

Monika Chojnacka, Karolina Szydywar-Grabowska
Akademia Marynarki Wojennej w Gdyni

FORCED MIGRATION OF UKRAINIAN KULAKS IN THE INTER-WAR PERIOD – STATE OF RESEARCH

ABSTRACT

The topic of the Holodomor in Ukraine and the following deportation of Ukrainian kulaks was taken up by many authors from around the world, such as Michał Klimecki, Stanisław Kulczycki, Nikolai Ivnitski, Elena Chernolutsкая (Елена Чернолуцкая), Anna Reid, Timothy D. Snyder or Pavel Polyan. Forced relocations from Ukraine were aimed at eliminating possible enemies of the communist system. The mass deportations should be seen to take roots in the resolution of 27 December 1929, the Stalinist authorities, and specifically the All-Union Conference of Marxist Farmers who spoke on accelerating the collectivization of the village. Importantly, a resolution was adopted to start the campaign to liquidate the kulak farmers as a class.

Key words:

forced migration, Ukraina, kulak, labor camps, Gulag.

Looking at the history of modern, independent Ukraine, we can see a country struggling with various problems. The nineties was a period of finding and building new foundations of an independent state and seeking its own way of development, whereas early 21st century is a short period, and interwoven with two revolutions – the *Orange Revolution* and *Dignity Revolution*. The process of political transformation and the birth of a sovereign state required from the Ukrainians patience, as well as many sacrifices. Successes were alternating with slip-ups or actual failures in the sphere of politics or economy. Subsequent political decision makers, while winning elections and fulfilling commitments from their mandate of support are confronted with a challenge of strengthening independent Ukraine and pursuing

difficult tasks in domestic or foreign policy in the existing international situation in the region.

The topic of the Holodomor in Ukraine and the following deportation of Ukrainian kulaks was taken up by many authors from around the world, such as Michał Klimecki, Stanisław Kulczycki, Nikolai Ivnitski, Elena Chernolutskaia (Елена Чернолуцкая), Anna Reid, Timothy D. Snyder or Pavel Polyan. A treasure of knowledge, from which we can also get information are memories, for example by Zofia Pawłowska or Victor Krawchenko. A rich source of information are also collected resources, for example, by the Central State Historical Archive in Moscow, Kiev and other Russian and Ukrainian cities. It should be noted that many documents have not been examined so far. However, not all the research that scholars carried out, which resulted in numerous publications, can be discussed. This article was inspired by a book, promoted and translated with the help of the Museum of the Second World War, by Pavel Polian, a Russian geographer, sociologist and historian *Against Their Will... The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*, which one of the chapters addresses the difficult subject of state repression, such as deportations that have affected Ukrainian kulaks.

Forced relocations from Ukraine were aimed at eliminating possible enemies of the communist system. In Russia, they mainly concerned people fighting tsarism, primarily Mensheviks, socialist revolutionaries, also the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia. Commencing from the resettlement of Cossacks in 1919, as well as rich peasants, called the kulaks in the twenties, and others. The mass deportations should be seen to take roots in the resolution of 27 December 1929, the Stalinist authorities, and specifically the All-Union Conference of Marxist Farmers who spoke on accelerating the collectivization of the village. Importantly, a resolution was adopted to start the campaign to liquidate the kulak farmers as a class. From the beginning of 1930, as reported by Professor Michał Klimecki, Head of the Department of Internal and International Security at the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń¹, approx. 900,000 peasants were deported, resulting in the appropriation of 90% of the Ukrainian lands. These lands were included in kolkhozes. In the hands of wealthy peasants, known as kulaks, there was 20% of the Ukrainian territory. If a farmer was deemed a kulak or enemy of the state, the so-called Deku-

¹ Website of the Nicolaus Copernicus University, Department of Internal and International Security at the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies, https://usosweb.umk.pl/kontroler.php?_action=katalog2/osoby/pokazOsobe&os_id=24262, [update: 21.02.2018].

