

Volodymyr YUSHKEVYCH\*

## **FROM COOPERATION TO ANTAGONISM: THE ACTIVITIES OF SOVIET REPATRIATION MISSIONS IN THE AMERICAN ZONE OF RESPONSIBILITY IN POST-WAR EUROPE (1945–1951)**

*- Abstract -*

The purpose of the research is to examine the interaction between Soviet repatriation missions and the American occupational administration within their zone of responsibility in post-war Europe (1945–1951). The study focuses on repatriation mechanisms, key challenges, and conflicts that arose during these processes.

The scientific novelty lies in the first comprehensive analysis of the activities of Soviet repatriation missions in the American zone of responsibility, based on an extensive source base. The article describes the key aspects of the “Yalta formula” for repatriation and its practical implementation. It reveals the evolution of approaches to the repatriation of Soviet citizens, highlighting the transition from cooperation to a conflict-based model of interaction. The role and impact of political, ideological, and humanitarian factors in this process are thoroughly examined.

Cooperation between Soviet missions and the American side in repatriation efforts quickly gave way to conflicts, reflecting a general trend of worsening relations between the countries during the early Cold War period. Fundamental differences in repatriation approaches – mandatory repatriation by the USSR versus the voluntary principle upheld by the United States – led to tensions and disputes. By the late 1940s, the scale of repatriation significantly decreased, and Soviet missions became tools of propaganda and coercion, ultimately resulting in the breakdown of cooperation on this issue.

---

\* Kyiv Institute of the National Guard of Ukraine, Ukraine (volodymyr\_yushkevych@ukr.net).

**Funding.** The author did not receive any financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

*Keywords:* U.S. policy; repatriation; displaced persons; “Yalta formula”; Soviet repatriation missions; forced repatriation.

\*\*\*

### **Formulation of the issue**

The end of World War II brought to Europe not only liberation from occupation and the cessation of hostilities but also the intensification of numerous socio-economic issues, among which the demographic crisis played a central role. Millions of people were displaced from their native lands due to combat operations, forced labor, deportations, and mass relocations. According to estimates by international organizations, over 11 million displaced persons (DPs) were present in Germany and Austria in 1945, a significant portion of whom were citizens of the Soviet Union, Poland, France, Belgium, and other European countries.

The emergence of such an unprecedented phenomenon as the DP problem required prompt resolution. The Allied nations of the anti-Hitler coalition faced the dual challenge of stabilizing post-war life and determining the fate of millions of refugees and displaced persons. Repatriation, regarded as the primary mechanism for returning these individuals to their home countries, became a key issue in post-war settlement. However, this process was intricately linked to political, humanitarian, and logistical challenges, often surpassing the scope of bilateral agreements between nations.

To coordinate efforts to resolve this issue, several international organizations were established, among which the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and the International Refugee Organization (IRO) played leading roles. UNRRA was tasked with providing DPs with food, medical care, housing, and assistance in their repatriation or resettlement.

For the Soviet Union, the return of its citizens from the Western occupation zones became a critical element of its policy to restore human resources and a tool for legitimizing territorial changes. Conversely, for the United States and the United Kingdom, the DP issue acquired humanitarian and political significance, as forced repatriation risked provoking public

backlash and becoming a source of diplomatic conflicts with the Soviet Union.

Thus, addressing the post-war refugee and DP crisis became not only a humanitarian task but also a battleground for the political ambitions of the great powers. Examining the mechanisms used to resolve this problem allows for a deeper understanding of the specifics of international cooperation during the post-war period and the prerequisites for the conflicting approaches that later led to the escalation of the Cold War.

### Analysis of the research and publications

The historiography of Soviet repatriation missions in the American zone of post-war Europe (1945–1951) reflects evolving scholarly interests in displaced persons (DPs), repatriation policies, and Cold War dynamics. Early narratives from the 1940s and 1950s were dominated by official and immediate accounts. Soviet works, such as Bryukhanov's "Vot kak eto bylo" (1958)<sup>1</sup>, portrayed repatriation missions as successful state-led initiatives, emphasizing their role in national recovery while avoiding discussions of coercion or human rights issues. In contrast, Western contemporaries like I. A. Hirschmann's "The Embers Still Burn" (1949)<sup>2</sup> criticized forced repatriation and highlighted its humanitarian consequences, drawing attention to the difficulties faced by international organizations.

By the 1980s, analytical studies began focusing on the Yalta Agreement and its consequences. Michael Elliott's "Pawns of Yalta" (1982)<sup>3</sup> critiqued the Yalta Agreement's provisions for facilitating forced returns, emphasizing the ethical dilemmas and political compromises involved. This marked a turning point in the historiography, moving beyond state-centric narratives to consider the broader human and moral dimensions of repatriation.

