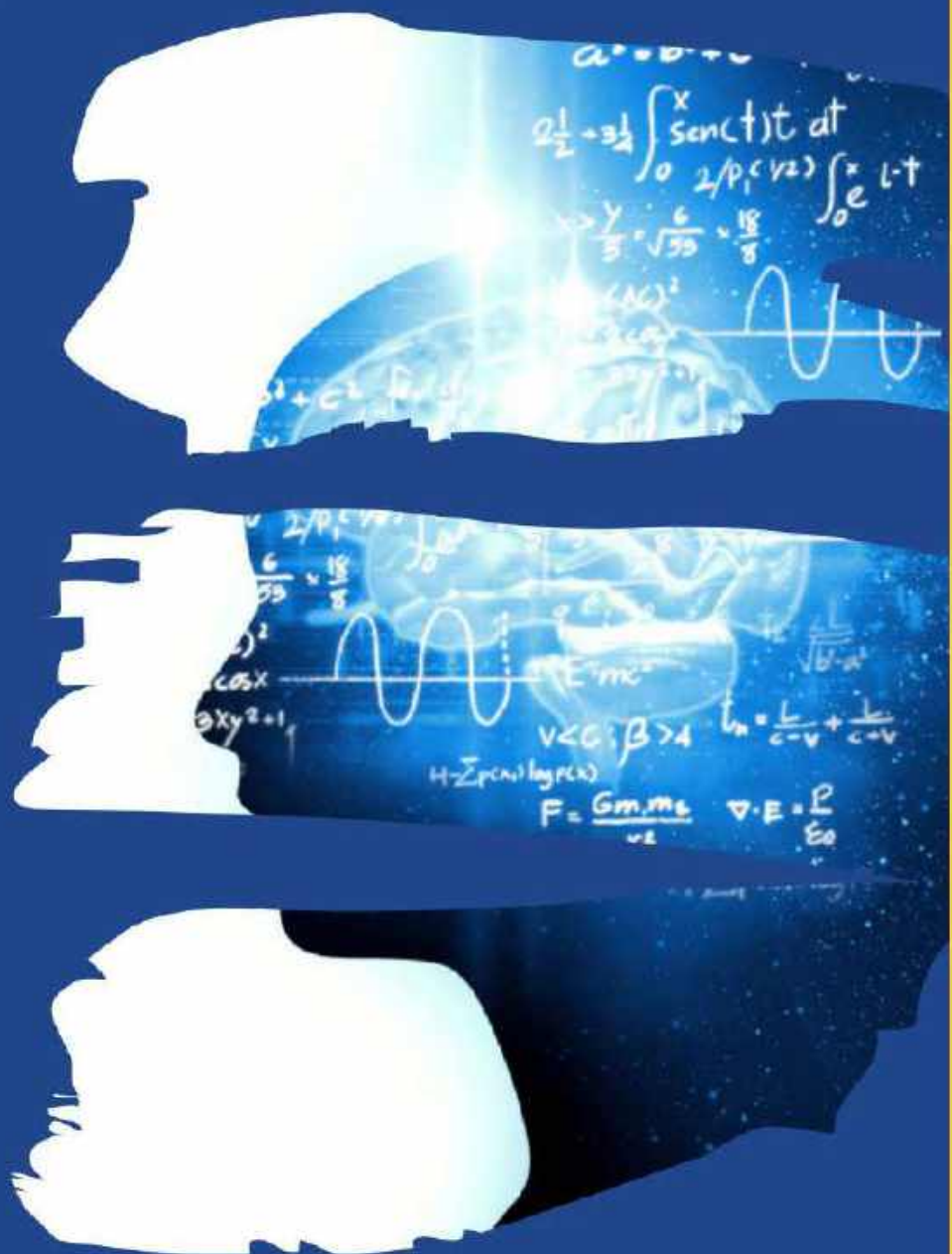




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Klysh Taras HPhD student of the Department of History of Ukraine, Archeology and Special Branches of Historical Science Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Ternopil, <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4584-955X>

