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FEATURES OF THE REVIVAL AND OPERATION OF RAILWAY IN SOUTHERN UKRAINE. 1943-1945

-Abstract-

The article considers a number of problems related to the operation of rail transport in South Ukraine in the mid-40s of the XX century. Material damage caused to the industry, and features of recovery strategy of Odessa railway are characterized here. The author analyzes the factors that complicated the process of normalization of traffic, and priority areas of restorative work. Specifically, Soviet methods of transport infrastructure management are analyzed here. The article reveals the results of development companies and business units of the Odessa railway during the first post-war five-year plan.

Keywords: railway transport, the Second World War, Odessa railroad, material damage, recovery process, management, the fourth five-year plan.

The scorched earth policy followed by all belligerents during the Second World War had caused the total destruction of transport infrastructure in Ukraine in general and in its Southern region in particular. Moreover, much of the property was taken during the evacuation by the Soviet authorities in 1941 and the one by the German and Romanian governments in 1943-1944.

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According to Soviet data, invaders caused damage to track facilities of the Odessa railroad¹ alone in the amount of 389 million 996 thousand rubles. 1,748 km of main first rails (116 mln. 963 ths. rubles), 448 km of the main second rails (43 mln. 219 ths. rubles), 1,182 km of station tracks (58 mln. 787 ths. rubles), 3593 of railroad switches (26 mln. 178 ths. rubles), 17 440 m³ earth-embankments (19 mln. 950 ths. rubles), 746 engineering structures (102 mln. 946 ths. rubles), 313 buildings of volume 162 ths. 872 m³ (10 mln. 775 ths. rubles), 12 road workshops (627 ths. rubles), arboreal protection (forest plantations) 1510 hectares (750 ths. rubles), 360 ths. of snow barriers (3 mln. 682 ths. rubles), a household of 4 rock quarries (1 mln. 815 ths. rubles) were ruined, the property of road household amounting 4 mln. 304 ths. rubles was taken out (CSAPO of Ukraine, apk. 6)

Rail transport had suffered not only from material damage, but also from losses of personnel. Military mobilization, repressions, and migration had dramatically limited human resources. The number of murdered and injured railroad workers during the battle was impressive. The same can be said about the number of aircraft and artillery bombings.

These circumstances demanded complex measures from the Soviet authorities aimed at normalizing the rail transport situation since it served both as civil and military transportation.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the specific economic strategy of the Soviet management in this field, approaches to its reconstruction, renovation and development of inventory and logistics support, finance support and staff assistance, control devices and management facilities, of moral and material direction, and of overcoming of difficulties and negative trends existing in industrial and social spheres.

In the academic literature these issues were considered unsystematically and one-dimensionally in the context of the operation characteristics of rail transport in general.

Unlike other economic sectors, rail transport used to own indisputable priority, since it was impossible to ensure the supply of newly recruited soldiers, weapons, equipment, ammunition without its smooth-running operation, and also to evacuate the wounded and sick with the help of the railway. Moreover, as early as 1943, repairing works began in Donbas, Kryvbas and Podniprovia, actualizing a regular cargo carriage: coal, ore, metal, equipment, materials, etc.

¹ The South of Ukraine was serviced by the Odessa railroad, a production and territorial management structure, reporting directly to the People's Commissariat of Railroads of the USSR. Its management authority was the Directorate. It covered Odessa, Vinnytsia, Mykolayiv, partly Kirovograd and Kyiv regions. Since rail transport of the USSR was militarized, all its senior officers had military technical ranks.

In this context, the preparation of railroad facilities and rolling stock became the main tasks on the initial phase of restorative work. In the former case it involved the regaging of rails from the European standard to the Soviet one, flattening and repairing of the roadbed, switches, semaphores, etc. The case of the latter involved overcoming the substantial deficit of locomotives, wagons, platforms, tanks through the repair of the available and the trophy. Other tasks were resulted from the necessity of reconstruction and adjusting of service infrastructure facilities: locomotive and wagon depots, repair shop, water system, fuel and cargo warehouses, station rooms and railway stations, bridges, viaducts and so on. Another problem to be solved immediately was to provide the restorative work with labor (human resources) and qualified staff.

