

UDC 94((47+57):(4-11)):32.019.5]”1944/1948”
DOI <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4863.5/29.209693>

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METHODS OF SOVIET PROPAGANDA DISSEMINATION WITHIN DISPLACED CAMPS IN WESTERN EUROPE (1944–1948)

This article identifies, differentiates and details the role of the ideological component in the propaganda activities of the Soviet repatriation agencies during the Second World War and the post-war period, as well as discussing the tasks set by the communist regime in the process of making and using propaganda aimed at displaced persons after the war. This article examines the usage and intention of that propaganda, its main directions, and forms and methods. These covered absolutely all repatriation centers in the given period and spread to the fields of both official and personal correspondence of citizens, as well as into radio, journalism, fiction and art; the characteristic features of Soviet propaganda among Ukrainian repatriates during their mass return in June 1945 – early 1946. This research emphasizes the evolution of the propaganda: from general standard provisions at the beginning, to isolation and differentiation in 1946, that is, its reorientation toward a separate group of persons – potential returnees.

Drawing on unpublished archival documents, it can be stated that Soviet post-war propaganda was destructive in nature, purpose, and means, but also effective, separating people and making them easily submit to the propagandist. Repeated use of various methods of propaganda to create an image of the common enemy in the form of the Western powers allowed for the unification of repatriates around the propagandist and so bestowed favorable beliefs and stereotypes upon him, which in turn made it possible to create an illusory reality with a distorted system of values, personalities and views that the displaced persons (further – DPs) so naively believed. That's why it's important to explore this issue in the context of addressing such issues in the XXI century and also to avoid contradictions and an armed solution to this problem.

Key words: DPs, repatriation, World War II, propaganda, agitation, Western Europe.

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МЕТОДИ РАДЯНСЬКОЇ ПРОПАГАНДИ В ТАБОРАХ ДЛЯ ПЕРЕМІЩЕНИХ ОСІБ У ЗАХІДНІЙ ЄВРОПІ (1944–1948 РР.)

У статті виокремлено, диференційовано й деталізовано роль ідеологічної складової в діяльності радянських органів репатріації в роки Другої світової війни та повоєнний час, а також завдання, що ставилися комуністичним режимом в процесі пропагандистської роботи з переміщеними особами. Висвітлено об'єкт пропаганди, основні її напрями, форми й методи, що в зазначений період охопили абсолютно всі репатріаційні осередки й поширилися на сфери офіційного й особистого листування громадян, радіо, публіцистику, художню літературу й мистецтво; з'ясовано характерні риси й особливості радянської пропаганди серед репатріантів-українців у період їх масового повернення в червні 1945 – на початку 1946 рр.; наголошено на еволюції агітаційно-пропагандистської роботи: від загальних стандартних положень до виокремлення й розрізнення в 1946 р., тобто переорієнтації на окрему групу осіб – потенційних репатріантів.

Спираючись на неопубліковані архівні документи, можна констатувати, що радянська післявоєнна пропаганда за своєю суттю, метою й засобами була деструктивною, але ефективною, себто такою, яка роз'єднувала людей, робила їх покірними слову пропагандиста. Неодноразово застосовувана технологія вдаваного створення «образу ворога» в особі західних держав давала змогу згуртовувати репатріантів навколо пропагандиста й нав'язувати вигідні йому переконання та стереотипи, що своєю чергою давало можливість створювати ілюзорну реальність зі спотвореною системою цінностей і поглядів, у яку радянські displaced persons (далі – DPs) найвно вірили. Таким чином, доцільно буде реконструювати певні історичні події, щоб зрозуміти мотиви їх здійснення та наслідки, до яких вони призвели, та, спираючись на історичний досвід минулих подій, уникнути подібних політичних ситуацій у сучасному світі.

Ключові слова: переміщені особи (DPs), репатріація, Друга світова війна, пропаганда, агітація, Західна Європа.

Current relevance of the topic. In the XXI century, it is impossible to imagine our lives without a constant flow of information. Therefore, the immanence of information and its presence everywhere in society, shapes the conditions under which it influences, forces us to adjust our behavior, and impacts our decision making. One of the powerful tools serving propaganda is the influence that information can have.