Kitsak Volodymyr PhD in History, Associate Professor of the Department of History of Ukraine, Archaeology, and Special Branches of Historical Sciences Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Ternopil, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7180-0588>

THE UNRESOLVED HOUSING PROBLEM AS THE MAIN CAUSE OF THE DOUBLE RESETTLEMENT OF DEPORTED UKRAINIANS FROM ZAKERZONIA IN THE UKRAINIAN SSR

Abstract. This article examines the housing aspect of the resettlement of Ukrainians from Transcarpathia to the Ukrainian SSR in 1944–1947 and identifies its decisive influence on the secondary migration of the deported population to the western regions of the republic. Based on published archival documents, statistical materials and regulatory acts, the article analyses the mechanisms for implementing the Soviet authorities' resettlement policy, the regional characteristics of resettlement and the actual conditions under which resettlers were settled in the southern and eastern regions of the Ukrainian SSR. It has been established that the officially declared commitments to provide resettlers with adequate housing and living conditions did not correspond to the actual capabilities of the post-war economy. It is shown that post-war devastation, a catastrophic shortage of housing stock, the bureaucratic inertia of local authorities, the slow pace of housing construction and repair, limited material and technical resources, as well as the occupation of former German settlements significantly complicated the adaptation of the deported population. It has been established that in most regions, the resettlers did not receive separate housing, but were accommodated by moving in with local residents, renting temporary accommodation, or staying for extended periods at transit centres. Particular attention is paid to the inability of resettlers to resolve the housing problem on their own due to a shortage of timber, a lack of skills in building dwellings from local materials, and inadequate supplies of glass, slate and iron fittings. It is argued that the inability to provide adequate housing was not a local phenomenon,



but a systemic feature of Soviet resettlement policy. It is demonstrated that it was precisely the unresolved housing problem that became the main reason for the repeated displacement of a significant proportion of people from the 'behind-the-line' zones of Southern and Eastern Ukraine to the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR. It is concluded that the formal improvement in housing provision indicators in the late 1940s was primarily due to the outflow of resettlers, rather than the effectiveness of state policy regarding their settlement. The study traces the contradiction between the normative model of one-off resettlement and the practice of repeated migrations within the Ukrainian SSR.

Keywords: Zakerzonnia, Agreement of September 9, 1944, resettlement of Ukrainians, deportation, housing provision, secondary migration, postwar Ukrainian SSR, Soviet resettlement policy, Eastern Ukraine, Western Ukraine.

Клиш Тарас аспірант кафедри історії України, археології та спеціальних галузей історичних наук Тернопільського національного педагогічного університету імені Володимира Гнатюка, Тернопіль, <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4584-955X>

Кіцак Володимир кандидат історичних наук, доцент кафедри історії України, археології та спеціальних галузей історичних наук Тернопільського національного педагогічного університету імені Володимира Гнатюка, Тернопіль, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7180-0588>

НЕВИРІШЕНІСТЬ ЖИТЛОВОЇ ПРОБЛЕМИ ЯК ОСНОВНА ПРИЧИНА ПОДВІЙНОГО ПЕРЕСЕЛЕННЯ ДЕПОРТОВАНИХ ІЗ ЗАКЕРЗОННЯ УКРАЇНЦІВ В УРСР

Анотація. У статті досліджено житловий аспект переселення українців із Закерзоння до УРСР. У 1944-1947 рр. та з'ясовано його визначальний вплив на вторинну міграцію депортованого населення до західних областей республіки. На основі опублікованих архівних документів, статистичних матеріалів і нормативно-розпорядчих актів проаналізовано механізми реалізації переселенської політики радянської влади, регіональні особливості розселення та реальні умови облаштування депортованих у південних і східних областях УРСР. Встановлено, що офіційно задекларовані зобов'язання щодо забезпечення переселенців належними житлово-побутовими умовами не відповідали фактичним можливостям повоєнного господарства. Показано, що післявоєнна руїна, катастрофічний дефіцит житлового фонду, бюрократична інертність місцевих органів влади, повільні темпи будівництва й ремонту житла,