An imminent basis of the “socialist” system of economic management became an intervention of the party into all spheres of economic infrastructure. The “Stalinist” USSR Constitution dated 1936 had fixed the leading status of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) at the legislative level. The legitimization of the exclusive role of the party in the society and in the state in general acquired an odious form, when it came to purely technological and technical aspects. If the party organizations and enterprises of railway transport profile were often headed by the best workers (on big objects they were “fired”, i.e., were engaged in party affairs exclusively), then in the district and regional party committees the positions were occupied by nomenclature functionaries, who typically had no idea of the rail transport and had no special knowledge in this area. This often led to duplication of functions of the party and economic bodies, incompetent interference into purely industrial and technological processes, even profanation. Often, instead of long, systematic, diligent and hard work with the staff, the party bodies were engaged with agitation-and-propaganda actions in the form of “companies”, and tried to solve complex scientific and technical problems by “social-and-political” moralizing and intensifying the ideological pressure on the performers.

Lack of financial and material resources narrowed the possibilities of financial encouragement of labor. Therefore, the party apparatus tried to recoup it by means of moral deployment of workers. According to traditional beliefs of the Bolshevik establishment, these tools were not only completely consistent with the psychological nature of the Soviet people, and were the sign of their self-identity, but they also optimally provided their responsible attitude towards labor.

One of the common forms of the party influence became the meetings with the most active members of the party. On May 12, 1944, the Kotovsk District Party Committee held such an event on the subject “On the progress of the restorative work at the gauge”, and on July 17 there was an event titled “On the activity of the Kotovsk station”. On the 23rd of October there was a meeting of the secretaries of

Komsomol organizations, considering a role of the Komsomol in rail transport winterization (CSAPO of Ukraine, apk. 9).

The party authorities systematically monitored the railway transport service by obtaining reports from the field, and sending their functionaries with supervisory powers on business trips. The example is a memorandum report of a team of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) dated December 15, 1944, on the audit results of business units and party organization of the Kolosovsk gauge of Odessa railway. The very list of categories of this long document – “Traffic Service”, “Locomotive facilities”, “20th distance of a path”, “Trial activities to fight snow”, “Communication service”, “Carriage facilities”, “Housing services”, “Labor union organization activities” and others – shows a wide range of matters analyzed in the document after the research (CSAPO of Ukraine, apk. 46-52).

In many cases, the intervention of the party authorities contributed to the improvement of labor discipline, encouragement of responsibility of officials of different ranks and managers, solving of organizational matters. Moreover, parallelism and duplication of competences of the party and economic structures often prevented the settling normal management processes.

Immediately after the return of the Soviet government, the railway track was inspected. According to a special measuring wagon (2nd quarter of 1944) the age was estimated at the level of 4440 points. In the third and fourth quarters of 1944 the following operations were carried out:

1. A research and preventive repair of 2,189 km of main rail tracks and 520 km of station tracks, and a medium maintenance of 143 km of rail tracks according to classification No.1 and 520 km according to classification No.2.
2. 29 km of curves were stiffened.
3. 11 on gravels and 134 points were mounted
4. The broken rails were replaced with the serviceable ones on 168 km of the railroad.
5. Separate rails were replaced on 62 km of the railroad.
6. 19678 of cracked paired filling plates were replaced, 72 thousand of defective filling plates in general were replaced.

After these operations the average score equaled to 173 points in the 3rd quarter of 1944 and 55 points in the 4th quarter.

But the superstructure of the railroad needed a major repair as the ballast sections has not been renewed since 1941.

The People's Commissariat for Lines of Communications (PCLC) set a ballast import plan for 1944 in the amount of 330 ths m³. For that purpose the

following ballast quarries were revived: Vorontsovo-Gorodyshensky, Yavkinsky, Zvenshorodsky, Oleksandrivsky; and the new one, Sosnovsky, was opened. However, by the end of 1944 due to lack of rolling equipment only 106 ths m³ of ballast (32% of planned) were taken out from quarries.

Rail sleepers' facilities had not been renewed during the war, too. In addition, with the help of special machinery, the German forces destroyed 780 ths of rails sleepers on 399 km of the main route and 157 km of station tracks.