Modern propaganda is a systemic activity, the content of which is to spread different political, philosophical, scientific, artistic, and other ideas and principles with a view to implementing a public awareness and enhance mass practical activity based on those ideas and principles. For example, when we see constant violence on television (whether it is violence as a method of combating crime or a form of unlawful human behavior), it is propaganda that encourages violence. When internet blogs, and social networks are constantly filled with abuse, discrimination, etc. – it is propaganda that fuels degradation, spiritual insignificance, as well as the decline of literacy, which when replicated and multiplied, manages to draw in an increasing number of young people. Thus, to date, any information, depending on how it is disclosed, how it is perceived, if it can be considered a suggestion, and what the position of the person who publishes it is, can therefore, be considered an element of propaganda or agitation.

It is important to explore these problems, and to learn some lessons from the past in order to reveal the evolution of the phenomenon and analyze the information for current conditions. This historical experience can lead to the development of an effective state counter-propaganda political strategy, that could resist information aggression from the Russian Federation in the face of an unannounced war against Ukraine.

Introduction of the topic in question. At the final stage of World War II and during the post-war years, the problem of repatriation of displaced persons – citizens who, due to various reasons, found themselves outside of their own countries, became particularly acute. About half of the 5 million Soviet *DPs* were ethnic Ukrainians or emigrants from the Ukrainian SSR. It should be noted, that for the political leadership of the USSR, the problem of repatriation of these citizens almost immediately became clearly ideological. For the head of state, it was important not only to ensure the return of emigrants and guarantee their involvement in the labor force to rebuild the war-torn country, but also to avoid turning them into an object of propaganda for the Western powers.

Thus, in order to repel the “ideological actions of the West”, Soviet propagandists clearly outlined active and purposeful work for the repatriation of displaced persons. It should be noted, that during the post-war decades of ideological propaganda, processing *DPs* became one of the key priorities of the Soviet ideology of repatriation, including in the Ukrainian SSR.

The purpose of this article is to distinguish, categorize and analyze the directions, forms, methods and features of the Soviet authorities’ propaganda work among displaced persons, in particular from the Ukrainian SSR at the end of World War II and in the post-war period.

Analysis of the publications and research used. The issue at hand was partly raised by the Ukrainian researchers – A. Andreev, S. Galchak and M. Kunytskyi. Some aspects of the activities carried out by the repatriation authorities, in particular with regard to its ideological dimensions, were reflected in O. Bryukhanov’s memoir, namely the book “How It Was. On the work of the mission to repatriate Soviet citizens: Memories of a Soviet officer”.

Discussion of the main material. At the end of the Second World War, the Stalinist regime extensively used propaganda, in order to enhance the psychological impact on people’s minds. In particular, communist propaganda was employed to promote the mistaken theoretical positions and practical activities of the Stalinist ideology, as well as disseminate a denial and objection doctrine in the face of enemy propaganda. Thus, it acted as a form of resistance. After the war, the Communist Party used propaganda for two main tasks: to strengthen the moral and political integrity of the people, and to prevent the spread of Western influences on the territory of the USSR (Dyczok, 2000: 14). However, it is worth noting that the Western allies, having full knowledge of the Soviet mission’s propaganda work in the *DPs* camps, did not in any way impede its implementation (Dyczok, 2000: 18).

The first official publications that appeared in the Soviet Union at the end of World War II and that directly related to displaced persons, date from the middle of 1945. The decision of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) on August 4th 1945, on the organization of political and educational work for repatriated Soviet citizens, was of key importance in the context of activation of propaganda, cultural identity and directive of labor for the repatriated citizens (ЦК КПС, 1945: 3). The decree obliged the provincial committees and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Union of Republics, among them the Ukrainian SSR, “to broadly expand political work among repatriated citizens, to familiarize

repatriated Soviet citizens with the main stages of the Great Patriotic War and the great victories of the Red Army against Nazi Germany, to make clear that the salvation of the Soviet people from enslavement and annihilation was made possible by the Soviet socialist system, the heroic exploits of the Red Army, and the selfless work of the Soviet friendship of the USSR” (ЦДАВО, 1945: 4–5). It is worth noting that for the purpose of the implementation of this decree from the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) on August 22nd, 1945 the Central Committee of the CP (b) U adopted its own document, similar in name and content (ЦДАВО, 1945: 5).

In particular, in the autumn of 1945, a special decree was adopted by the USSR (b)U, which determined the sequence and nature of coverage in print media of materials to follow the trajectory and conditions set by them on repatriation (ЦДАВО, 1945: 6). According to the party leadership of the USSR, the purpose of this resolution was to convince *DPs* of the usefulness of the authorities’ repatriation measures, to substantiate its importance and to demonstrate clearly the image of “a happy Soviet citizen”, who had returned to the homeland.