обмеженість матеріально-технічних ресурсів, а також зайнятість колишніх німецьких колоній істотно ускладнили адаптацію депортованого населення. З'ясовано, що в більшості регіонів переселенці не отримували окремого житла, а розмішувалися шляхом підселення до місцевих жителів, оренди тимчасових помешкань або тривалого перебування на перевалочних пунктах. Окрему увагу приділено неспроможності переселенців самотійно розв'язати житлову проблему через дефіцит будівельного лісу, відсутність навичок спорудження житла з місцевих матеріалів на неналежне постачання скла, шиферу й залізо-скоб'яних виробів. Обґрунтовано, що неможливість належного житлового забезпечення була не локальним явищем, а системною ознакою радянської переселенської політики. Доведено, що саме невирішеність житлової проблеми стала основною причиною повторного переміщення значної частини закерзонців із Південної та Східної України до західних областей УРСР. Зроблено висновок, що формальне покращення показників житлового забезпечення наприкінці 1940-х рр. пояснювалося передусім впливом переселенців, а не ефективністю державної політики їхнього облаштування. У роботі простежено суперечність між нормативною моделлю одноразового переселення та практикою повторних міграцій у межах УРСР.

Ключові слова: Закерзоння, Угода 9 вересня 1944 р., переселення українців, депортація, житлове забезпечення, вторинна міграція, повоєнна УРСР, радянська переселенська політика, Східна Україна, Західна Україна.

Statement of the Problem. One of the under-researched aspects of the resettlement of Ukrainians from Transcarpathia to the Ukrainian SSR remains the housing situation during the postwar period. Although the Agreement of September 9, 1944, provided for adequate material and living support for the resettlers, in practice the Soviet authorities failed to create the necessary conditions for their settlement in Southern and Eastern Ukraine. A severe shortage of housing, the devastation of postwar regions, poor organization of resettlement, and slow rates of housing construction led to the maladjustment of the deported population. In this context, it is relevant to study the unresolved housing problem as the main factor in the secondary migration of Zakerzonians residents to the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR.

An analysis of recent studies and publications. The issue of the resettlement in the Ukrainian SSR of the Ukrainian population from territories that were ceded to the Polish People's Republic after World War II occupies a significant place in the contemporary historiography of Ukraine and Poland. Despite the existence of a significant number of studies devoted to the Soviet authorities' resettlement policy, the specific mechanisms and characteristics of



the resettlement of deported Ukrainians within the Ukrainian SSR remain insufficiently studied.

The source base for contemporary research consists of published documents from the collections of the Central State Archives of the Higher Authorities and Administration of Ukraine and the Central State Archives of Public Associations of Ukraine, which contain regulatory acts, statistical materials, government correspondence, and documents of resettlement commissions. These sources make it possible to trace the mechanisms of resettlement policy implementation at the local level and to identify regional patterns in the placement of the deported population.

A significant contribution to the study of this issue was made by the Polish historian of Ukrainian origin, Yevhen Mysylo, who, in his two-volume study “Repatriacja czy deportacja. Przesiedlenie Ukraińców z Polski do USRR 1944–1946”, thoroughly examined the circumstances and nature of the resettlement processes.

In studying the resettlement of Ukrainians in the Ukrainian SSR, the document collection “Deportations: The Western Regions of Ukraine in the Late 1930s–Early 1950s: Documents, Materials, and Memoirs” is of great importance, as it contains valuable source material and concise analytical commentary by the editors. Despite the significance of these publications for reconstructing the administrative mechanism of deportations, the issue of the subsequent resettlement of displaced persons within Ukraine is covered only briefly. This issue is examined more broadly in V. Serhiichuk’s work “The Tragedy of Ukrainians in Poland,” which analyzes the political and humanitarian consequences of resettlement. I. Bilas was one of the first to attempt a systematic analysis of this process, although he covers the resettlement process only fragmentarily.