According to the rules of the PCLC the Odessa railway had to receive 93 ths of sleepers, but actually received 39.1 ths of sleepers at a time when the plan for medium repairs and preventive repairs needed 373 ths of sleepers. The management was solving the problem on its own: it have repaired 98 ths of sleepers, 56,529 of sleepers were stored up. In autumn 1944, the research found that 26% of the sleepers were unfit for service.

Out of 1848 km of rails ruined by explosions (1,285 km of main tracks and 563 km of station tracks) 542 km of rails were repaired, 4611 of defective rails were removed, carried out the replacement by used but serviceable rails on 167 railway tracks. Afterwards there were 59,025 off cuts of rails and 8,411 defective ones left. (CSAPO of Ukraine, арк.39-41).

Directing officials of the Odessa railway paid closer attention to the repair of locomotive and train park. The elevating repair was conducted at the depots of Odessa-Tovarna, Odessa-Sortuvalna, Voznesensk, Znamianka, but only the latter possessed a wheel-turning machine. Thus there was a need to transport the mounted wheels from other depots to Znamianka for facing, wheefore the idle hours reached 100-120 hours.

Due to lack of spare mounted wheels, it was impossible to conduct the elevating repair of locomotives ЭМ 721-66, ЭМ-724-09, Э677-94, Э701-53. Steam locomotives 19-849, 19-861, 19-841 had many idle hours due to lack of tender mounted wheels.

From June until November 1944, the elevating repair of 34 steam locomotives with total 1790 idle hours was carried out.

In March 1944, 58 warm washings and 49 cold washings of steam systems were carried out; in July these numbers reached 153 and 339 respectively.

Depots were restored at a quick rate. Thus, by December 1st, 1944, at the station Odessa-Sortuvalna a roundhouse was 95% ready for exploitation, at the station Pomoshna – 85% ready, at the station Tarasa Shevchenka – 75% ready, at the station Khrystynivka – 95% ready, and rectangular shed at the station Odessa-Tovarna was 97% ready, and 10% ready – at the station Mykolaiv.

Exceptionally poor was the mechanical equipment of depots. Thus, they were equipped with 3 wheeled-track machines instead of 8 necessary, 6 Becker jacks out of 19 needed; 7 welding machines out of 20; 10 gas-generating welding machines out of 18; 1 compressor out of 10; 5 warm washing pumps out of 24; 3 piston machines out of 10; 11 drilling presses out of 29; 21 metal turning lathes out of 55; 1 parallel-planning machine out of 8; 5 shaping machines out of 19; 3 blacksmith hammers out of 10 needed.

Close attention was paid to the preparation equipage. The Odessa railroad had only one coal chute in the fuel storage of the station Voznesenska. Moreover, four bunkers were built with a 20 tons capacity, 29 cinder pits were repaired, and all sand dryers were restored, including 3 mechanized pneumatically-squeezing ones with the sand distribution to locomotives from bunkers, and 3 dryers with primitive mechanization of sand supply by a crane. A plan of sand delivery was 60.5% fulfilled.

Instead, a slag disposal was carried out manually.

Five swinging circles were repaired, and another three ones were in the process of renovation. All reversing triangles, except two, were serviceable and operating. A repair of the rest circles and triangles was postponed due to absence of associated parts and components.

Restored engine tracks in coal depots ensured absolutely smooth operation of the railway road.

In order to restore water supply system on the Odessa railway, 5,671,500 rubles were appropriated, 3,888,300 rubles of which were used by December 1st, 1944.

As of early December, 69% of the total depot objects picked for reconstruction in 1944 were completed.

Delays and disruption of terms were connected with an improper performance of the Directorate of Development and Restorative Works (DDRW). In its turn, the government of the DDRW complained about the lack of construction materials and qualified workforce.

There were two water softeners on the railroad (in Mykolaiv and Snihurivka), but they suffered from severe damages and have not operated since early 1945.

Pumping stations premises were restored very slowly. Thus, the pumping stations in Voznesensk and Veselynove were only 30-40% ready since the block work was carried out here by blacksmiths, carpenters, pipe men, because there wasn't enough brick masons. 15% of planned works were conducted at the

pumping plant of the station Lobashivka, a little higher percent of execution was at the stations Mykolaiv, Kherson and Korsun. Pumping plants were 59.5% fueled.