---

<sup>1</sup> A. Y. Bryukhanov, *Os' yak tse bulo: Pro robotu misiyi z repatriatsiyi radyans'kykh hromadyan*, Hospolytyzdat, Moscow, 1958.

<sup>2</sup> I. A. Hirschmann, *The Embers Still Burn: An Eye-Witness View of the Postwar Ferment in Europe and the Middle East and Our Disastrous Get-Soft-With-Germany Policy*, Simon and Shuster, New York, 1949.

<sup>3</sup> M. R. Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta. Soviet Refugees and America's Role in their Repatriation*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1982.

The 1990s saw efforts to contextualize displaced persons within broader historical frameworks. Mark Wyman's "DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945–1951" (1998)<sup>4</sup> examined the DP crisis across Europe, contrasting Soviet coercive practices with Western voluntarism. His work provided a nuanced understanding of repatriation efforts as part of larger humanitarian and political challenges.

In the 2000s, scholars focused more critically on Soviet coercion and internal motivations. Pavel Polyan's "Zhertvy dvukh diktatur" (2002)<sup>5</sup> analyzed Soviet repatriation practices as instruments of political control and linked them to Stalin's broader patterns of repression. Earlier, B. M. Kuznetsov's "V ugodu Stalinu" (1993)<sup>6</sup> highlighted internal tensions within Soviet repatriation policies, revealing how propaganda and practical challenges shaped their implementation.

International and operational perspectives have also been central to the historiography. Works such as Lorimer's analysis of UNRRA (1964)<sup>7</sup> and Marrus's "The Unwanted" (1985)<sup>8</sup> underscored the limitations of international organizations in balancing humanitarian objectives with political pressures. Military perspectives, as seen in Ziemke's "The U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany" (1975)<sup>9</sup>, detailed the logistical and administrative complexities of repatriation in the Allied zones.

While previous studies have examined isolated aspects of repatriation, this research bridges gaps by offering a comprehensive analysis of the transition from cooperation to antagonism in Soviet-American relations. By

---

<sup>4</sup> M. Wyman, *DPs. Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945–1951*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> P. M., Polyan, *Zhertvy dvukh dyktatur. Zhyzn', trud, unyzhenye y smert' sovet-skykh voennoplennykh y ostarbayterov na chuzhbyne y na rodyne*, Rosspen, Moscow, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> B.M. Kuznetsov, *V uhodu Stalynu. Hody 1945 – 1946*, New-York, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> M. Lorimer, *America's Response to Europe's Dislaced Persons, 1945–1952: a preliminary report of dissertation presnted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Saint Louis University in Partirial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Pholosophy in History*, Saint Louis, 1964.

<sup>8</sup> M. R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press, New-York, 1985; T. Maga, *America, France, and the European Refugee Problem, 1933–1947*, Graland Publishing, New-York, 1985.

<sup>9</sup> E. F. Ziemke, *The US Army in the occupation of Germany, 1944–1946*, Center of Military History, Washington, 1975.

synthesizing archival sources and historiographical debates, it situates Soviet repatriation missions within the broader context of Cold War divisions, providing a holistic understanding of their humanitarian, political, and diplomatic dimensions.

### **Presenting the main material**

According to the United Nations resolution of September 29, 1944, the primary responsibility for caring for refugees and displaced persons (DPs), as well as assisting in their return home, was assigned to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA)<sup>10</sup>. However, decisions made by the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) placed full responsibility for their support—including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and transportation—and repatriation on military authorities. These responsibilities included evacuating individuals from combat zones, organizing them into reception centers, and creating identification systems and DP databases.

A draft plan for managing refugees and displaced persons in liberated territories, developed on June 4, 1944, was approved in SHAEF Administrative Memorandum No. 39 (SHAEF Plan) on November 18, 1944, with amendments added on April 16, 1945. This document outlined the criteria for inclusion in the “United Nations displaced persons” category. It defined displaced persons as those who, due to wartime circumstances, found themselves outside their home countries and required external assistance to return home or find a new country.

The memorandum specifically categorized displaced persons as follows:

- Nationals of former enemy states;
- Citizens of enemy states;
- Soviet citizens;
- Former civilian prisoners;

---

<sup>10</sup> On September 16–17, 1944, during the Montreal session of UNRRA, a decision was made that the organization would oversee the repatriation of citizens of Axis countries – Germans, Hungarians, Italians, Romanians, Bulgarians, and Austrians.

