning to Poland (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 566, pp. 160–172).

In support of domestic agriculture, the victorious state received significant contributions from Germany and its allies, but bureaucratic obstacles in making operational decisions and negligence of responsible persons on the ground often prevented them from being used for good. Thus, in a special message dated August 8, 1946, the Minister of State Security of the Ukrainian SSR, Serhiy Savchenko, signaled to D. Korotchenko about the threat of exhaustion and death in the Reniyskyi district of Izmail region of more than three thousand heads of cattle

brought from Romania for reparations due to the delay in their redistribution and the lack of feed (State Administration of the Security Service of Ukraine, f. 16, d. 1, c. 577, p. 112).

You can't envy the livestock confiscated from the defeated enemy, which was still "lucky" to find new homes. On February 11, 1946, the then People's Commissar of State Security of the Ukrainian SSR S. Savchenko, in a report to the NKVD of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) on the unsatisfactory state of livestock farming in Ukraine and the adoption of intelligence and operational measures to improve it, informed, in particular, about the operational development of the recent German accomplice, and at that time the head of the Bilopolska District Veterinary Hospital Mykola Aksenenko. He was exposed in improper care of livestock transferred to local collective farms as reparations from Germany, as a result of which they became massively ill (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 563, pp. 34–35).

In the special report of Deputy People's Commissar D. Yesypenko on the unpreparedness of draft power for spring sowing "in certain collective farms of a number of regions of the Ukrainian SSR", prepared on March 30 based on materials from military censorship, a letter was quoted from a resident of the village of Volokh, Orynyskyi district, Kamianets-Podilskyi region (now the village of Dolynivka, Gukiv rural community, Kamianets-Podilskyi district, Khmelnytskyi region), Saveliy Oliynyk, to his son, a military serviceman: "... The horses in our collective farm are in very poor condition, they die almost every day. Many horses were taken from those brought from Germany, and they all died from gnawing wood. And ours live on one straw cutting, they did not see the grain at all, but worked; now the end has come – they do not want to work..." (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 567, p. 205).

Against the backdrop of the spread of the terrible famine, the documented large-scale losses of grain taken from the peasants and other products in warehouses due to their improper storage and care are striking. Thus, according to S. Savchenko's report to the MGB of the USSR, as of April 10, 1946, 1,965 thousand tons of grain products were stored at the procurement points of the republican office "Zagotzerno". The inspection established that of these, 490 thousand tons of grain turned out to be wet, 290 thousand tons – raw and 1,200 thousand tons – infected with barn pests. Many heads of procurement points and elevators have been brought to criminal responsibility on charges of incompetence, negligence, or criminal inaction (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 569, pp. 196–203).

The deliberate or forced use of spoiled grain and meat and fish products by numerous public catering establishments for cooking caused mass food poisoning of the population, in particular of peasants. In one of such special reports, S. Savchenko informed the MGB of the USSR about the poisoning during June 18–25, 1946 of 96 state farm workers of the village of Berezyne, Tarutynskyi district, Izmail region (now the village of Soborne, Tarutynskyi settlement community, Bolgrad district, Odessa region). One of the victims died. All of them were fed products made from low-quality corn flour, which the state farm received from the warehouse "Zagotzerno" (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 575, p. 111).

The quality of personnel selection for leadership positions in post-war collective farms, state farms and village councils can also be the subject of a separate study. The important criteria here were not so much the professional education and practical skills of the applicants for the positions as their ideological commitment and certain front-line merits. Dozens of examples of incompetent appointments of collective farms and village councils heads', decorated with orders, who, in the most difficult times for the peasants, drank, obediently carried out all the instructions of the leadership and did not show any intelligent initiative, were documented.

