

## **RESETTLEMENT OF PEOPLE OF RUSSIAN DESCENT FROM BULGARIA TO THE UKRAINIAN SSR (1946 – 1947)**

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**Abstract.** The article examines one of the little-known and unexplored episodes of Soviet government campaigns for the re-emigration of Bulgarian citizens of Russian descent, who were deported to the Soviet Union in the autumn and winter of 1946 – 1947 and settled in the southern, south-eastern and western regions of Ukraine. The demographic statistics of the contingent of migrants, the circumstances of the transportation of ‘re-emigrants’ to Ukrainian ports, their distribution in the regions of the Ukrainian SSR, resettlement, housing and employment locally have been analysed.

The main sources of the study are the documents of the Department for Repatriation of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, which are stored in the funds of the Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine in Kyiv. They include records, directives, instructions, resolutions, reports, information, notices, letters and telegrams of the authorities of the USSR and the Ukrainian SSR at various levels. These documents reveal the details of the preparation and implementation of the resettlement of hundreds of Bulgarian citizens of Russian descent to Ukraine in the autumn and winter of 1946 – 1947 by the Stalinist authorities and provide statistics on the number, gender, age and occupation of ‘re-emigrants’, information on their transportation to Ukrainian ports, reception and accommodation of people in their new places of residence, the reaction of migrants to the actual living and working conditions in their new homeland.

The vast majority of immigrants were associated with the Soviet Union only by the Russian descent of their ancestors, so one cannot call these people “repatriates”, as the Stalinist government did. Given the nature and consequences of this action of the Soviet totalitarian regime, we can rather talk about forced displacement on ethnic grounds.

**Keywords:** Bulgaria; USSR; Ukrainian SSR; forced displacement; peasant fishermen of Russian descent; re-emigration; repatriation; totalitarian regime

## Introduction

At the final stage of the Second World War and after its end, the countries of the world made efforts to return home those of their citizens who, for various reasons and under different circumstances, found themselves outside their state borders. This global process known in international humanitarian law as repatriation has not only led to an unprecedented increase in cross-border migration activity, particularly in Europe, but has also revealed different approaches by governments to repatriation strategies.

From the spring of 1946, Soviet citizens returned to their homeland exclusively on a voluntary basis. Due to this, the Soviet leadership adjusted its own repatriation strategy. In addition to strengthening the propaganda component in working with compatriots abroad, the Soviet leadership sought to expand the demographic base of potential repatriates. In particular, in 1946 – 1947, the Soviet government planned the return to their ‘historical homeland’ of the so-called *re-emigrants*, i.e. former subjects of the Russian Empire, citizens of Soviet Russia and the USSR who once left the country for various reasons, as well as their descendants, who were citizens of other countries. Re-emigration measures were much more active in the countries of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe occupied by the Red Army, and the presence of Soviet troops in the region turned the voluntary nature of repatriation into an empty formality for Stalinist authorities. Bulgaria has become one of the countries implementing this plan.

Despite a significant historical narrative devoted to the study of the problem of post-war repatriation to the USSR, the details of the re-emigration campaigns of 1946 – 1947 from Southern Europe remain virtually unexplored. At best, researchers briefly mention them, and often ignore them, *a priori* considering this aspect insignificant against the background of mass forced repatriation campaigns of 1945 to early 1946. These are dissertations, monographs and articles by Ukrainian researchers A. Andrieiev (2018), S. Halchak (2003, 173 – 182; 2012), M. Kunitskyi (2007), N. Meleshko (2014), T. Pastushenko (2009), L. Dyptan and O. Potylchak (2021, 193 – 216).

Bulgarian historians in their publications touched on the issue of resettlement. So, in 2022, V. Muchinov tried to describe it in an article the main directions in the immigration policy of socialist Bulgaria in the period 1944 – 1989 and to analyze the consequences of this policy with regard to the demographic and socio-economic development of the country (2022, 129 – 147).

Since the early 1990s, Russian historians have been studying the problem of post-war repatriation to the USSR using a new methodology and source base. The most famous of these studies are the works of V. Zemskov (1990, 26 – 41; 2004, 331 – 358; 2013, 272 – 289), A. Shevyakov (1994, 195 – 222), P. Polyan (2002), M. Semiryaga (1995, 19 – 33), A. Bichekhvost (2008), V. Pyankevich (1999), Y. Arzamaskin (2000).