- Citizens of the United Kingdom and the United States;
- Stateless persons or those whose nationality was unclear due to territorial changes;
- Victims of political or religious persecution;
- Nationals of neutral countries;
- Non-German collaborators.

The document also outlined the division of responsibilities: military authorities were charged with providing food, clothing, transportation, registration, and temporary housing, after which these responsibilities would be transferred to UNRRA staff. Additionally, UNRRA personnel were responsible for supporting individuals who refused repatriation for political reasons, while the IRO managed their resettlement.

Anticipating the imminent conclusion of the war, the leaders of the Allied nations addressed the issue of repatriation during their discussions on post-war European reconstruction. On February 11, 1945, the closing day of the Yalta Conference, a U.S.-Soviet agreement on displaced persons was signed<sup>11</sup>. This agreement aligned with Soviet preferences, as the return of forced laborers and prisoners of war could partially compensate for the significant demographic losses suffered during the war and serve as a tool for political intimidation. This policy was also rooted in the isolation of the country and the lack of opportunities for individuals to leave it<sup>12</sup>. The Soviet Union sought to extend the agreement's provisions to include individuals who were Soviet citizens at the outbreak of the war with Germany. This was viewed as a means of internationally legitimizing the redrawing of European

---

<sup>11</sup> The "Agreement on Prisoners of War and Civilians Liberated by Troops Under Soviet Command and Troops Under U.S. Command" was signed on the Soviet side by the representative of the General Staff of the Red Army, Lieutenant General Anatoly Gryzlov, and on the American side by the head of the military mission at the U.S. Embassy in the Soviet Union, Major General John Russell Deane.

<sup>12</sup> A similar agreement was signed by the USSR with the United Kingdom, on February 11, 1945, and later with Belgium, on March 13, 1945, and France, on June 29, 1945. Representatives of the latter two did not participate in the tripartite conference. Shortly thereafter, several other countries concluded repatriation agreements with the USSR, including Norway, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Greece, Luxembourg, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.

borders and recognizing the territorial acquisitions made between 1939 and 1941<sup>13</sup>.

As a result of a compromise among the three Allied powers, the so-called “Yalta formula” was developed<sup>14</sup>. According to this formula, mandatory repatriation to the Soviet Union applied to individuals who were citizens of the USSR as of September 1, 1939. This included individuals captured while wearing German uniforms, those who had served in the Red Army after June 22, 1941, and those whose collaboration with or assistance to Axis powers had been proven. Consequently, Soviet missions were not authorized to repatriate Ukrainians from Galicia, Volhynia, and Transcarpathia, or citizens of the Baltic states annexed by the USSR. At the same time, the agreement granted Soviet repatriation mission personnel unrestricted access to locations housing Soviet citizens, the right to appoint representatives in camp administrations, and a prohibition on hostile propaganda.

Michael Elliott argued that the American side’s agreement to the Soviet approach to repatriation was motivated by the desire to secure the return of their prisoners of war, whom the Red Army was liberating as it advanced toward Berlin<sup>15</sup>. Meanwhile, M. Wyman contended that these steps aimed to preserve the unity of the anti-Hitler coalition ahead of the war’s conclusion with Germany and Japan<sup>16</sup>.

As a supplement to the Yalta Agreement, on May 22, 1945, in Halle, Lieutenant General K. Golubev and Deputy Chief of Staff of SHAEF, Major General Ray Barker, signed a roadmap for the implementation of repatriation measures. This technical protocol, known as the “Plan for the Transfer Across Military Lines of Former Military Personnel and Civilians Liberated by the Red Army and Allied Forces” (Plan), detailed the execution of a large-scale repatriation campaign. The plan envisaged the daily relocation of 20,000 to 50,000 individuals and established seven exchange points on each

---

<sup>13</sup> B. Barron (ed.), *Foreign relations of the United States. 1945. Conferences of Malta and Yalta*, United States Government Printing Office, 1955, pp. 985-987.

<sup>14</sup> *State Department Clarifies Policy on Soviet Repatriates*, *The Evening Star*, 1946, № 37187, February 26, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>16</sup> Wyman, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

side. It was agreed that the protocol would take legal effect 24 hours after its signing.

N. Bethell asserts that the Soviet side effectively held 2,200 American prisoners of war as hostages, intending to release them only upon the agreement's conclusion. By the end of May 1945, the Soviet Union had returned a total of 28,662 American prisoners of war<sup>17</sup>.