lakization² proceedings were commenced. They mainly involved confiscation of all the property. Stanisław Kulczycki, a Ukrainian historian of Polish descent who worked at the Institute of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, in his book on Ukraine between the wars of 1921–1939³, presented the origin of the process of Dekulakization. Interesting information can also be found in his second publication, which was translated into Polish in 2008, and covers the related topics of the Holodomor in Ukraine. The author highlights among others errors that were made during the entire procedure. In fact, there were no criteria set that would point out that a family could be considered kulak. It very often depended on one man or a group of people in the commission. Often the proof that someone is wealthy was, for example, a roof that was not thatched, or having more cattle. The Dekulakization took place in a spectacular way and had a propaganda dimension, because the entire community of the village was gathered on this occasion. Oftentimes, when definite resistance occurred members of the Joint State Political Directorate were invited (Obyedinyonnoye gosudarstvennoye politicheskoye upravleniye pri SNK SSSR – OGPU). The future of the dekulakized family was sealed, if a family was not deported, it had to leave its current place of residence and was either sent to the cities, or it was assigned for exile. Dekulakization was to serve, among others, intimidation of the whole village, so that its inhabitants would voluntarily enter the kolkhozes and thus stripped themselves of land ownership⁴. Anna Reid, a British journalist and historian who deals, inter alia, with the history of Eastern Europe in her book *Borderland: a journey through the history of Ukraine* quotes a resident of the village of Lukovitsi located on the Dnieper, reports Hanna Hrycaj, who eye witnessed the Dekulakization in the village: people did not want to join those collective farms, but they were forced to do so by force. They took everything from us – land, grain, plows, animals. And if that was not enough, they also took all the bread out of the house. My grandfather was a blacksmith; he was resisting for three years. They stripped him of his horses, smithies, and hammered the walls of the house to check whether he had hidden the grains in them. They even seized

² M. Klimecki, *Ukraina i Ukraińcy w latach 1914–1991 [Ukraine and Ukrainians in the years 1914–1991]*, [in:] L. Podhorodecki, *Dzieje Ukrainy [History of Ukraine]*, Warszawa 2014, p. 233-240.

³ С. В. Кульчицький *Україна між двома війнами (1921–1939 рр.)* – Київ: Альтернативи, 1999. – р. 336.

⁴ Tenże, *Holodomor – Wielki głód na Ukrainie w latach 1932–1933 jako ludobójstwo. Problem świadomości [Holodomor – Great famine in Ukraine in 1932–1933 as genocide. The problem of consciousness]*, Wrocław 2008, p. 150-158.

grains for sowing for the next year. If someone had a barn and a stable, it meant he was rich. And if the roof of his house was covered with sheet metal, they considered him a kulak and sent north⁵.

Depending on the degree of acceptance of the situation, the kulak and his family were incorporated into the group of collective farm employees, sent to the Gulag (labour camp system) and deported. This topic was taken up by the historian of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the late Nikolai Iwnicki in his work *Collectivization and Dekulakization from the early 1930s*⁶. In his book, Nikolai Iwnitski lists, among other things, three categories according to which the communist regimes divided kulaks: counter-revolutionaries, who tended to face the highest penalty, they were outlawed, that is handled in the extrajudicial mode. Counter-revolutionaries (наиболее контрреволюционные) were closed in concentration camps, and were often shot dead. Their families were deported to Siberia, nonetheless sometimes they were allowed to stay at home. The second group consisted of the so-called other elements of the Kulak activist (остальные элементы кулац-кого актива) – rich kulaks and semi-land owners, which were sent to distant places of the Soviet Union. The third category involved kulaks who were able to operate in small farms in small towns, whereas these farms were to be located outside the area belonging to kolkhozes. Every act of the so-called Dekulakization entailed confiscation of property and money, which fed into the budget of state farms, or as it was said, was used to pay off the kulak debts. In Ukraine, the Northern Caucasus and Lower Volga, resettlement was to take place first. Elena Chernoluzskaya, an employee of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Institute of History, and Archeology and Ethnography is one of scholars who describes this issue⁷. In her work *Forced Migration in the Russian Far East of 1920–1950*⁸, she argued, among other things, that it was also opposition to the nationalization of farms that was one the reasons for deeming someone a kulak. In her work, the author emphasizes that the implementation of the resolution issued by the Soviet government on 5 January 1930 *On the rate of*

⁵ A. Reid, *Pogranicze. Podróż przez historię Ukrainy 988–2015*, Kraków 2016, s. 175.

⁶ N. Iwnicki, *Kollektiwizacja i rozkulacz iwanie (Nacząło 30 godów)*, Moscow 1930, p. 130.

⁷ Офіційний сайт Інституту історії, археології і етнографії народів Дальнього Востока Дальневосточного отделения Российской академии наук, <http://ihaefe.org/about/people/chernoluzskaya/>, [update: 18.02.2018].

⁸ Е. Н. Чернолуцкая, *Принудительные миграции на советском Дальнем Востоке в 1920–1950-е гг.*, Владивосток 2012, p. 130-220.

collectivization and state aid for collective farm construction was to be implemented voluntarily because the content emphasized the voluntary nature of collectivization. All the more so Stalin himself, who wrote an article published in "Pravda" in 1930⁹, defended this freedom at first. Due to this viewpoint presented by the leader himself, the party's activism calmed down temporarily, unfortunately this state of affairs did not last for too long and the old practices were quickly resumed of forcing peasants to join the kolkhozes. The resistant who did not consent to joining faced harsh punishment, mainly deportation. Thus, the author pointed out that, in most cases, the actions of the authorities in fact lacked legal grounds.