There were also outright thieves-swindlers in power. The arrest of one of these was signaled by a special message from D. Yesypenko to the MGB of the USSR dated March 27, 1946. He turned out to be the director of the Frunze State Farm of the Kherson Region, Volodymyr Orlov, who achieved a leadership position in February 1944, presenting himself during a visit to the Zaporizhzhia Regional Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as an agricultural specialist demobilized from the Red Army and a holder of the stolen Orders of Lenin and Alexander Nevsky. It was determined that this clever thief and swindler was previously educated in a labour colony of the Dzerzhinsky State Farm, and during 1943 he managed to work in a similar way as the deputy director of the Dzhangeldy State Farm in the Tashkent Region and the head of the collective farm in the village of Karlivka, Poltava region.

On February 25, 1948, S. Savchenko informed the leadership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) and the MGB of the USSR about the exposure and arrest of another thief-swindler, Alexei Dubas, who had headed the Dzerzhinsky State Farm in the Voroshilovgrad Region since July 1945. It was determined that in January 1944 he escaped from prison, moving from Omsk to Kyiv. By July 1945, “overcoming high thresholds,” the scoundrel managed to get a job as the head of the Volodarsky butter factory in Kyiv Region and the manager of the Tiraspol meat processing plant. The last management position was held by O. Dubas was appointed by the People’s Commissar of Grain and Livestock State Farms of the Ukrainian SSR, Hryhoriy Taran, because he trusted the applicant’s false application data about his higher agricultural education and previous service in the Red Army as an assistant to the regiment commander with the rank of major, as well as the Orders of Lenin and the Red Banner on his chest, bought at the market in Odessa (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 638, pp. 236–238).

The return or introduction (in the newly annexed regions) of collective farm slavery in the post-war conditions of famine, poverty and mismanagement prompted peasants to various forms of resistance. The simplest of these was escape to production. Thus, in a letter dated June 1, 1946, a peasant woman from the Poltava region, Vira Peday, complained to the addressee, a military man: “... There is a lot of land, but little to sow, because there was nothing to sow. The land is rotting, there is no rain, there is no one to work. Only women work. All the others who were demobilized from the army and those who returned from Germany – all go to production, and no one wants to work on the collective farm...” (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 675, p. 332).

Other common forms of spontaneous peasant resistance were sabotage, sabotage and vandalism, as well as terrorist acts and intentions against grain procurement officers, heads of collective farms and village councils, and other pro-government activists. There are more than enough information reports to confirm these facts. Vandalism and terrorist acts were usually acts of desperation and revenge. For example, on April 19, 1946, S. Savchenko reported to the MGB of the USSR that while on vacation, the Red Army soldier had taken the life of the head of the collective farm named after Kaganovich in Belozerskyi district of Kherson region, Rivenko, in revenge for his refusal to return the house of his father, who had been repressed as a German collaborator (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 569, pp. 114–115).

Documented are numerous other cases of cruel retaliation against offenders for confiscation or seizure of housing and household plots, deprivation of responsible positions, expulsion from collective farms for unworked workdays, oppression and repression against relatives, exposure of theft of grain and collective farm property, etc. For example, on July

22, 1948, M. Popereka informed the leadership of the MGB of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) about the exposure of criminals who, on the night of July 1, committed arson in the estate of Oleksiy Bezkrivnyi, secretary of the party organization of the collective farm “Kommunar” in the village of Pisky, Novobasanskyi district (now Bobrovytskyi urban community of Nizhyn district), Chernihiv region. As a result of the fire, a barn with a cow and poultry burned down. The criminals turned out to be a mother with two minor daughters, who thus took revenge on O. Bezkrivnyi as an agent of the authorized Ministry of Procurement for bringing her husband to trial, confiscating a cow, and imposing an exorbitant fine for failure to fulfill state deliveries in 1947 – 1948 (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 656, pp. 200–202).