The Western historiography on the subject of Soviet post-war repatriation is represented by the works of M. Eliot (1974), N. Bethell (1974), N. Tolstoy-Miloslavsky (1996), W. Jacobmeyer (1985), U. Göcken-Haidl (2006), as well as

the joint Austrian and Russian project “Hitler’s Slaves and Stalin’s Traitors. Aspects of Repression Against Forced Labourers and Prisoners of War” (Ruggenthaler & Iber 2010). These researchers, although studying the various aspects of post-war repatriation, did not provide an analysis of Soviet campaigns for the deportation of Russian citizens from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe.

The authors of this article consider one of the little-known and unexplored episodes of Soviet government re-emigration campaigns. These are Bulgarian citizens of Russian descent, who were deported to the Soviet Union in the autumn and winter of 1946 – 1947 and settled in the southern, south-eastern and western regions of Ukraine. The study analyses demographic statistics of the contingent of migrants, the circumstances of the transportation of ‘re-emigrants’ to Ukrainian ports, their distribution in the regions of the Ukrainian SSR, resettlement, housing and employment locally.

The main sources of the study are the documents of the Department for Repatriation of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR for the period 1946 – 1947, which are stored in the funds of the Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine in Kyiv.

### **Argumentation**

Bulgaria was not among the countries where the repatriation authorities of the USSR were particularly active. The reason for this was the relatively small number of displaced Soviet citizens who were subject to compulsory repatriation under the Yalta Agreements of 1945. This opinion is confirmed by the statistics of the Office of the Commissioner for Repatriation of the USSR Council of People’s Commissars (Council of Ministers) for Repatriation Matters. As of 1 March 1946, 3,682 people had been repatriated from Bulgaria to the Soviet Union, including 643 prisoners of war and 3039 civilians (1102 men; 1046 women; 891 children) (Zemskov 1990, 29). Unfortunately, the statistics available to us do not distinguish between displaced and re-emigrants. At the same time, a significant number of children (29.3%) indirectly attests to a significant number of the families of re-emigrants among those who returned from Bulgaria during the first post-war year.

With the end of the wave of mass repatriation in the spring of 1946, the Soviet government did not abandon attempts to return much-needed labour resources to the country to restore the destroyed economy. There was quite a large and compact local group of ethnically Russian population in the north of Bulgaria on the river Danube. Its core was the descendants of Old Believer emigrants who lived in and near Siliстра. Perhaps the largest was the Russian community in the village of Tataritsa, founded by settlers in South Dobrudzha back in the last quarter of the XVII century. Most of these people earned their living by fishing on the Danube and farming in coastal lands. Therefore, it was decided to return home of them, at least those who volunteered to relocate, to their historic homeland.

On 9 August 1946, the Council of Ministers of the USSR approved Resolution No. 1919-61 1/120 “On the Resettlement of 1271 Peasant Fishermen of Russian Descent from Bulgaria to the Ukrainian SSR”<sup>1)</sup>.

On 18 September 1946, I. Senin, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, telegraphed to Moscow the decision of the Government of the Ukrainian SSR to place 1,271 re-emigrants from Bulgaria in two Black Sea and two Azov regions: 100 families in the Mykolaiv region; 70 families in the Kherson region; 25 families in the Zaporizhia region; 250 families in the Stalino region<sup>2)</sup>. On the same day, in telegrams addressed to the chairmen of the executive committees of the regional councils of these regions, the Deputy Head of the Government of the Ukrainian SSR asked the local authorities to take urgent measures to prepare housing, provide material assistance and employ migrants, informing Kyiv by 1 October 1946<sup>3)</sup>.

While preparations were underway to transport migrants from Bulgaria to Ukraine, it turned out that hundreds of families of potential re-emigrants had nothing to do with fishing and were farmers or had purely urban occupations. Responding promptly to this development, the government of the Ukrainian SSR made changes to the resettlement plan. Three western regions of Ukraine – Rivne, Volhynia and Ternopil – were identified as the region of permanent residence for 300 families of re-emigrants. On 4 – 5 October 1946, the government of the Ukrainian SSR telegraphed its decision to the local authorities three regions<sup>4)</sup>.