The implementation of repatriation efforts and bilateral agreements relied on a range of military and civilian structures. The Berlin Declaration of June 5, 1945, formalized the division of German territory into four occupation zones<sup>18</sup>. As one of the coalition's leaders, the United States assumed full or partial responsibility for the occupation of Germany, Austria, Italy, and Trieste following the war<sup>19</sup>. Within the U.S. State Department, a Deputy Secretary for Occupied Territories was appointed, and political advisers were assigned to each occupation zone to address DP-related issues.

In addition, specialized organizations operated within military structures. For instance, the Civil Affairs Division of SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) included a department for prisoners of war and displaced persons, led by Colonel Stanley Mickelsen. Responsibility for managing 1.4 million Soviet citizens categorized as DPs was assigned to SHAEF's economic department. According to the terms of the Yalta Agreement, the United States and Britain provided medical assistance and food supplies (approximately 2,000 calories per person daily) until repatriation was completed<sup>20</sup>.

---

<sup>17</sup> N. Bethell, *The Last secret. The delivery to Stalin of over two million Russians by Britain and the United States*, Basic Books, New-York, 1978, p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> Between 1945 and 1947, the four victorious Allied powers sequentially announced the division of their respective occupation zones into federal states (Länder). In the Soviet zone, the states of Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia were established. In the American zone, the states of Bavaria, Bremen, Württemberg-Baden, and Hesse were created. The British zone was divided into the states of Hamburg, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Schleswig-Holstein. Meanwhile, the territory under French occupation was divided into the states of Baden, Württemberg-Hohenzollern, and Rhineland-Palatinate.

<sup>19</sup> J. J. Carafano, *The Occupation of Germany, Austria, Trieste, Japan, Okinawa, and Korea*, A Companion to American Military, Wiley-Blackwell, New-York, 2010, p. 564.

<sup>20</sup> National Archives and Record Administration (NARA), RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. DPC, B. 14, *Letter from Robert Murphy to the Secretary of State concerning Standart of Care to be Accorded to Russian Liberated Citizens as a Result of Yalta Agreement*, April 21, 1945, n/a.



On July 8, 1945, General Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered the reorganization of SHAEF, resulting in the establishment of the Coordinating Displaced Persons Executive (CDPX), headquartered in Frankfurt. Subsequently, on July 13, 1945, SHAEF was dissolved, and the American Forces in the European Theater (AFET) was created. The division of responsibilities between military authorities and UNRRA was regulated by agreements specific to each occupation zone.

In the American occupation zone of Germany, UNRRA operated under agreements signed on November 28, 1944 (SHAEF Agreement), and February 19, 1946<sup>21</sup>. On October 1, 1945, Frederick Morgan, the former head of SHAEF's DP department, was appointed as UNRRA's representative in the American occupation zone. The organization's headquarters were initially located in Höchst and later moved to Arolsen<sup>22</sup>. UNRRA's responsibilities included overseeing the care, control, treatment, repatriation, and resettlement of displaced persons<sup>23</sup>.

According to M. Lorimer, the designation of repatriation as a core focus of UNRRA's operations was a significant strategic miscalculation by its founders. This decision not only duplicated the functions of specialized national agencies but also exacerbated international tensions surrounding the voluntariness of repatriation<sup>24</sup>. Nevertheless, a coordinating body was essential for implementing large-scale repatriation efforts. The conflicts that later arose between the USSR and the United States were primarily driven by escalating bilateral tensions.

On October 28, 1944, the Soviet government established the Office of the Commissioner for Repatriation of Soviet Citizens, headed by General-Colonel Filipp Golikov<sup>25</sup>, Chief of Personnel for the USSR's People's Commissariat of Defense. His deputies were General-Colonel Ivan Smorodinov and General-Major Vasily Dragun. This organization developed

---

<sup>21</sup> M. J. Proudfoot, *European refugees 1939 – 52: a study in a force population movement*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1956, pp. 136-138.

<sup>22</sup> G. Woodbridge, *UNRRA: The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*, Vol. III, Columbia University Press, New-York, 1950, pp. 247-255.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 472.

<sup>24</sup> Lorimer, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>25</sup> The administration officially ceased its operations on January 9, 1953.

an extensive network of structural subdivisions<sup>26</sup>. Its representatives were active in Hungary, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Italy, Denmark, the United States, Poland, Great Britain, Yugoslavia, Romania, Belgium, France, Iran, Egypt, and French Indochina.

The Austrian mission, headed by General S. Fomin, operated with personnel numbers ranging from 10 to 39 at various times. Meanwhile, the German mission, led by General Davidov, had between 267 and 471 staff members.