By the end of 1944, on the Odessa railroad they managed to restore 2 power plants with a capacity of 500kW, 12 transformer sub-stations and 30 kilometers of power lines. Power supply works were hindered a lack of high voltage poles, main transformers, electric accessories (CSAPO of Ukraine, apk. 4-8).

One of the important parameters of railway service functioning is traffic safety. The safety situation at the Odessa railway was the following.

For the period from September till mid-December 1944 there were 5 registered train accidents on the railroad (collisions, running off the rails, runaways etc.), as well as a significant number of defects in work and violations of the operating and maintenance rules (CSAPO of Ukraine, apk. 25):

Due to a fault of	September	October	November	10 days of December	Total
Traffic department	44	43	51	12	150
Locomotive management	163	195	257	72	687
Car service division	44	25	29	3	101
Track service	14	9	22	6	51
Communication department	14	5	9	2	30
Total	279	277	368	95	1019

The dynamics of the accidents on the Odessa railroad tended to grow: in the II quarter of 1944 there were 10 accidents registered (7 were prevented), in the III quarter – 10 were registered (16 prevented), in the IV quarter – 16 (5 prevented). At the same time, the violation of the operating and maintenance rules and job descriptions were becoming more and more outrageous.

Thus, on the running line Samorodne-Korsun through a fault of a locomotive driver Kovtun and a train car man Pylypenko train No.2799 stopped 4 times by self-braking due to a brake failure. A train car man Pylypenko failed to take measures to settle these problems. On the upgrade near the station Sotnyky a train stooped again due to self-breaking. A locomotive driver Kovtun, having backed the train, sharply pulled it forward, that made the last 13 cars detach from the echelon and roll back, colliding with the train No.966. As a result of the accident, 17 people died, 9 people got injured, 4 people got severe injuries, and 6 cars were broken (and discarded). The total sum of damages was estimated at 35,350 rubles. Kovtun was sentenced to 8 years of imprisonment, and Pylypenko to 6 years.

There were frequent cases when trains were accepted on tracks, which were occupied with rolling equipment or with other echelons (Znamianka station, Pomoshna station, Korystivka station and others). Over the past three quarters of

1944 there were registered 51 cases of unauthorized absence at work, 15 cases of breach of orders, and 174 cases of desertions.

The management of the Odessa railroad considered the main reasons for so many flaws and violations of the operating and maintenance rules was a lack of proper control over the work of all services and divisions and over their execution of orders of the PCLC. In this matter a chief operating manager Ryabov and a chief locomotive manager Liutenko were particularly lenient, allowing 80% of flaws.

In this regard, the analysis should focus on the problem of human resources of the Odessa railroad. A specific feature of the Soviet government's approach to human resources policy in general was that political loyalty, ideological bias and "active citizenship" was considered the priority qualities of an employee. Instead, professionalism, competence, ability to find out-of-the-box solutions receded into the background.

That is why the managers of "economical units", including those of the Odessa railroad, focused their close attention primarily on the political qualities of employees. In the second half of 1944 the "political assessment" of human resources of the railroad came to an end. Out of 33,443 people subject to that procedure 32,796 people were assessed. Regarding 761 people the assessment committee of the railroad decided to relocate them to the rear railway, that is deep into the country, 575 people were transfer to works not connected with train movements (they were considered the regime operations), where was potentially the biggest threat of diversions, sabotage and other subversive activities.