The malicious sabotage of collective farm labor by peasants was primarily a consequence of their unwillingness to work for nothing, their disbelief in the possibility of receiving from collective farms even the promised meager payment in kind for previously worked days of work. However, in the reports and special reports of the MGB of the Ukrainian SSR, cases of mass non-appearance of collective farmers to work were usually explained by the provocative activities of “anti-Soviet elements”. Thus, in July 1947, local sectarians of the Order of St. John were accused of organizing a several-day sabotage of the harvest by 270 collective farmers of the village of Stalinka, Bratslavskyi district, Vinnytsia region (no modern information about the village has been established), with the use of repressive measures against them (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 614, pp. 274).

Against the backdrop of a terrible famine of unprecedented magnitude in the territory of the Ukrainian SSR, theft of bread and other products from collective farm fields and warehouses, from elevators and procurement points reached a peak. It got to the point that individual activists openly called for thefts as a necessity, and some moderate leaders agreed with this. The sincere speech of the collective farm worker and Komsomol member Valentina Ruban in July 1947 at the general meeting of the agricultural cooperative “Kolos” of the Vysokopolskyi district of the Kherson region is noteworthy: “... you can’t live on what they give you on the collective farm. You have to steal. Now everyone steals. I worked on a reaper, and now I’m moving to another job where you can steal” (she was brought to justice for stealing 14 kg of grain) (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 606, p. 206). The wise proposal of the head of the Voroshilov collective farm of Zhashkivskyi district of Kyiv region, Ivanenko, expressed by him in informal communication with his entourage, is also documented: “it is necessary to provide the collective farmers with the opportunity to steal bread, otherwise this year, as in the past, all the bread will have to be handed over to the state, and the collective farmers will starve” (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 606, p. 190).

The dramatic message of S. Savchenko to the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (Bolsheviks) Lazar Kaganovich about the investigation of the murder of Pavlo Kondratyuk, the head of the village council of the village of Hubnyk (nowadays – Haisyn urban community) of Haisyn district, Vinnytsia region, is striking. It was determined that at dawn on June 24, 1947, on his way to his own garden outside the village, P. Kondratyuk encountered three fellow villagers with bags of ears of corn cut on the collective farm field, who mortally wounded him with a shot from a sawn-off shotgun. The son of the victim, who was guarding the garden, started shooting back and wounded one of the attackers, while the others fled, leaving the wounded man, weapons and bags. The wounded turned out to be Yosyp Kondratyuk, the brother of the head of the village council (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 618, p. 66).

Armed robberies of collective farms and criminal banditry became a mass phenomenon as extreme forms of resistance to the authorities and a way of survival. According to a special message from the Deputy Minister of State Security of the republic, Mykhailo Popereka, to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Tymofii Strokach, dated December 26, 1946, the military censorship of the MGB of the Ukrainian SSR revealed 6,155 reports from 11 regions about numerous murders and robberies. The excerpts from the letters given most often referred to the brazen robberies of collective farms, peasants, and townspeople with the aim of seizing bread, meat, and potatoes (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 581, pp. 194–197).

The information and reporting documents of the NKVD-MDB of the Ukrainian SSR most often attributed traitors, German accomplices, OUN members and other illegals to the category of criminal criminals. However, we have a lot of evidence when ordinary Soviet citizens also embarked on a criminal path en masse: workers, collective farmers, military personnel. The human psyche, crippled by war and poverty, more easily paved the way to crime. Indicative are S. Savchenko's special report to the Central Committee of the CP(b) U dated May 31 and to the MGB of the USSR dated June 7, 1947 on the results of the investigation into the murder of Hryhoriy Kyrmach, the head of the collective farm of the village of Orane, Ivankivskyi district (now Ivankivskyi settlement community, Vyshhorod district), Kyiv region. It was established that on the night of May 2, he was killed with a registered rifle by Mykola Marchenko, a recipient of seven government awards, elected chairman of the village council in August 1946. shortly after demobilization from the ranks of the Red Army. The murderer also turned out to be the leader of a gang of robbers. Some of the villagers supported and covered him (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 599, pp. 62–65, 201–205).