The aforementioned Anna Reid describes, according to numerous witness testimonies, the travel itself and reaching the target places by peasants and their families. They were transported in appalling sanitary conditions – cattle cars with no heating and water. There was also a shortage of food, and high mortality was recorded, especially among old people and children. Zofia Pawłowska, who lived in Podolia, and whose grandson decided to copy all the memories she wrote in exile, in an engaging way mentions the children in the cars: *There were no small children in our carriage, but in others they would cry so miserably that it was impossible to withstand – the heart was falling. At long stops, in the middle of nowhere, the cry of the little ones would lead to despair. We were happy that the train was moving again. The clatter of wheels and the clang of old, battered carriages drowned the pitiful crying of the children and the groans of their parents. Later, we learned that many children and elderly people died during the journey. The "guardians of order" took tiny dead bodies and exhausted from their distraught parents, as well as emaciated bodies of old men. God only knew what they were doing with these corpses. They were said to have thrown them into the field – it is nothing extraordinary. We lived in the Soviet Union, and there were human corpses everywhere in the earth or on the surface. The people, however, are still reborn and we are again many*¹⁰.

The place of destination were settlements usually deep in the forest. There were cases when deportees were left alone and were ordered to take care of their own existence. In most cases, peasants tended to dig dugouts

⁹ И. Сталин, *Головокружение от успехов. К вопросам колхозного движения*, [w:] *Правда* nr 60, 2 марта 1930.

¹⁰ Z. Pawłowska, *Wspomnienia z nad Bugu, 1921–1945 [Memories from the banks of the Bug river]*, <https://tadeuszczerwik.wordpress.com/2011/09/01/wspomnienia-zza-buga-1921–1945-zofia-pawlowska/> [update: 1.09.2011].

first in such cases¹¹. Timothy D. Snyder, historian and journalist working at the University of Yale, in the publication *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* describes the story of displaced peasants from Ukraine in 1933. He notes that the application of a criminal measure in the form of deportation for the Ukrainian kulaks coincided with the use of forced labor in the Soviet economy on an unprecedented scale. It was at that time that the Gulags were established, which were the result of the combination of special settlements and concentration camps into one system. In fact, it can be said that the entire Gulag system was directly dependent on the collectivization of agriculture. Snyder reports that the system was to cover a total of 476 complexes, to which approx. 18 million people were sent¹². Pavel Polyán, a Russian geographer, sociologist and historian of the newest period quotes further statistics. This Russian researcher in his work presents statistical data, supported by archival records, originating from the Russian State Archive of Economy, according to which, from 1 January 1930, 20,761 families, that is 97,743 people, were resettled from the territory of Ukraine to Northern Krai. Nonetheless, as of 6 January of the same year, 20 176 Ukrainian kulaks were resettled to Siberia and these were category II kulaks. The author also takes up the topic of the destination of deportation. He mentions that for the purpose of efficient organization of work and settlement, a special commission was set up in the government of the Russian Federal Soviet Socialist Republic, under the leadership of Vladimir Tołachev, Commissar for Interior Affairs. The aforementioned Timothy D. Snyder also points that the most frequent deportation site was the construction of the White Sea Canal, connecting the White Sea with the Baltic Sea *for twenty-one months, about 170,000 people digging through frozen soil with picks and shovels, and sometimes using clay shells or their own hands*. This murderous work resulted in a high percentage of mortality. He also emphasizes a high mortality rate among the exiled kulaks, and above all, numerous deaths among children¹³. Pavel Polyán also presented the organization of settlement. The kulaks were concentrated in small settlements, at each of them was a commandant. The instructions issued on 20 May 1931 by the authorities of the Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU) provided for that the settlement should consist of 30 to 50 home-

¹¹ A. Rein, dz. cyt., s. 197; the author cites, among others, Wiktor Kravchenko, whom she described as a promising member of the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League.

¹² T. Snyder, *Skrwawione ziemie. Europa między Hitlerem a Stalinem*, Warszawa 2011, p. 49.

¹³ T. Snyder, dz. cyt., p. 49.

steads. Depending on the area of resettlement, Ukrainian Kulaks were employed to work in quarries, construction, work in mines, also forestry works were carried out, and wherever possible, the field was cultivated.

As mentioned above, many mistakes were made in the course of Dekulakization. As Pavel Polyan wrote, the commission established in 1930 to investigate the irregularities under Byergavinoff's leadership detected 41% of such cases, but in the final analysis only 8% were officially reported, of which only 6% of kulaks could return home, of all displaced persons and only those who could prove having been involved in a revolutionary struggle or their members served in the Red Army¹⁴.