At the same time, despite the existence of a significant body of documentary evidence and general studies, the issues of the causes, directions, and specifics of the resettlement of deported Ukrainians in the southern, central, eastern, and northern regions of the Ukrainian SSR remain insufficiently researched.

The purpose of this article is to examine the role of the housing problem in the resettlement of Ukrainians from Transcarpathia to the Ukrainian SSR in 1944–1947, as well as to demonstrate its decisive influence on the secondary migration of the deported population from Southern and Eastern Ukraine to the western regions of the republic.

Presentation of the main research material. The agreement of September 9, 1944, between the government of communist Poland and the puppet government of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic established the legal and



organizational framework for the resettlement of the Ukrainian population from Transcarpathia to the Ukrainian SSR. In accordance with its provisions, the territory of Soviet Ukraine was to be prepared in advance with adequate material, living, housing, and economic conditions to receive over half a million resettlers. Conceptually, this process was to be carried out as a one-time operation completed as quickly as possible, since it was anticipated that the arriving population would immediately be settled in a socio-economic environment suitable for a full life. Neither the Agreement itself nor the related set of supporting regulatory and administrative documents contained provisions regarding the possibility of repeated or additional internal relocations of displaced persons [1, pp. 29–40].

However, the practical implementation of the resettlement campaign revealed a significant discrepancy between the legally defined model and the actual conditions under which it was carried out. Due to a combination of objective and subjective factors, the resettlers were forced not only to travel considerable distances eastward but also to undergo further internal relocations within the republic.

In particular, approximately 150,000 residents of the “backwater” regions, after their initial resettlement in the eastern regions of the Ukrainian SSR, were forced to change their place of residence again and relocate to the western regions of the republic. From a formal legal standpoint, such migration was not provided for by existing state regulations; however, in the context of the actual course of resettlement processes, it became a completely natural consequence of a series of socio-economic, administrative-organizational, and cultural-domestic circumstances [2, pp. 1–80].

One of the first challenges displaced persons faced upon arriving at their new resettlement sites was the local authorities’ lack of preparedness to properly receive the newly arrived population. In practice, this manifested itself in bureaucratic inertia, organizational irresponsibility, and a failure to respond promptly to the urgent needs of the displaced populations. As a result, people were often forced to spend long periods of time at train stations, transit points, or even in open areas, waiting for district administrative bodies to make decisions regarding their further placement. This situation demonstrated not only a low level of coordination in the resettlement process but also a marked indifference on the part of some local officials toward the plight of the new arrivals [3, pp. 26–27].

Illustrative in this context are certain regional practices that indicate the substitution of resettlement tasks with the economic interests of the local administration. In particular, in the Mykolaiv region, while IDPs were held at a transit point without a proper resolution of their resettlement, the horses belonging to them were actively used to transport grain. Such cases provide grounds for asserting that resettlers and their property were often viewed by local authorities



primarily as an additional resource for fulfilling current economic tasks, rather than as subjects of state care and social welfare.

Undoubtedly, there were also isolated instances of ceremonial receptions for newcomers, particularly those from Kholmshchyna and Podlasie, who were sometimes greeted with orchestras and other elements of official ceremony. However, such episodes were more of a demonstrative and symbolic nature and did not reflect the general attitude toward the newly arrived population. On the contrary, an analysis of documentary materials provides grounds to conclude that official records far more frequently documented a lack of proper preparation for the arrival of the trains, a delayed response from local authorities, and a general lack of interest in the swift and orderly settlement of the displaced persons. They were forced to wait for weeks at the stations. Thus, the problem of administrative indifference and organizational inefficiency on the part of local authorities became one of the first and most significant factors complicating the process of adaptation for the displaced population in their new place of residence [3, pp. 26–27].