However, in the opinion of the PCLC Safety supervisor on the Odessa railroad the Director-colonel of connection rod Behanin, a political assessment in some structures was poor, first of all through the fault of the human resources director of the Odessa railroad Gershman, who did not manage the assessment committees locally. This resulted in that managerial positions were still occupied with people who "did not deserve political credit". As an example, there given the names of Zabolotsky, the head of the station Petrivka, and Medushevsky, an operator on duty of line service of the station, who were sent to exile for 5 months during the occupation period for loyalty towards the Romanian administration. Before the war, because of the accident a locomotive driver of the depot of the station Sortuvalna Gerasymovych was arrested for 7 months, and after the outbreak of war he have crossed the front line twice under obscure circumstances. These facts have not been found by the assessment committee, and Gerasymovych continued working in the sphere of the train movements. An operator on duty of line service of the station Yeremiyivka Bukhaiko in his autobiography stated that he allegedly was a guerrilla, got into a trap nearby Armavir (Krasnodar Krai),

having destroyed his passport and military card, was arrested by the Germans and was discharged after three months of confinement. Afterwards he returned to his previous place of residence. The discharge of Bukhaiko seemed weird, since it is a well-known fact that Nazi punitive agencies used to keep prisoners and discharged the soldiers of standing subdivisions of the Red Army, but those guerrillas, who were considered “bandits” were usually put to death after questioning.

An audit body found another 250 people of this “politically unreliable” category at the Odessa unit, Kotovsk and Khrystynivka offices, and demanded to conduct their assessment once again. But Gershman did not rush to fulfill these recommendations.

Moreover, during the occupation period the officers, who were fired for whatever reason, have returned to work in transport service. They kept their positions after the return of the Soviet government and have not been assessed due to a poor performance of the assessment committee.

Furthermore, Gershman made questionable career appointments. For example, Vernianska, who never worked either in human resources or on the railroad, was appointed to a post of a chief staff clerk of SC-1 at the station Odessa. Similar appointments occurred at the stations Odessa-Port and Odessa-Peresyp. Within 2 months a chief staff clerk of the second locomotive department was dismissed three times (Kotovsk station) (CSAPO of Ukraine, *арк.* 25-26).

Since the Odessa railroad needed personnel badly, one of the possible ways to solve this problem was to revive the staff training system. New entrants into the labor force were made through forcible recruitment from all the regions of Ukraine. But the lack of human resources prevented this to happen. For instance, in spring 1948 it was impossible to recruit 650 carpenters, plumbers, concreters in Zaporizzhia region (SAOR, *арк.* 79 – 81).

Heads of different services often complained about the violators officials to the prosecutor’s office of the Odessa railroad. But, as it turned out, in most cases these were groundless accusations. Thus, in 117 out of the 244 cases the prosecutor’s office refused to initiate a criminal proceeding due to lack of evidenced set of all elements of an offense.

Some officials (a chief staff clerk of MS-17 Martynenko (alias – a party organizer), a head of the 17th distance of Dekanov road) dismissed workers unlawfully, and then accused them of malicious desertion (or accused them of failing to comply with orders) and submitted materials to military prosecution.

On the Odessa railroad, in the II quarter of 1944, 26 people were sentenced for the robbery of cargo (including 15 railway men), in III quarter – 35 people (22 railway men), in October and November – 13 people (9 railway men). Nine people

were imprisoned for bribes, who mostly occupies highly paid posts (locomotive drivers and their assistants) conveying speculators and mules.

A yardmaster of the station Odessa-Tovarna, Vasylykivsky, and a yardmaster of the station Odessa-Peresyp, Shelest, were themselves involved in the cargo stealing schemes.

Stealing was often the result of poor feeding arrangements for the railroad officials. Thus, at the station Odessa-Zastava-2, due to the fault of a chief of the department for procurement of supplies, from the 3rd till 9th of December the workers had not received any bread (CSAPO of Ukraine, арк. 53-54).

To sum up the above material, it should be emphasized that the restoration of the proper operation of the Odessa railroad was carried out under conditions of total shortage of financial, material and human resources. The Soviet administration-by-fiat system was using inherent methods, and the centralized inventory and logistics management complicated and hindered the restorative work. The peculiar place in the administrative system was taken by the party agencies, which were unappeasable intervening in the activities of all transport services, and duplicated functions of economic structures. Therefore, their activities should be examined through the prism of the mobilization strategy of the Kremlin, which widely used the means of moral-and-psychological and ideological pressure on the workers.

Despite the relatively poor discipline, low work quality, and difficulties with inventory and logistics management, the workers, engineering and technical staff and officials of the Odessa railroad managed to rearrange a smooth operation for all the structural units of railway infrastructure and to provide military and civilian transportation by the mid-40s.

Sources:

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