Further forced Ukrainian migrations directly link to the origin of the Holodomor in Ukraine. This subject was taken up by a large group of historians, including Ukrainian, Russian and Polish ones. One of them, as mentioned above, Stanisław Kulczycki, states, among other things, that at the turn of 1930 and 1931, 32,127,000 families were deported from Soviet Ukraine. When the balance of food collections of 1930 was made, it turned out that they were very high. Good weather contributed to this, which was not so in the following year.

In the subsequent growing season, the results obtained from the 1930 crops raised the bar very high for working peasants, and the authorities at all costs wanted to attain the designated target supply quota, mainly in cereal. However, the crops of 1931 were considerably smaller than in the prior year. The reason was not only bad weather, but also the appearance of pests, lack of adequate stock, as the planned production of tractors was not executed, and some of the farmers were deported earlier. With a view to meeting the government's requirements, a large part of the seed was seized, this being administered by Stanisław Kosior, Party Chairman in Ukraine¹⁵. Robert Kuśnierz, Polish historian in a book *Ukraine in the period of collectivization and the Holodomor*¹⁶, wrote that the first reports about peasants suffering from hunger were already noted in late 1931. When the next wave of deportation began, the peasants had a choice, either to die of hunger at their place or to go into the unknown and work hard with their tomorrow uncertainly. In most cases, peasants chose to stay at home. Subsequent deportations took place in 1932, when mainly lower-level party members were sentenced to

¹⁴ P. Polian, *Wbrew ich woli. Historia i geografia migracji przymusowych Związku Radzieckim*, Gdańsk 2015, p. 66-78.

¹⁵ S. Kulczycki, dz. cyt., p. 190.

¹⁶ R. Kuśnierz, *Ukraina w okresie kolektywizacji i wielkiego kryzysu*, Toruń 2005, p. 172.

them, who were unable to fulfill the applicable grain supply standards, as well as peasants who rebelled or opposed the then agricultural policy. As a result of these activities, approx. 11 thousand people were deported from Ukraine. According to various estimates, the death toll of the Holodomor varied from 3.3 million to 6.7 million victims. The aforementioned Pavel Polyan wrote that many towns were deserted, and then the party apparatus tried to settle them again. It is interesting to know that no official directives stipulated this, separating the number of people displaced to Ukraine between Eastern Siberia, Far East and the Azov-Black Sea Krai. The displaced persons were directed mainly from central Russia and Upper Volga, also from Belarus. Migrations also involved residents of other Ukrainian regions, such as Vinnytsia, Kiev and Chernihiv. Timothy D. Snyder described the story of displaced peasants from Ukraine in 1933, when about 142 thousand people were sent to the Soviet Labour Camps and so-called special settlements. He reports, among other things, that these people in the camps tried desperately to find something to eat. The Gulag policy envisaged the largest food rations for those who showed specific deliverables of their work, which is why hungry and malnourished peasants from Ukraine were assigned the smallest portions of food, due to their health and weak physical activity. As a result of hunger and malnutrition, over 67,000 displaced people died in the camps. Equally difficult was the situation in the settlements, where 241 thousand 355 people died.

Ukrainian migrations still require numerous archival research. The attempt undertaken by us to present some of the works concerning mass deportations of Ukrainian peasants requires supplementary and separate examination. The ruthless action of the apparatus of the Soviet power deprived many families of the right to property, dignity and finally to life. While discussing the issues in the above-mentioned works, facts were identified that had not been previously reported, mainly due to inaccessibility of archival records. Ukrainian migration, viewed in a comprehensive context, means not only deportations, but also emigration and migration within the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, including the lands inhabited by the Ukrainian people, which following the First World War became a part of other countries, including Poland.

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MIGRACJE PRZYMUSOWE KUŁAKÓW UKRAIŃSKICH W XX-LECIU MIĘDZYWOJENNYM – STAN BADAŃ

STRESZCZENIE

Tematykę wielkiego głodu na Ukrainie i związaną z nią deportacją kułaków ukraińskich podejmowało wielu autorów z całego świata, takich jak Michał Klimecki, Stanisław Kul-

czycki, Nikołał Iwnicki, Elane Ciernołuckaja, Anna Reid, Timothy D. Snyder czy Pavel Polian. Skarbnicą wiedzy, z której także możemy czerpać informacje są wspomnienia, chociażby Zofii Pawłowskiej, czy Wiktora Krawczenko. Przymusowe przesiedlenia z terenów Ukrainy miały na celu wyeliminowanie ewentualnych wrogów systemu komunistycznego. Początek masowych deportacji należy upatrywać w uchwale z 27 grudnia 1929 roku władz stalinowskich, a konkretnie Wszechzwiązkowej Konferencji Rolników-Marksistów, która mówiła o przyspieszeniu kolektywizacji wsi. Jej ważnym postulatem było postanowienie o rozpoczęciu akcji likwidacji rolników kułaków jako klas.

Słowa kluczowe:

migracje przymusowe, Ukraina, kułak, obozy pracy, Gułag.