One of the most acute problems facing the deported population during their resettlement in southern and eastern Ukraine was a catastrophic shortage of housing. In the postwar period, these regions were in a state of profound socioeconomic and material-infrastructure ruin, caused by large-scale military operations and repeated shifts and movements of the front line. While most of Ukraine's territory was affected by the front passing through twice, certain regions suffered four waves of military devastation, which had particularly devastating consequences for residential, agricultural, and municipal infrastructure [4, pp. 557–560].

A telling indicator of the scale of destruction is the situation in Left-Bank Ukraine, where 319,000 peasant farms were destroyed, and about 30% of rural homesteads were burned down [5, p. 27]. The situation in urban settlements was no less dramatic; as a result of repeatedly changing hands, they were effectively reduced to complete ruins. Under these conditions, a significant portion of the local population was deprived of basic housing and forced to live in barracks, basements, dugouts, half-ruined buildings, temporary shelters, stables, or primitive, makeshift mud huts [5, p. 27].

It was precisely in these regions, which were themselves experiencing an acute housing crisis, that the Soviet leadership planned to resettle more than 316,000 people from Transcarpathia [6, pp. 148–154]. This intention highlighted a profound contradiction between the normative obligations declared in the Agreement and the actual possibilities for their practical implementation. In particular, the provision regarding the provision of housing for resettlers equivalent to that which they had left behind in Poland was, in the conditions of



postwar devastation in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, virtually impossible to fulfill.

Thus, the housing problem emerged not merely as one of the everyday aspects of the resettlement process, but as a structural factor that significantly complicated the adaptation of the deported population and revealed the systemic inadequacy of state policy regarding their resettlement.

Numerous documents preserved in Ukrainian archives provide compelling evidence of the actual impossibility of adequately housing the displaced persons. They allow us to trace not only the general crisis nature of the situation but also the specific quantitative parameters of the housing insecurity of the deported population in individual regions of the Ukrainian SSR. For example, in May 1945, in the Dnipropetrovsk region, out of more than five thousand arrivals, only 612 families were provided with separate housing, while 4,614 families were accommodated by moving in with local residents [7, pp. 14–15]. This practice demonstrated that the primary mechanism for addressing the housing problem was not the provision of separate housing units, but rather the densification of the existing housing stock, which, in turn, created additional social and living difficulties for both displaced persons and the local population.

It is telling that by September of that same year, the situation in the Dnipropetrovsk region had not only failed to stabilize but had taken on even more pronounced signs of crisis. According to the planned targets, the region was supposed to accept 8,450 families, but in fact, 5,509 families, or 21,349 people, arrived. Of this number, only 782 families were provided with their own housing, which accounted for about 14% of the total number of arrivals. Thus, the vast majority of displaced persons were forced to live in temporary, disorganized, and often unsuitable accommodations for long-term residence. This situation indicates a profound mismatch between the scale of the resettlement campaign and the actual resource capacities of the regions designated to receive the displaced population [8, p. 9].

At the same time, the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast was no exception. Archival records show that a similar—and in some cases even more difficult—situation was observed in other oblasts of the Ukrainian SSR. In particular, in the Kirovohrad and Kherson regions, only 2% of resettlers were provided with separate housing, in the Sumy region—3%, and in the Kharkiv region—only 0.3% [8, pp. 9–10]. These figures provide grounds for asserting that the housing shortage was not a local but a nationwide phenomenon. It was one of the most striking manifestations of the structural unpreparedness of the Soviet administrative and economic system to fulfill its own declared commitments regarding the full resettlement of the deported population. In this context, the housing problem emerges not as a secondary accompanying factor, but as one of



the key causes of the resettlers' maladjustment and subsequent internal migration within the Ukrainian SSR.

Faced with an acute housing shortage, the deported population was forced to seek out even minimal housing options on their own. One of the most common practices in this situation was renting temporary housing or a separate room in the homes of local residents. However, this solution to the housing problem placed an additional financial burden on the displaced persons, which was extremely onerous for most of them. The need to pay several hundred karbovanets for temporary housing forced the deportees to urgently sell the property they had managed to save during their eviction from Kholmshchyna, Lemkivshchyna, and other regions of Transcarpathia [9, pp. 21–22].