Local authorities were studying the capabilities of their regions to accept a predetermined number of migrants. In particular, between 24 and 30 September 1946, Mayboroda, Head of the Repatriation Department of the Zaporizhia Regional Executive Committee, visited the districts of his region located on the coast of the Azov Sea to ensure the ability of local fishing collective farms to accept re-emigrants from Bulgaria. The visit revealed that there was no free housing for even 25 families of migrants. At best, people could be placed in the homes of other collective farmers. During this trip, the regional official met with O. Yashchenko, Deputy Minister of Fisheries of the Ukrainian SSR. The conversation between them made it clear that the relevant ministry is not going to accept or place the families of Bulgarian fishermen in their guilds. According to the official, “Let the district authorities deal with this issue [...] We can only involve people in work in fishing cooperatives [...]”. The Deputy Minister also refused the oral proposal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Ukrainian SSR, D. Manuilskyi, to accept 1000 migrants from Bulgaria in the cooperatives of the Ministry of Fisheries<sup>5)</sup>. In response to a written request from I. Senin, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, to take measures to employ and provide essentials for displaced fishermen, his namesake, Minister of Fisheries M. Senin, said he could not do so. The relevant ministry only agreed to create separate fishing brigades of migrant fishermen and to allocate them places for fishing<sup>6)</sup>. As we can see, the re-emigrants went to a country where few people were waiting for them. There was a

real risk that people leaving their homes in Bulgaria in the hope of a better life in the USSR would face the reality of homelessness and poverty in their new homeland.

Realising this, the authorities took some steps to provide at least some help to those migrants in greatest need, including with clothing. On 5 November 1946, M. Zozulenko, Head of the Repatriation Department of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, approved the “Model Guideline on the Procedure for Providing Assistance to the Peasant Fishermen Repatriated from Bulgaria with Items of Clothing”<sup>7)</sup>. In the regions that were to receive re-emigrants, local authorities, on instructions from Kyiv, adopted similar resolutions on their placement and employment. For example, Resolution of the Executive Committee of the Mykolaiv Regional Council No. 6407 of 15 October 1946 provided for the accommodation of 50 migrant families in the Tilihulo-Berezan district and 100 families in the Ochakov districts of the region, using “habitable apartments and abandoned houses”<sup>8)</sup>. On 2 October 1946, the local authorities of the Kherson region convened a meeting of the heads of fishing collective farms to discuss the readiness to accept 70 families of Russian migrant fishermen in the region. It turned out that the re-emigrants had to find housing by settling them mostly in the apartments and houses of other collective farmers, of course with the consent of the latter. Most of this housing was one-room and needed repair and furnishing<sup>9)</sup>.

According to Moscow’s preliminary plan, the first group of re-emigrants from Bulgaria was to be transported to Ukraine on 15 – 18 October 1946<sup>10)</sup>. Hundreds of Bulgarian citizens of Russian descent from Tataritsa, Stelbyshche, Karabcha, Kavarna, Ruse (Rushuk), Siliistra and Burgas were waiting to be transported to the Soviet Union in the port of Varna<sup>11)</sup>. [See Table 1]. Believing the assurances of the officers of the Soviet Repatriation Mission, these people hoped for a better life in their historic homeland. The agitators promised the migrant fishermen jobs in their field, decent living conditions, as well as monetary compensation for real estate left on the ground and transferred to the Bulgarian Land Cooperative Bank.

**Table 1.** Bulgarian citizens of Russian descent, displaced to the Ukrainian SSR in November and December 1946<sup>12)</sup>.

Displaced from	Total persons	Incl.:	
		Male	Female
1	2	3	4
Burgas	4	2	2
Kozachka	9	5	4
Karabcha	124	67	57
Stelbyshche	65	35	30
Siliistra	162	82	80
Tataritsa	767	401	366
Total	1131	592	539

The first vessel with more than a thousand re-emigrants left the port of Varna in transit via Odessa to Mykolaiv on 14 November 1946. The next day, the steamer Karl Marx delivered 1,099 migrants from Bulgaria to its destination<sup>13)</sup>. Some people were to be transported from here to their new homes by rail, and some by sea.

The re-emigrants on this voyage included 359 people who had nothing to do with fishing and had to be sent to the Rivne region by rail. M. Zozulenko, Head of the Repatriation Department of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, asked his Moscow leadership to allocate passenger and freight cars and railway platforms for the transportation of people, livestock and property<sup>14)</sup>. On 21 November 1946, the 161 migrants were sent to their destination, the Verba railway station near Zdolbuniv<sup>15)</sup>. The rest of the re-emigrants and property were sent to the Rivne region the next day<sup>16)</sup>. Along the way, echelons of migrants were guarded by officers and soldiers of the Odessa Military District<sup>17)</sup>.