The Ukrainian SSR’s repatriation activities, with regards to political propaganda and agitation in the post-war years, crystallized through the use of specific tools, forms and methods of ideological work. The key in this context, is the question of methods used by the Soviet side to provide support for the return of displaced persons. Therefore, it is advisable to divide and categorize them.

Taking into account the fact that many of the displaced persons, especially older people, were poorly educated or even illiterate, oral conversation often acted as the main form of ideological reprogramming during the process of repatriation. Soviet propagandists widely used different monologue propaganda techniques in oral speech. Within this type of ideological treatment, it is possible to distinguish: *public speeches* (in front of an audience or a separate group of returnees), *conversations*, *mass and group political information*, as well as “*reading*” of newspapers and other materials (Андреев, 2014: 72).

It is worth noting that, among all of the means of ideological influence, the lively communication of propagandists with repatriates has always occupied a special place. The time spent outside their native land coupled with the lack of any information from the Motherland, provided the conditions under which the agitator’s words exerted a significant psychological influence on the thoughts and actions of Soviet *DPs* (ЦДАВО, 1945/1946: 13).

Dialogue, especially in its most common form, conversation, was a common propaganda tactic with returnees. Such communication was mainly carried out in groups and involved the active participation of potential repatriates in discussing various pressing issues. Campaign speeches often formed the introduction for various gatherings, celebrations and rallies, which were often organized by the repatriation authorities (ЦДАВО, 1945/1946: 24). This form of political work became especially widespread, using the conditions of the mass flow of returnees through the check-filtration system (further – CFP), reception and transfer points (further – RTP), in the second half of 1945 to the beginning of 1946 (ЦДАВО, 1945/1946: 27). An indispensable element of this conversation was the questions from people who returned to the USSR following several years living abroad. The mission of the agitator was not simply to give a banal answer to these questions, but a desire to do so in the spirit of the official ideology. It is worth noting that the *DPs* were concerned about the various problems and post-war issues and so they hoped for a clear and credible answer (ЦДАВО, 1945/1946: 36). Obviously, the replies provided should not leave the returnees in any doubt that the Soviet government was taking care of them and taking all possible steps to return them as soon as possible to their homeland, to their relatives, to peace and to work in order to rebuild a war-torn country.

A no less effective method of funneling *DPs* onto the USSR’s official trajectory, was the use of so-called “political information”. Such events were usually entrusted to particularly experienced and politically “correct” agitators. They, in turn, were especially carefully prepared, and the subject matter and content of the speeches was pre-agreed with the party leadership (ЦДАВО, 1945/1946: 65).

Mass verbal influence in situations such as rallies, was a characteristic tool of the ideological work carried out by the Soviet repatriation authorities. Traditionally, they were dedicated to the arrival at the CFP of large numbers of displaced persons or to prominent Soviet dates that were of great ideological importance. The main objective of the rallies was to popularize, among repatriates, the universal Soviet propaganda formulas and clichés, such as: the unity of the party and the people, the unity of the peoples of the USSR in the fight against the Nazi invaders, the power and greatness of the Soviet system, and so on (Брюханов, 1958: 87).

Quite effective, and therefore, an important means of verbal agitation was the so-called “reading” of newspapers. This form of propaganda became widespread during the first stage of repatriation in the

fall of 1944, and was actively used in the ideological treatment of *DPs* until the completion of the second stage of repatriation in early 1946 (ЦДІАБО, 1945/1946: 51). The narrator's monologue ended, as a rule, with a collective discussion. In this way, the involvement of print media provided the agitator with engaged listeners, thus forming a kind of interactivity.

The printed text was actively used in propaganda work with the repatriates, the content of which was pre-agreed with the party workers. Popular types of printed text during the first stage of repatriation were postcards and letters to *DPs* urging them to return to their homeland (ЦДІАБО, 1945/1946: 48–49). The central, republican and local press became a much more powerful means of disseminating propaganda materials at the end of the war and in the post-war period.

It should be noted that thousands of copies of "Pravda", "Izvestia", "Pravda Ukrainy", "Kolkhoznyk Ukrainy" newspapers were distributed daily during the whole period in which the work of the repatriation departments in the territory of the Ukrainian SSR took place, as well as the distribution of a variety of local periodicals (ЦДІАБО, 1946: 17). In the absence of this material, the administration at transit points and camps for *DPs* practiced the creation of newspaper showcases and exhibitions. It is interesting to note that the publication of specialized literature for *DPs* entered daily life only in late 1946 due to the suspension of mass repatriation of displaced persons from the western occupation zones (ЦДІАБО, 1946: 19–20).