Thus, housing insecurity had not only a domestic but also a distinct socio-economic dimension, as it directly led to the further impoverishment of the displaced persons. Archival documents confirm that similar cases of deported persons “providing for themselves” with housing were recorded in various regions of the Ukrainian SSR [10, pp. 29–30]. This provides grounds for viewing the rental of private housing not as an isolated phenomenon, but as a fairly widespread adaptation strategy, driven by the inability of state structures to provide the displaced with adequate housing conditions in accordance with their declared obligations.

Former German colonies—specific large settlements where an ethnic German population, deported to Kazakhstan in 1941, had lived prior to the outbreak of the German-Soviet War—could have served as an important potential resource for housing the deported population. It was precisely the housing stock of these settlements that Soviet authorities viewed as one of the most realistic reserves for accommodating newly arrived resettlers from Transcarpathia. The legal basis for this use of former German settlements was a directive from the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR dated March 23, 1945, which authorized the resettlement of people from the Zakerzonja region there [8, pp. 10–11].

However, the practical implementation of this decision proved to be significantly complicated. Even before the arrival of the deportees, a significant portion of the houses in the former German colonies had already been occupied by local residents, transferred to collective farms for use, or were being utilized by various institutions and organizations. As a result, the housing stock, which was formally considered suitable for resettling migrants, had effectively lost its original functional purpose as a reserve for their settlement. This situation indicated a lack of proper administrative control over the preservation and intended use of this resource in the context of implementing resettlement policy [10, p. 29].



Similar phenomena were recorded in a number of regions of the Ukrainian SSR, particularly in Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, and others [10, p. 30]. This provides grounds for asserting that the problem of inaccessibility of the former German housing stock was not accidental or local, but systemic in nature. Consequently, one of the few potentially effective mechanisms for providing housing to the deported population remained largely unrealized, which further exacerbated the housing crisis and intensified maladjustment processes among the displaced population.

The opportunities for internally displaced persons from Transcarpathia to resolve their housing issues independently by building their own homes were extremely limited. This was due to both natural-geographical and economic-technological factors. People from the well-forested regions of the Foothills or the Carpathians themselves, where traditional housing construction relied heavily on the use of wood, found themselves in eastern and southern Ukraine, where construction timber was a scarce resource. Consequently, the construction models for housing that were familiar to them proved practically unsuitable for use in the new environment.

An equally significant barrier was the lack, among a significant portion of the resettlers, of skills in building with local materials, primarily clay, which was traditionally used in the steppe and forest-steppe regions of Ukraine. Thus, adapting to different technological and material conditions in housing construction required time, resources, and relevant practical experience, which the deported population largely lacked. This further complicated the prospect of self-sufficiency in housing, even with minimal opportunities for individual construction [11, pp. 547–549].

The situation was further exacerbated by a lack of adequate logistical support. Government agencies failed to ensure the timely delivery of the most essential construction materials and products, including glass, iron and hardware elements, slate, and other components, without which the construction or even basic furnishing of housing was extremely difficult [11, pp. 552–554]. Ultimately, the inability of the resettlers to resolve the housing issue on their own cannot be viewed as a consequence of their passivity, but rather emerges as a natural result of an unfavorable combination of natural resource constraints, differences in construction traditions, and inadequate organizational and logistical support from the state.

Despite the acute nature of the housing problem at the initial stage of resettlement, a certain trend toward its partial stabilization became evident in the subsequent period. At the same time, this improvement was due not so much to a large-scale expansion of new housing construction or a systematic expansion of the housing stock, but rather to a gradual reduction in the number of the deported



population in certain regions of Eastern and Southern Ukraine as a result of their constant migration to the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR. Thus, the positive trend in the housing sector was largely attributable not to the effectiveness of state policies for resettling displaced persons, but to a reduction in the very number of people in need of housing [9, pp. 82–84].