The main form of conscious peasant resistance, characteristic of all regions of Ukraine, was mass anti-Soviet and anti-collective farm agitation. The statements of the “enemy elements” recorded in the information and reporting documents of the MGB of the Ukrainian SSR testified to their quite adequate understanding of the realities of life. “As long as the Soviet government exists, we will not see a good life, because we work not for ourselves, but are enslaved in collective farms” – lamented the collective farmer Vasyl Prykhodko from the village of Veselivka, Mostiv district, Odessa region, during the sowing season in 1947 (this is true in the case; we are probably talking about the village of Vesel, now Mostiv village community, Voznesensky district, Mykolaiv region) (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 594, p. 10).

The anti-Soviet and anti-collective farm sentiments of the peasants were consciously or spontaneously expressed, first of all, in their everyday communication and family correspondence. They were easily detected by agent-operative means and by perusal of correspondence and were completely controlled. A more real threat and a certain challenge to the totalitarian state was the production and distribution of leaflets with appeals to the population. Their authors, despite the awareness of the danger of merciless punishment, called on the peasants to revolt, sabotage grain procurement, and steal the harvested harvest; they threatened collective farm managers and activists with reprisals.

Appeals were usually secretly posted or placed in mailboxes. There were also daring cases of their distribution, one of which was reported to T. Strokach by S. Savchenko in a special message dated July 12, 1947. On July 8, six bandits attacked the collective farm in the village of Gorchychna, Dunayevets district, Kamianets-Podilskyi region (now the village of Gorchychna, Dunayevets urban community, Kamianets-Podilskyi district, Khmelnytskyi region), killed the head of the farm and scattered leaflets with the following appeal: “... it's

enough to endure poverty, hunger and persecution. Rise up, take leadership into your own hands, sort out the bread that was stolen from you..." (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 606, p. 36).

As a type of post-war anti-Soviet agitation, a new category of correspondence tracking was identified – the spread of provocative rumors. Expectations of a new great war were spreading throughout Ukraine, as a result of which the Americans and the British would disperse the collective farms, free the peasants and distribute the land to them. "The state does not provide any assistance to the collective farmers and people are dying like flies. There must be a war and a change of power in the near future," predicted a teacher from the village of Lipetske, Kotovskyi district (now Podilskyi urban community, Podilskyi district), Odessa region, in the spring of 1947 (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 594, p. 11). For a long time, people's hopes for intervention against the USSR only grew. If during 1946 – 1947, the censorship singled out hundreds of letters of this content every month, then at the beginning of 1948 – already thousands: in particular, 1346 for March (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 645, p. 97) and 1359 for April (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 649, p. 95).

The most powerful conscious resistance to the implementation of forced collectivization was exerted by the population of the western regions of Ukraine, who massively joined the national liberation armed struggle of the OUN and the UPA. An extraordinary warning against the collective farm yoke for them were tens of thousands of "bag farmers" from the eastern regions of Ukraine and the border regions of Russia, who had to be saved from starvation. S. Savchenko, in a special message dated April 20, 1946, addressed to the leadership of the MGB of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) expressed concern that in the Ternopil region such newcomers demonstratively discredited the collective farm system, which made it possible for the OUN members to use such facts in conducting anti-Soviet and anti-collective farm agitation (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 569, pp. 172–174).

Open anti-collective farm sentiments also prevailed among the peasants of the Sovietized South of Ukraine, but were limited to quiet sabotage. In a special message dated March 30, 1946, D. Yesypenko signaled D. Korotchenko about the mass refusal of peasants of the Izmail region to join collective farms, citing characteristic excerpts from the traced correspondence: "... Uncle Pylyp, we are not going to the collective farm. So, the councils took away our bread so that we would go to the collective farm, but despite this we are not going! They gave us the bread, but we are not going to the collective farm..." (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 567, pp. 211–212).