On July 10, 1945, the Soviet Military Administration in Germany established a Repatriation Department, staffed by 61 personnel and led by Colonel Yevseyev<sup>27</sup>. Additionally, the NKVD operated Department "F," headed by Pavel Sudoplatov, whose responsibilities included the inspection and filtration of both Soviet and foreign repatriates. A Soviet mission in the American occupation zone in Germany was established on August 13, 1945, and was headquartered in Frankfurt am Main<sup>28</sup>. By December 17, 1945, a Soviet repatriation mission began operations in the American occupation zone in Western Austria. Repatriation officers were granted immediate access to camps and assembly points where Soviet citizens were housed<sup>29</sup>. According to Michael Elliott, the activities of Soviet missions were carried out under the strict control of SMERSH<sup>30</sup>.

The staff of Soviet repatriation missions had to obtain accreditation with the headquarters of Allied military formations and later with regional military administrations. In the American zone of responsibility, as of mid-July 1945, seventy out of 162 Soviet officers in the Western Allied zones of occupied Germany had received such status. Shortly thereafter, on August 13, 1945, an additional 38 Soviet mission members received temporary accreditation for one month within the American zone.

---

<sup>26</sup> M. Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees*, Springer, New-York, 2000, pp. 26-28.

<sup>27</sup> Yu. N. Arzamaskyn, *Zalozhnyky vtoroy myrovoy voyny. Repatriatsiya radyans'kykh hromadyan 1944–1953*, Fokus, Moscow, 2001, p. 73.

<sup>28</sup> Polyan, *op. cit.*, pp. 467-469.

<sup>29</sup> O. J. Frederiksen, *The American military occupation of Germany, 1945 – 1953*, US Army Headquarters Historical Division, Darmstadt, 1953, p. 155.

<sup>30</sup> Elliot, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

The American occupation administration was tasked with determining whether Soviet citizens fell under the provisions of the Yalta Agreement. Further actions regarding these individuals had to be coordinated with military command. Soviet citizens deemed subject to repatriation were transferred to camps or centers under international administration, which then became the responsibility of the Soviet side. The Soviet administration assumed accountability for internal discipline and the organization of transportation arriving from the USSR. The use of American troops in repatriation operations was deemed inappropriate, except in cases of suppressing unrest. When necessary, U.S. military personnel could be employed to guard transport convoys. However, American missions were not authorized to conduct police operations outside the camps and lacked the authority to track and arrest escapees. Requests for such actions had to be initiated by the Soviet side<sup>31</sup>.

During the liberation of Western and Central Europe, the number of displaced persons (DPs) under the jurisdiction of SHAEF increased significantly, from 350,000 as of March 31, 1945, to 2,002,000 by May 14 and 6,210,000 by June 30, 1945. Additionally, 95,500 displaced persons were present in Italy<sup>32</sup>. The Halle Agreement marked the beginning of large-scale repatriation efforts for Soviet citizens, which continued until October 1945. On the eve of this unprecedented population transfer, Germany and Austria were home to 11,078,000 individuals identified by the Allies as eligible for repatriation. Of these, 5,992,000 were under SHAEF's control, while 4,502,000 were located in the Soviet occupation zones<sup>33</sup>.

By August 1945, 65% of displaced persons (DPs) in the American zone—approximately 1.66 million individuals—had been repatriated to 17 different countries. In the three Western zones, 2,174,182 DPs remained, with the largest group being Poles, numbering 899,950<sup>34</sup>. The peak period of

---

<sup>31</sup> NARA, RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. DPC, B. 14, *Letter from R. Murphy to the Honorable the Secretary of State concerning current policy affecting liberated Soviet citizens from US Zone in Germany*, October 26, 1945, n/a.

<sup>32</sup> Proudfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 189.

<sup>34</sup> *Western Allies Repatriate 65% of Displaced Persons*, *The Evening Star*, 1945, № 36981, August 4, p. 2.

repatriation occurred in May–June 1945, when 5.25 million individuals returned to their home countries<sup>35</sup>. The highest eastward population movement took place on June 5, 1945, when 600,000 individuals were transported to the Soviet zone of responsibility in a single day. However, after September 30, 1945, when 2,034,000 individuals had already been repatriated to the Soviet Union, large-scale repatriation effectively ceased. During the same May–September period, the Soviet side returned 22,279 American citizens from Europe and 1,275 individuals from the Far East<sup>36</sup>.

On October 5, 1945, General Dwight Eisenhower temporarily suspended forced repatriation due to humanitarian concerns. Later, on October 27, 1945, General Lucius D. Clay emphasized the need for a resolution to the issue, as forced repatriation was mandated by the Yalta Agreements<sup>37</sup>. Concerns about the safety of American soldiers during riots associated with forced repatriation, as well as suicides among DPs, led the command to decide against deploying U.S. military personnel in such operations to avoid negative public reactions<sup>38</sup>.