One of the methods of the ideological work with returnees was to encourage reading. To this end, CFP libraries would have to be equipped with original collections of central and national print periodicals, carefully selected by political workers and containing state ideologies in their content (ЦДІАБО, 1946: 45). A factor that facilitated the use of printed text in outreach was the sufficiently high literacy rate of displaced persons of middle age (up to 30 years of age), whom were in the majority. These young and educated people, brought up on the traditions of the pre-war Soviet era, were open to receiving any information in their mother tongue and so there was no need to force them to read.

Another of the powerful information tools used to influence the repatriates, was the radio. According to archival documents from the USSR's RNK repatriation department, it should be noted that the issue of radio broadcasting in the CFP was raised from the very beginning by the People's Commissariat of International Affairs (NKVD) (ЦДІАБО, 1946: 89–93). In detail, it should be emphasized, that

during the first stage of repatriation, the employment of the mass media for propaganda among *DPs*, was of a general nature (in the CFP, displaced persons listened to identical broadcasts to the rest of Soviet citizens), but after 1946, radio propaganda, which targeted repatriates, began to change: there were agitational radio programs which had the specific task of encouraging the voluntary return of these people to their homeland (ЦДІАБО, 1946: 94).

As of January 2nd 1948, the USSR Council of Ministers Commissioner for Repatriation, M. Zozulenko, issued an official document regarding the need to send overseas broadcasting texts aimed at Soviet displaced persons in the western occupation zones. The information constituting these radio programs were the speeches of Soviet citizens who returned from the camps in West Germany, their letters, and the speeches of officials, all of which were aired on both Berlin and Vienna radio stations (ЦДІАБО, 1947/1948: 67–68). It should be noted that from 1948 most of these radio programs began to be recorded on tape recorders, which were then forwarded to the Moscow office of the USSR Council of Ministers and Commissioner for Repatriation. There, 10 copies of these radio programs (5 in Ukrainian and 5 in Russian) were stored (ЦДІАБО, 1947/1948: 69).

It is worth noting that in order to persuade people who were hesitant to return, there had been regular broadcasts (8–10 broadcasts per month) on the Berlin Volga and the Vienna radio stations since 1947 (). In general, during 1947–1948 these radio stations managed to create more than 300,000 outreach programs for displaced persons, that "debunked" the activities of national committees, war criminals, and their Western patrons (ЦДІАБО, 1947/1948: 71-72). In addition, in order to broadcast the "true" position of the repatriated population in the Motherland in 1948, by direct instruction from the Office of the Commissioner for Repatriation of the USSR, the Department for Repatriation to the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR organized for a radio transmitter to broadcast a large number of appeals from citizens who had been brought back, to those still abroad (ЦДІАБО, 1947/1948: 74).

Also, the prevalence of Soviet Art significantly impacted returnees, as it was of course, imbued with the spirit of communist ideology. Art showing human figures has widely been used in political work, apparently due to its accessibility, and the way it is perceived and assimilated. The interiors of the transit points that were built for the repatriates, were always crowned with images of the "father of all peoples of the USSR" Joseph Stalin, prominent statesmen

of the Politburo and the Soviet military (ЦДАВО, 1947/1948: 92).

Other tools of direct influence and propaganda were campaign posters, aimed only at the repatriates. Distributed by the hundreds of thousands of copies, this propaganda tool was intended for use mainly in the CFP, framing the walls of railway stations through which the repatriated citizens were transported (ЦДАВО, 1947/1948: 78–79). According to the Soviet ideologists, numerous photo showcases and photo exhibitions, as well as specially printed photo magazines, had a similar influence on the *DPs* that were in the camps under the control of the Western Allies (ЦДАВО, 1947/1948: 79). Their task was to create, in the imagination of a potential repatriate, the image of a happy post-war Motherland, which was eagerly awaiting the return of its citizens.

Another of the effective tools of ideological influence on *DPs* was entertainment events, such as amateur concerts and theatrical performances of amateur groups, typical of Soviet citizens (ЦДАВО, 1945: 112). Official documents from the repatriation authorities at the time indicate that this method was practiced from the very beginning of the activities at transit points and camps, and became especially widespread in its peak period (ЦДАВО, 1945: 119). The degree of effectiveness and the impact theatrical art forms had on the minds of the displaced persons was measured by the number of spectators at such events. With the cessation of the mass flow of repatriates, the need to arrange these events was eliminated.