The further subjugation of the Bessarabians by famine looked most terrible. Thus, S. Savchenko informed the MGB of the USSR and the party and state leadership of the Ukrainian SSR about 33 cases of corpse eating recorded on the territory of the republic as of March 25, 1947. 16 such cases occurred in the Izmail region (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 590, pp. 40–43). In his report of April 18, 1948 to the then Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR D. Korotchenko on the state of food security in Kherson, Mykolaiv and Izmail regions, it is noted that "food difficulties" caused an increase in the number of cases of dystrophy in peasants: in particular, 578 cases were registered in Mykolaiv, 727 in Kherson and 1380 in Izmail regions (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 646, pp. 39–41).

As we can see, all post-war government agricultural campaigns, such as the restoration and creation of collective farms and state farms, the organization of spring sowing and harvesting, taxation, etc., were carried out under the close supervision of the MGB of the Ukrainian SSR, and were provided with extensive intelligence and operational services. The Central Committee of the CPSU (b) and the MGB of the USSR received regular reports on

the identified shortcomings in the work of collective farms and the successful neutralization of “enemy elements”.

In order to promptly respond to the growth of peasant resistance with the beginning of the sowing campaign against the backdrop of the spread of a terrible famine, the Minister of State Security S. Savchenko, by order dated April 1, 1947, obliged all heads of regional departments of the MGB of the Ukrainian SSR to report immediately on all significant facts of “anti-Soviet manifestations” (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 626, pp. 104). By a subsequent order dated May 12, Deputy Minister D. Yesypenko demanded not only timely current reporting, but also the provision by June 1 of a list of all previously unreported active hostile manifestations and extraordinary events for July of 1946 – May 1947 with brief information on the results of the investigation into each such fact (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 626, pp. 149–151).

Since then, almost daily reports on the struggle of the state security organs against mass peasant resistance had become the norm, both on official and party lines. The most informative, however, are informational and statistical reports on the results of such a struggle over long periods of time. Let us illustrate this with the example of a report dated August 25, 1947, in which S. Savchenko informed L. Kaganovich about the neutralization of “anti-Soviet elements” among the peasants of the eastern regions of Ukraine during the second decade of August, who were hindering the harvest and grain procurement (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 613, pp. 11–37).

The above-mentioned report not only provided detailed information within the stipulated time frame, but also accumulated general statistical data from the beginning of the harvest. It, in particular, reported on the arrest of 884 enemies of the Soviet government. Of these, 51 people were accused of collaborating with foreign intelligence, 61 of committing or preparing terrorist attacks against party and Soviet activists, 22 of organizing sabotage during the harvest, 18 of committing sabotage, 164 of conducting anti-Soviet agitation and distributing relevant leaflets. Almost half of those arrested (400 people) were classified as former German accomplices, traitors, police officers and punishers, 66 were classified as OUN members, and the rest (102 people) were classified as various other “anti-Soviet elements.” The largest number of such “enemies” were exposed within the Kamianets-Podilskyi (112), Dnipropetrovsk (109), Zhytomyr (105) and Kyiv (76) regions. Some of them held responsible positions at the time of their arrest: heads of collective farms (11), foremen (19), members of collective farm boards (7), agronomists and other agricultural specialists (10) (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 613, pp. 12–14).

Even under the conditions of post-war poverty and devastation, the totalitarian state did not see and did not look for easier ways to raise agriculture from its knees, except by artificially resuscitating the unviable collective farm system. There was an urgent need, if not to motivate, then at least to force the peasants to work on the collective farms and not steal.

According to the state plan, the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of June 4, 1947 “On Criminal Liability for Theft of State and Public Property” was supposed to put an end to the mass theft of collective farm property, which, against the backdrop of the new famine, had become almost the norm of life. Even for minimal theft or embezzlement on a collective farm, a sentence of five to eight years in prison was provided; for repeated, group or significant theft, from eight to twenty years in prison with confiscation of property was proposed. One could be imprisoned or exiled for failing to report the preparation or commission of theft.