On October 26, 1945, U.S. political adviser in occupied Germany Robert Murphy informed the State Department that representatives of the American Forces in the European Theater (AFET) had assisted Soviet officers in conducting voluntary repatriation. In cases where a DP objected or doubts about citizenship arose, an officers' council was convened. Individuals from annexed territories prior to World War II, those liberated by Americans before February 11, 1945, or those who had relocated for reasons unrelated to the war, were subject to repatriation but could only return to the Soviet Union voluntarily. Women who had acquired new citizenship through marriage could only be transferred to the USSR with the agreement of their new country of citizenship. Following incidents of attacks on Soviet officers in

---

<sup>35</sup> Proudfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 220.

<sup>37</sup> T. Sjöberg, *The Powers and the Persecuted. The Refugee Problem in the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR), 1938 – 1947*, Lund University Press, 1991, p. 174.

<sup>38</sup> NARA, RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. DPC, B. 14, *Letter from R. Murphy to the Honorable the Secretary of State concerning current policy affecting liberated Soviet citizens from US Zone in Germany*, October 26, 1945, n/a.

Baltic DP camps, it was decided that such visits would continue under the escort of American colleagues<sup>39</sup>.

By the end of October 1945, the vast majority of those wishing to return home had done so. However, representatives of Marshal Zhukov sought to identify and deport all Soviet citizens. The command of the U.S. Seventh Army received instructions not to support the forced repatriation of individuals who resisted. Later, A. Hirschmann recalled that Frederick Morgan, the operational director of UNRRA in Germany, held anti-Soviet views and avoided meetings with Polish and Soviet missions whenever possible<sup>40</sup>. In contrast, Colonel O. Bryukhanov, a Soviet mission member, accused Western countries of deliberately preventing Soviet repatriation missions from accessing DPs under various pretexts, such as quarantine, reorganization, or repairs<sup>41</sup>.

On November 5, 1945, AFET issued special clarifications for DP camp leaders, some of whom had been uncooperative with Soviet representatives in violation of the Yalta Agreement. Military leadership recommended organizing meetings between Soviet missions and their citizens, compiling lists of DPs with Soviet citizenship, and allowing representatives of the Golikov Administration to conduct advocacy work among Baltic DPs and other potential categories<sup>42</sup>. However, General Davidov accused American authorities of obstructing access to 39,000 “criminals” (including 15,000 Ukrainians, 400 Kalmyks, and 4,000 members of German formations), against whom the Americans had launched their investigations<sup>43</sup>.

A new phase in American repatriation policy began on December 21, 1945, when the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee in Washington (comprising representatives of the War and Navy Departments and the State

---

<sup>39</sup> NARA, RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. DPC, B. 14, *Incoming telegram from R. Murphy to DOS*, May 16, 1946, n/a.

<sup>40</sup> Hirschmann, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>41</sup> Bryukhanov, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>42</sup> NARA, RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. DPC, B. 14, *Letter from Assistant Adjutant General of USFET T. W. Guptill to Commanding Generals of Eastern Military District, Western Military District, Berlin District concerning privileges of Soviet Liaison Officers in DP Camps other than Wholly Soviet*, November 5, 1945, n/a.

Department) decided to enforce the repatriation of approximately 20,000 Soviet citizens. The directive was entrusted to the commanders of the American contingent in Germany and Austria, Generals Joseph McNarney and Mark Clark. In historiography, this document is known as the “McNarney-Clark Directive”. Its contents were communicated to the occupation forces in Germany on January 4, 1946, and in Austria on January 5, 1946.

The directive not only required the cessation of resistance to repatriation and the resumption of forced transfers, in coordination with the British, but also introduced a redefinition of the United States' role in this process. While mandatory repatriation was formally abandoned, the text recommended facilitating the efforts of Soviet repatriation authorities<sup>44</sup>. Meanwhile, Britain maintained its policy of mandatory repatriation until June 1946, and France until July 1947<sup>45</sup>. According to historian M. Marrus, these shifts in American and British attitudes toward repatriation were due to the growing tensions with the USSR, while T. Maga linked the French position to Paris's hope that the USSR could act as a counterweight to the resurgence of German militarism<sup>46</sup>.