The fishing collective farms of Zaporizhia region were waiting for another group of 19 families of re-emigrants of Russian descent (71 persons) from this sea charter<sup>18)</sup>. From Mykolaiv to Melitopol, these people were transported by the railway, and then by road to their destinations. However, due to the lack of fuel for trucks, the transportation of property and accommodation of families of migrants in the Azov villages lasted until 27 November 1946<sup>19)</sup>.

The third group of re-emigrants from the first trip of the steamer Karl Marx went to settle in the Kherson region. Therefore, having unloaded most of the passengers and their property in Mykolaiv, on 20 November 1946, the transport headed for the Port of Kherson<sup>20)</sup>. There, 375 migrants (104 families) came ashore<sup>21)</sup>.

In the period from 14 November to 1 December 1946, 1,309 re-emigrants arrived in the Ukrainian SSR from Bulgaria, mostly peasant fishermen of Russian descent. These people transported with them 115 horses, 228 cattle units, 398 sheep, 184 pigs and 1,138 poultry units to their new homes<sup>22)</sup>.

**Table 2.** Distribution of re-emigrants from Bulgaria by regions of the Ukrainian SSR (November 1946 – January 1947)<sup>23)</sup>

Number of re-emigrants	Incl.:		Settlement region
	Male	Female	
1	2	3	4
72	38	34	Zaporizhia region
118	58	60	Mykolaiv region
356	185	171	Kherson region
173	85	88	Stalino region
531	274	257	Rivne region
1250	640	610	Total

On 2 December 1946, the second group of re-emigrants from Bulgaria, numbering about 400, arrived in Odessa on the steamer Karl Marx from Varna<sup>24)</sup>. From there, the migrants took the railway to their new homes. In particular, 31 families (133 persons) left for Verba station, Rivne region, the next day<sup>25)</sup>. Another group of 40 families of re-emigrant fishermen (173 persons) was sent to Mariupol on 6 December 1946<sup>26)</sup>.

According to the Union Control Commission in Bulgaria, in November 1946, 1,407 citizens of Russian origin were relocated from Bulgaria to the Ukrainian SSR<sup>27)</sup>. As of 1 February 1947, 530 migrants from Bulgaria were employed in the fishing collective farms of the Zaporizhia, Mykolaiv, Stalino (now Donetsk) and Kherson regions<sup>28)</sup>. On 27 January 1947, V. Begma, Secretary of the Rivne Regional Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine (CP(b)U), wrote in a letter to D. Korotchenko, Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the CP(b)U, that 497 'Russian repatriates' from Bulgaria had arrived in the region<sup>29)</sup>. Most of these people were resettled in the village of Sofiyivka, Verba district, Rivne region, in apartments left by Czech citizens deported by the Soviet regime to Czechoslovakia<sup>30)</sup>.

The dwellings and outbuildings abandoned by the German colonists were used as housing for Russian re-emigrants from Bulgaria in the Mykolaiv region. In particular, 185 people were resettled in two former settlements of German colonists in the Tilihulo-Berezan district<sup>31)</sup>. At the beginning of December 1946, 101 families of migrants were housed in six districts of the Kherson region (Hola Prystan, Biloziorka, Berislav, Novovorontsovka, Tsiurupynsk and Kherson districts)<sup>32)</sup>.

As of 1 April 1947, the authorities resettled 40 families of migrants from Bulgaria (173 persons) in eight fishing collective farms in the Budionnovsk, Primorsk and Mariupol districts of the Stalino region. 173 re-emigrants brought with them 18 tons of flour, 11 cattle units, 97 sheep, 37 pigs, household utensils and other personal belongings. Curiously, the livestock of the migrants almost immediately ended up on collective farms, and some of the cattle were slaughtered by the migrants for meat<sup>33)</sup>.

The life of re-emigrants in post-war Bulgaria was not easy. The really difficult situation of the Russian migrants in the country of their citizenship is evidenced by the phrase: "We cannot be worse off than in Bulgaria"<sup>34)</sup>. At the same time, the reality faced by these people in their new homeland during the famine of 1946 disappointed and shocked them. The inability of many to work in their trade, lack of normal housing, lack of food, fuel, fodder for cattle, injustice in payments for real estate left in Bulgaria and refusal of the authorities to relocate them to other parts of Ukraine or let them return to relatives in Bulgaria caused dissatisfaction and complaints.