This tendency is confirmed by statistical data for individual regions. For example, in the Kharkiv region at the end of 1947, all 145 families of displaced persons who remained in the region owned their own houses and apartments. In the Kirovohrad region, 275 out of 357 families were provided with housing, and in the Kherson region, 253 out of 443 families [14, pp. 19–22]. However, these figures should be interpreted with migration dynamics in mind: they reflect not only a certain improvement in material and living conditions but also the consequences of the outflow of a significant portion of the deportees to Western Ukraine, where the sociocultural, religious, and living conditions proved to be more familiar and adaptable to them.

Thus, the formal improvement in the housing situation in a number of regions should not be viewed as unequivocal evidence of the state's successful fulfillment of its obligations to the displaced persons. To a large extent, it was the result of secondary migration processes, which effectively compensated for the structural inability of the Soviet administrative and economic system to fully provide the deported population with adequate living conditions.

In 1946, the Soviet leadership announced its intention to significantly improve housing conditions for the newly arrived population by constructing more than 33,000 housing units. The largest construction projects were planned for Zaporizhzhia (6,756), Dnipropetrovsk (5,218), and the Stalinsky, now Donetsk, (3,827) regions [15, p. 14]. These figures indicated that state authorities were aware of the scale of the housing crisis; however, the mere fact of setting ambitious targets did not guarantee their actual implementation. On the contrary, in practice, there was a significant discrepancy between the declared intentions and the actual results, which was caused by both limited material and technical resources and low implementation discipline at the local level.

A telling example in this regard is the situation in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, where the course of housing construction mirrored the nationwide problems on a smaller scale. Here, construction began on 315 residential buildings, but only 78 were completed [16, p. 315]. Particularly telling is the fact that in the Vasylivskiy and Pryazovskiy districts of the region, construction work had not even begun. This provides grounds for concluding that even within the framework of officially approved plans, state authorities failed to ensure proper organization of the process, mobilization of resources, and oversight of the implementation of construction programs. As a result, the housing problem for displaced persons

remained effectively unresolved, despite the formal existence of relevant administrative decisions.

The limitations of the state's capabilities are even more evident in the final figures as of the end of 1947. In the eastern regions of the Ukrainian SSR, the state built only 320 residential units and fully or partially renovated another 184, while the planned figure was 2,529 [14, p. 24; 20, pp. 166–170]. Thus, the actual results of housing programs fell far short of the planned targets. This demonstrates that the state policy on housing for the deported population was largely declarative in nature and lacked both a sufficient material foundation and an effective administrative mechanism for implementation. Consequently, the incompleteness or failure of construction programs became yet another factor that exacerbated the social and domestic instability of the resettlers and encouraged them to undertake further migratory movements within the Ukrainian SSR.

Conclusions. An analysis of sources and archival materials shows that the resettlement of Ukrainians from Transcarpathia to the Ukrainian SSR, as provided for in the Agreement of September 9, 1944, was accompanied by significant discrepancies between the state's declared obligations and its actual capacity to fulfill them. Despite official assurances regarding the proper reception of resettlers, local authorities proved unprepared to provide them with housing, and state programs for the construction and repair of the housing stock were implemented extremely slowly and inefficiently. The situation was further complicated by the destruction of Southern and Eastern Ukraine as a result of the war, the occupation of former German colonies, a shortage of building materials, and the inability of the resettlers themselves to quickly build their own homes.

Thus, it was the unresolved housing problem that became the main cause of the secondary migration of residents from the “behind-the-line” zones to the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR. The formal improvement in housing provision in the late 1940s was due not so much to the success of state policy as to the decrease in the number of resettlers in the eastern and southern regions due to their outflow to Western Ukraine. Thus, resettlement was a natural consequence of the Soviet administrative and economic system's inability to create adequate conditions for the deported population to settle permanently in their initial resettlement areas.

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