Forced actions involving certain categories of displaced persons continued after December 1945. Despite Eisenhower's October 4, 1945, order prohibiting forced repatriation, reports surfaced of American soldiers assisting Soviet missions in rounding up refugees, including an incident on December 27, 1945, at a camp in Memmingen<sup>47</sup>. A tragedy accompanied the handover of 368 individuals to the USSR on January 19, 1946, at the Dachau camp. In protest against forced repatriation to the Soviet Union, ten Soviet citizens committed suicide (by hanging or slitting their throats), while 21 others sustained serious injuries. American authorities reported that 271

---

<sup>43</sup> O. Burianek, *From Liberator to Guardian: The U. S. Army and Displaced Persons in Munich, 1945: a dissertation for Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (History)*, Emory, 1992, p. 472.

<sup>44</sup> Ziemke, *op. cit.*, pp. 419-420.

<sup>45</sup> K. Salomon, *Refugees in the Cold War. Toward a New Refugee International Regime in the Early Postwar Era*, Lund University Press, 1991, pp. 101-102.

<sup>46</sup> Marrus, *op. cit.*, pp. 306-308.

<sup>47</sup> W. Dushnyck, W. J. Gibbons, *Refugees are people. The Plight of Europe's Displaced Persons*, The America Press, New-York, 1947, p. 51.

individuals, whose service in German military formations had been proven, had already been transferred to Soviet missions at Dachau the previous day<sup>48</sup>.

Further forced repatriation actions included:

- February 24, 1946, at Plattling, where 1,590 individuals were transferred to the Soviet side;
- May 13, 1946, at Bad Aibling, where 243 individuals were forcibly repatriated;
- August 21, 1946, at Bad Aibling, where 600 individuals were handed over<sup>49</sup>.

In conducting these operations, American forces relied on a telegram from the U.S. War Department dated April 21, 1946. Forced repatriation of Soviet citizens was conducted only under specific conditions: residence within Soviet borders as of September 1, 1939, capture in German military uniform, service in Soviet military formations after June 22, 1941, and proven collaboration with the enemy.

It is worth noting that immediately after the commencement of large-scale repatriation, the USSR began lodging complaints against the United States. On June 1, 1945, the Soviet side issued an official note accusing the Americans of unsatisfactory conditions and mistreatment of 4,000 Soviet citizens (displaced persons, prisoners of war, and captured military personnel) in camps at Dachau and Allach near Munich. Under the direct orders of Deputy Secretary of State Joseph Grew, a military investigation was conducted, which found these accusations to be baseless<sup>50</sup>. Additionally, the Soviet side frequently accused the Americans of tolerating anti-repatriation propaganda in the camps, refusing to hand over individuals from the Baltic states and Bessarabia, obstructing the activities of Soviet repatriation missions, and fostering committees among Russians, Poles, and Ukrainians that promoted sabotage of repatriation efforts and encouraged individuals not to return to the USSR<sup>51</sup>.

---

<sup>48</sup> *Ten Russians end lives at Dachau*, New York Sun, 1946, January 19, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Kuznetsov, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–201.

<sup>50</sup> NARA, RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. DPC, B. 14, *Public Relations with the American Public*, June 28, 1945, n/a.

<sup>51</sup> NARA, RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. DPC, B. 14, *Incoming telegram from US Political Adviser for Austrian Affairs John George Erhardt to the Secretary of State*, September 11,

On February 11, 1946, at a meeting of the Allied Council for Austria, Marshal Ivan Konev raised objections to the continued existence of paramilitary formations in the British occupation zone of Austria, specifically the “Rogozhin Corps” (claimed by the Soviets to consist of 6,000 individuals, while British estimates put the figure at 2,000) at a camp in Kellerberg<sup>52</sup>. The British dismissed these allegations as a propaganda ploy intended to justify the Soviet military presence in Austria.

Another issue in U.S.-Soviet relations arose from the threat of forced repatriation of Mennonites. According to General Mark Clark, by the end of 1946, approximately 6,000 Soviet citizens identifying as part of this religious group were in the American zone of Austria. General Joseph McNarney reported to the U.S. War Department that about 700 of them were receiving United Nations assistance, while the others avoided registration due to fears of forced repatriation. Soviet repatriation mission representatives approached the Americans on this matter but were refused on July 25, 1945. The Americans were open to their emigration provided they underwent a screening process<sup>53</sup>.

Public appeals to President Harry Truman emphasized the need for U.S. intervention to protect the Mennonites. For example, in a letter dated January 4, 1946, P. Janzen requested priority consideration for the resettlement of 1,000 Mennonite families from Denmark to the United States. A Californian activist proposed employing Soviet Mennonites for economic development in Alaska and resettling them in the Kenai Peninsula area<sup>54</sup>. Despite Soviet protests, the United States allowed anyone who obtained a

---

1945, n/a; NARA, RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. DPC, B. 14, *Incoming telegram from US Ambassador to Moscow Walter Bedell Smith to the Secretary of State*, June 26, 1946, n/a.