The first sentences under the new decree were met by the peasants with indignation and despair, which is reflected in the materials of the perustration of correspondence for July 1947. Here is how Vynohradov, a resident of the village of Pustopillia, Bobrynetskyi district (now part of the village of Polumiane, Ketrysanivka rural community, Kropyvnytskyi district), Kirovohrad region, described his feelings: "... on July 10, our visiting session under the new decree tried Kochutka, Balanda, Rohach and others for stealing collective farm ears. All the collective farmers were herded to court like cattle. The people shouted at the wrong actions of the local authorities. This is what the collective farmer has come to: he must work and be nourished by the Holy Spirit, and whoever wants to eat bread is imprisoned for this..." (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 611, p. 62). In August, 745 such reports were already identified (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 616, p. 3). Thus, in the first years of the decree's operation, tens of thousands of peasants were deprived of their liberty through show trials.

According to researchers, an effective repressive mechanism for overcoming mass sabotage and strengthening labor discipline in collective farms by intimidating peasants was the implementation, at the initiative of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) Nikita Khrushchev, of the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of February 21, 1948, "On the eviction from the Ukrainian SSR of persons who maliciously evade labor activity in agriculture and lead an antisocial, parasitic lifestyle" (Baran, & Danylenko, 1999; Marchenko, 2020; Misinkevych, 2012; Niemtsev, 2020; Podkur, 2011). The decree did not apply to peasants in the western regions of Ukraine, who were subjected to another, even more powerful repressive pressure.

The decision on administrative eviction was made by collective farm meetings organized on the initiative of local party centers and collective farm activists. Anyone who did not work the established minimum number of days of work risked being classified as "idlers" and "parasites." During 1948, more than 27,000 Ukrainian peasants from the East were deported to remote parts of Russia by public verdicts.

The reaction of the population to the implementation of the said decree was reported in numerous reports, memos and special messages of the MGB of the Ukrainian SSR. In April 1948 alone, 3039 letters on the relevant topic were traced through a perusal of correspondence (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 649, p. 99). The attitude of fellow villagers to the next repressive measures this time was divided, but despair and indignation prevailed. Despite achieving the main goal: to force the peasants to work on the collective farm, the decree deepened the already deep gap in relations between the collective farm active and the peasants, causing a new wave of terrorist attacks.

The maximum level of conflict between the authorities and the peasantry is highlighted by a special report on the investigation into the murder of Hnat Martynenko, head of the Chapayev collective farm in the village of Martynivka, Pokrovsko-Bahachanskyi district (now an uninhabited territory within the Khorolsk urban community of the Lubenskyi district), Poltava region. This crime, at the instigation of a front-line soldier-order bearer, the head of the village council, was committed by another front-line soldier and the recent head of the collective farm audit commission on the night of April 10, with the participation of another collective farmer. They took revenge on the head of the collective farm (also a front-line soldier) for initiating a whole bunch of repressive measures against them or their family members: convictions for stealing grain, confiscation of surplus household plots, imposition of fines for official negligence and, finally, the intention to apply the Decree of the Presidium of the Verkhovna Rada of February 21, 1948. (SSA SSU, f. 16, d. 1, c. 649, pp. 62–66).

Conclusions. Thus, through poor management of agriculture, merciless tax pressure, and deliberate disregard for the needs of the population in the most essential things, the authorities pushed the peasants into desperate conscious and spontaneous resistance. Anti-Soviet and anti-collective farm agitation spread throughout Ukraine as the main form of conscious peasant resistance. Peasants in the western regions of Ukraine also joined the organized armed struggle against national enslavement and the introduction of collective farm slavery.

Condemned to hunger and poverty, ordinary people were forced to steal, rob, sabotage, and even kill in order to survive or seek revenge. The mechanism for combating the resulting wave of crime was harsh and inevitable criminal prosecution. The meager and often unreliable in-kind payment for the hard labor in collective farms led to widespread, open sabotage of work. The state's use of administrative deportation for failing to fulfill the minimum number of workdays forced peasants to make a difficult but clear choice between ungrateful work on the collective farm and hardship in exile.

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