From November 1946 to July 1947, the authorities of the USSR and the Ukrainian SSR at various levels repeatedly approved administrative decisions

aimed at improving the material and living conditions of migrants from Bulgaria. The documents prove the real effectiveness of these steps. On 19 August 1947, the Repatriation Department of the Executive Committee of the Zaporizhia Regional Council informed its Kyiv leadership that the loans promised to re-emigrants for individual construction in the amount of 10,000 rubles were not actually issued, and people were unable to purchase manufactured goods such as fabrics, bed linen, clothing and footwear allocated to them by the government due to lack of money. Immigrants living in the Tilihulo-Berezan district received only 400 grams of grain per working day, which was clearly not enough for their families to survive the winter and wait for a new harvest<sup>35)</sup>. Only at the end of 1947 did the authorities intensify lending to re-emigrants for housing development. For example, all 40 families of fishermen who settled in the Stalino region in 1947 received a 10,000 ruble loan for housing development. Such activity of re-emigrants was explained by the fact that almost all families of migrants on the northeastern coast of the Sea of Azov were forced to rent rooms in the homes of local residents.<sup>36)</sup> On the other hand, in the Kherson or Mykolaiv regions, there were few people willing to take out a loan for housing development, as it was cheaper for people to buy housing than to build it. Immigrants were more willing to take out loans for housing and livestock. As of 1 December 1947, in the Kherson region alone, 67 families of re-emigrants received such loans for 335,000 rubles<sup>37)</sup>.

Escaping from hunger and trying to improve their financial and living situation, some re-emigrants left their homes and fled to the western regions of Ukraine, where the drought of 1946 did not have as severe consequences as in the rest of the country and living conditions were better. From January to July 1947, 10 families (29 persons) of migrants who lived and worked in the collective farm Red Flag in the Tilihulo-Berezan district of the Mykolaiv region left for the Rivne region without permission<sup>38)</sup>.

Fishermen displaced from the Lower Danube expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of fishing conditions and the necessary fishing gear in their new places of residence<sup>39)</sup>. They appealed to the authorities to relocate them to other parts of the Black Sea-Azov coast. In January 1947, 17 fishermen from the Mykolaiv region unsuccessfully asked the government of the Ukrainian SSR to relocate their families to the north-east coast of the Sea of Azov<sup>40)</sup>. Some re-emigrants-fishermen from the Mykolaiv region went to the Kherson region, where they caught and sold fish in order to earn at least some money for a living. In 1947, 12 people did so.

The authorities of the totalitarian state denied re-emigrants even requests to return to Bulgaria due to life circumstances. Such cases are recorded by many sources. For example, O. Voznesensky, a 19-year-old re-emigrant from the village of Krasnopillia in the Mykolaiv region, asked in March 1947 to allow him and his brother Alexei to return to Bulgaria, where his parents remained in the village of Tataritsa. However, the local authorities, and later the government of the Republic,

refused, stating that it was inexpedient and impossible and offering the young men to persuade their parents to move to the Ukrainian SSR. Similar requests were denied to four other single re-emigrants whose parents remained in Bulgaria<sup>41)</sup>.

Losing hope of obtaining official permission to return to Bulgaria, some re-emigrants decided to cross the Soviet-Romanian border illegally. In particular, so did six single migrants who lived in the Mykolaiv region. They were all detained and arrested while trying to cross the border. The same fate awaited the re-emigrant Yegor Chugulitov, who left his wife and two children and tried to return to Bulgaria illegally. There were recorded attempts by families of migrants to cross the border illegally. This is how Ivan Shulyakov's family from the village of Chervone Pole tried to return to Bulgaria. However, he and his mother and wife were detained by border guards<sup>42)</sup>. To return home, re-emigrants needed money that most of them did not have. Some sold their property and spent the money just to get to the border. People detained at the border were usually returned to their previous places of residence<sup>43)</sup>.

Cash settlements with re-emigrants for their real estate left in Bulgaria were of an openly unfair and confiscatory nature. As part of the campaign for moving to the Ukrainian SSR, they were promised to recalculate the value of their real estate at the rate of 19.3 levs per 1 ruble. However, the actual conversion rate was 53 levs per 1 ruble. Many repatriates complained that the certificates for the transfer of the real estate to the Bulgarian Land Cooperative Bank did not include their private property, such as buildings and land. For example, the real estate certificate of Anisim Prokopov, a peasant from Tataritsa, drawn up on 4 November 1946, did not include 0.2 hectares of vineyards, and his two stone-tiled houses were valued at 39,600 and 50,000 levs, respectively. According to the actual exchange rate in Soviet currency, these were meagre amounts, 747 and 943 rubles<sup>44)</sup>. This money was not enough to buy or build even the poorest housing in the USSR. And considering the USSR's ruble denomination reform of 16 December 1947, these cash payments looked even more ridiculous. In total, the State Bank of the USSR allocated 801,624 rubles in compensation payments to migrants from Bulgaria in February 1947<sup>45)</sup>. As of 15 August 1947, out of this amount, re-emigrants were paid only 89,914 rubles<sup>46)</sup>.