<sup>52</sup> NARA, RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. DPC, B. 14, *Incoming telegram from US Ambassador in Vienna John G. Erhardt to the Secretary of State*, February 12, 1946, n/a.

<sup>53</sup> NARA, RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. DPC, B. 14, *Letter from CG USFET J. McNarney to War Department concerning emigration from US Zone of Germany of Soviet nationals of Mennonite Population*, December 17, 1946, n/a.

<sup>54</sup> NARA, RG 59, M 1284, R. 61, *Letter from P. M. Janzen to President Harry Truman*, January 4, 1946, img. 1.



visa and participated in migration programs to leave the American occupation zone<sup>55</sup>.

The emigration of Mennonites to Paraguay and Canada was financed by the Mennonite Central Committee, an American non-governmental organization that carried out this activity under an agreement with UNRRA<sup>56</sup>. The United Kingdom also considered resettling Mennonites in one of its African colonies.

Characterizing the second stage of repatriation, it is noteworthy that the number of repatriated individuals steadily decreased each year, and by early 1950, such actions had become rare and exceptional. For instance, the Soviet mission in Austria repatriated 44 individuals to the USSR in 1948, 19 in 1949, and only 13 in 1950<sup>57</sup>. On February 19, 1949, General Lucius Clay announced the termination of accreditation for the Soviet repatriation mission in Frankfurt as of March 1, 1949. The Military Governor of Germany stated that voluntary repatriation was effectively complete, and the continued presence of Soviet representatives was provoking conflicts<sup>58</sup>. Officers of the Soviet mission in Austria were accused of using coercion and intimidation against camp residents, leading to the termination of the mission's activities on June 8, 1951<sup>59</sup>. Between July 1948 and December 1951, a total of 1,836 individuals were repatriated to the USSR<sup>60</sup>.

---

<sup>55</sup> NARA, RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. DPC, B. 13, *Letter from CG USFET to War Department concerning the emigration from US Zone of Germany of Soviet Nationals of Mennonite Persuasion*, December 4, 1945, n/a.

<sup>56</sup> E. Gleason (ed.), *Foreign relations of the United States, 1946, Vol. V. The British Commonwealth. Western and Central Europe*, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1969, p. 193.

<sup>57</sup> NARA, RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. DPC, B. 2, *Report covering the Activities of Soviet Repatriation Mission in the US Zone of Austria* (1 January 1950 – 31 December 1950), June 8, 1951, p. 6.

<sup>58</sup> *Gen. Clay ousts Red Repatriation Unit from Zone. Russians object that work in U. S. Area is 'indispensable'*, *The Sunday Star*, 1949, № 46, February 16, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> NARA, RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. DPC, B. 2, *Incoming telegram from US Ambassador in Vienna Walter J. Donnelly to the Secretary of State*, May 23, 1951, n/a.

<sup>60</sup> L. J. Hilton, *Prisoners of Peace: Rebuilding Community, Identity and Nationality in Displaced Persons Camps in Germany, 1945 – 1952: dissertation presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy*, Columbus, 2001, p. 125.

Overall, during the second stage of repatriation, the central issue in U.S.-Soviet cooperation became the status of non-repatriated DPs who refused to return to the USSR for political reasons (including Ukrainians, Balts, Russians, Mennonites, Kalmyks, and others). At this time, tensions escalated over the divergent approaches of both sides to the process of returning citizens. The Soviet model demanded total forced repatriation, while the American approach was grounded in principles of civil rights, freedoms, and voluntary choice. Despite mounting tensions and diplomatic pressure from the USSR, the Americans largely succeeded in implementing their approach. However, voluntary repatriations of Soviet citizens were overshadowed by several tragic forced handovers of individuals accused of collaboration.

The minimization of repatriation efforts in the late 1940s and the Soviet use of their repatriation missions for propaganda and subversive purposes amid the “Cold War” led to the effective cessation of bilateral cooperation on this issue.

### **Conclusions**

The end of World War II marked the emergence of a complex system of repatriation policies that intersected humanitarian, political, and strategic interests of the major powers. The Soviet Union used repatriation as a tool for political control and the legitimization of territorial changes, while the United States sought to protect human rights and ensure voluntary return. The polarization of approaches to repatriation, particularly concerning so-called “non-repatriated displaced persons”, became one of the earliest manifestations of the “Cold War”. Forced repatriation caused humanitarian crises and created tensions in bilateral relations, ultimately dismantling the mechanisms of cooperation by 1951.