Beginning in the fall of 1944, cinema had become a leading place to exercise mass propaganda among returnees. Therefore, the authorities skillfully used the popularity of this artistic direction in its propaganda work with repatriates (ЦДАВО, 1945/1946: 83). The carefree, happy faces of the citizens of the USSR were displayed on the screens, and the characteristic optimism that filled the scenes of such feature films aimed to dispel any doubts about a return to the Motherland. Moreover, the form that film propaganda aimed at displaced persons took, evolved over a period of time; if at the beginning of repatriation and during its peak period (end of 1944–1945), artistic Soviet film tapes were offered for viewing, then from 1946 onwards, the initiative of the repatriation authorities had the studios make films (mostly documentary films), specially designed for viewing at camps for *DPs* (ЦДАВО, 1945: 93). The repertoire of documentary films dominated the production of Soviet film studios in the second half of 1930, as well as films made during the war. Among them: “Veselka”, “Bitva za Rosiyu”, “Chapaev”, “Pisnya pro Rosiyu”, “Muzhnist”, “Stalingrad” and

others (ЦДАВО, 1945: 95). Gradually, along with film production and in keeping with the general ideological direction, separate documentary tapes began to appear for viewing only among the returnees.

A specific propaganda campaign tool implemented for repatriation, particularly repatriation to Ukraine, was the use of correspondence with displaced persons (ЦДАВО, 1945: 11). These were letters sent by ordinary Ukrainians to their relatives, friends and colleagues, who were in the western occupation zones and hesitated to make the final decision on whether to return. It should be added that while the Yalta agreements were in effect between the Allies, which obligated Soviet citizens to be repatriated to their home country, the Soviet leadership did not pay much attention to the agitation component of personal correspondence. The situation changed after the administrations of the USA, Britain and France stopped the forced repatriation of Soviet citizens from the occupation zones of Germany and Austria in late 1945. Accordingly, each of the potential returnees had to make a personal decision as to whether to return at that time (Bethell, 1974: 45). On October 9th, 1947, according to his memorandum, the head of the repatriation department of the Ukrainian SSR Council of Ministers, M. Zozulenko, instructed the heads of regional repatriation departments on which letters should be sent to the western zones of Germany and Austria (ЦДАВО, 1947/1948: 119–121). He emphasized that these letters should contain images of reconstructed villages and cities, as well as a prosperous, carefree life, that is, the letters should only be positive (ЦДАВО, 1947/1948: 121).

As an example, we will quote an excerpt from a letter from a previously repatriated inhabitant of the Lviv region, Dmytro Boretskiy, who writes to his friend Petro, who is in a detention camp in western Germany (). In particular, the author notes that “On October 22nd of 1948, I returned to my homeland and lived in the village Poriche-Lubinsky, Gorodotsky district, Lviv region, in my house. My wife and two children are healthy and we have our farm. What we were told at the camp by various propagandists – that we will never return to our homeland and that now, people are being transported to Siberia, is not the truth. Do not trust anyone, bring everyone back to our homeland. I returned home and no one has touched me, I feel happy among my people, my language. Our government helped me to get money and supported my health, etc. I ask you to return home, you can safely believe me and return home” (ЦДАВО, 1947/1948: 234–235).

Under these circumstances, as is clear in the letters, the wish to meet one’s relatives as soon as possible

was often the main driver for a person to finalize their decision to return to their homeland. From the beginning of 1946, and, practically, by the end of repatriation, letters prepared by the party's Soviet functionaries, appealing to the addressees to return to Ukraine, became one of the main means of agitation for *DPs* (). Direct communication, established in this way between relatives who had not seen each other for years, became an important motivation for repatriation for Ukrainian displaced persons.

Conclusions. The issue of repatriation of *DPs* was a priority for the Soviets, because not all of them sought to return to the USSR. Equally important was the fact that these displaced persons remained outside the USSR for a long time, and this accordingly

threatened its ideological influence, which therefore, inevitably actualized the importance of propaganda activities. Of great importance to the Soviet regime was the workforce and potential of repatriates to rebuild the country, as well as the intention to prevent the transformation of their own citizens into an object of "propaganda" by Western allies, which, according to the logic of the totalitarian regime, threatened the formation of a powerful flow of new immigration. Therefore, the leadership of the USSR used all possible methods of persuasion and agitation on the *DPs*. Using mainly verbal, written and pictorial means of propaganda, which were modified and refined over time, the Soviets did not leave any alternatives or allow for the *DPs* to define their own will.

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