At the same time, local financial authorities assessed that the cost of the housing provided to re-emigrants from Bulgaria was unfairly overstated. Responding to the complaints of migrants, the Executive Committee of the Mykolaiv Regional Council even adopted a resolution on the immediate revaluation of housing transferred to re-emigrants and a reduction in the valuation of housing, which required major repairs and restoration<sup>47)</sup>. However, such selective steps by the authorities were ineffective and only gave the appearance of solving the problem. For example, houses, farm buildings and homesteads, formerly owned by German colonists and later assigned to repatriates from Bulgaria, were estimated by the Tilihulo-Berezan

District Finance Department at 3,000 rubles for each farm. This amount was to be repaid by the migrants within six years<sup>48)</sup>.

**Table 3.** Compensation payments to re-emigrants for real estate in Bulgaria (1947)<sup>49)</sup>.

Settlement region	Payments for real estate		
	In Bulgarian levs	In Soviet rubles	In Soviet rubles after 16 December 1947
1	2	3	4
Zaporizhia region	350,489	6,613.75	661.30
Mykolaiv region	645,169	12,173.98	1217.40
Rivne region	3,585.026	67,642.84	6,764.20
Kherson region	184,652	3,484.05	348.40
Total	4,765,336	89,914.57	8,991.30

Having deported Russian re-emigrants from Bulgaria, the authorities delayed issuing passports to the new Soviet citizens. Living in the Ukrainian SSR for almost six months, people were left without passports of Soviet citizens, i.e. they were effectively prevented from exercising their civil rights in full. For example, migrants from Bulgaria in the Mykolaiv region were issued passports only in April-May 1947<sup>50)</sup>. Nevertheless, the lack of Soviet passports did not prevent the authorities from including migrants on the voter lists in the elections of February 1947 to the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR. For example, there were 223 of them in the Kherson region alone<sup>51)</sup>.

### Conclusions

For most ethnic Russians deported to the Ukrainian SSR in the autumn and winter of 1946, Bulgaria was not only a country of citizenship, but also the homeland of many generations where they, their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents were born. The resettlement planned by the Stalinist government and carried out by the Soviet repatriation authorities, despite its publicly voluntary nature, was nothing more than ethnic displacement. Only a small proportion of migrants by definition belonged to the category of re-emigrants. The vast majority of displaced people were linked to the Soviet Union only by their Russian ancestry. That is why one cannot call these people ‘repatriates’, as the Stalinist government did. Given the nature and consequences of this action of the Soviet totalitarian regime, we can rather talk about forced displacement on ethnic grounds.

Believing Soviet propaganda and leaving their homes in Bulgaria in the hope of a better life in the Soviet Union, many migrants faced the reality of surviving without work, normal housing or livelihoods in their new homeland. Cash

settlements with re-emigrants for their real estate left in Bulgaria were of an openly unfair and confiscatory nature. At the same time, local financial authorities assessed that the cost of housing provided to the migrants in their new places of residence was unfairly overstated. This inevitably provoked social tensions among migrants, forcing many of them to leave their families and seek employment in neighbouring regions. There were also those who, without the permission of the authorities, left their homes and moved to other regions of Ukraine. Some citizens asked to be allowed to return to Bulgaria and, upon refusal, attempted to cross the border illegally.

Attempts by the authorities to reduce the level of dissatisfaction of migrants with living and working conditions in the USSR by providing their families with limited financial, material and food assistance as well as loans for housing development only partially reduced social tensions, but did not solve the problem. Despite all the challenges, the quality of life and household security of Russian peasants in Bulgaria was often higher than those in their 'new homeland'.

## NOTES

1. SENIN, Ivan [Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR]. 8.10.1946. *Letter to the minister of fish industry of UKRAINE*. Letter. In: Advice of Folk Commissars (Council of Ministers) of Ukrainian SSR. F. 2, op. 7, a. e. 4227, pp. 57. At: Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, [TsDAVOVU], Kyiv.
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