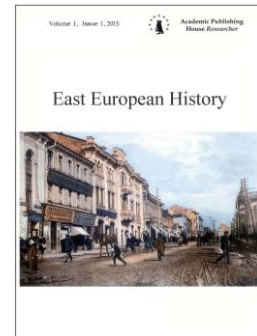


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Specificities of Soviet Repatriation in Slovakia in 1944–1952

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Abstract

The paper provides insights into the practical implementation of the Soviet repatriation operation in Slovakia between 1944 and 1952. It reveals mechanisms employed to carry out the repatriation, the degree of coercion, the role of the Slovak party and its security agencies. The paper offers a general analysis of the methods and fields of action that the bodies involved in the repatriation of Soviet citizens worked in.

Materials used include documents of central, military and several regional archives in Slovakia. Additionally, it makes use of modern foreign and Russian scientific publications on the research topic.

To address research goals, the work applies general scientific and traditional methods of analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction and the historical and comparative method. Particular importance in the paper is attached to the methods of concretization and generalization, which allowed us to extend the general framework of the Soviet repatriation operation in 1944-1952 using the example of one country – Slovakia with the focus on the operation's practical implementation.

In conclusion, the authors point out that the Soviet authorities performed arbitrary actions, first of all, in the march of the front when actual Soviet citizens and people of “Soviet origin” from Slovakia (including opponents of the Soviet system and communist ideology) were forcibly taken away. As the war ended, the situation in the country normalized and the Soviet troops withdrew from Czechoslovakia, repatriation was already conducted in the interpretation of the Slovak security agencies and army authorities (often with numerous violations in a gross and hostile manner). It was aimed to clear the territory of Russian emigrants and all sorts of wartime refugees from the USSR (in a broader sense, all foreigners who did not have a residence permit) and it was brought about by the country's subordinate and lackey relations with the USSR and the influence of the left forces in society that generally accepted a concept of an ethnically pure national state of Czechs and Slovaks, which had no minorities and various foreign elements.

Keywords: repatriation, displaced persons, re-emigration, Soviet repatriation operation, Soviet emigrants, refugees from the USSR.

1. Introduction

The post-war Soviet repatriation operation (1944–1952) was intended to track down citizens who, for various reasons, left the Soviet territory during the war of 1939–1945 (were taken prisoner or sent to work for the Third Reich, emigrated from or fled the USSR) and who remained primarily

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in the countries of Central and Western Europe after the war ended, and then return them to the Soviet Union. The repatriation of Soviet citizens has been intensively studied by Russian and foreign scholars over the past two decades, but the problem still contains many poorly reviewed aspects, in particular, regarding its implementation in the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe.

2. Materials and methods

Materials used include documents of central, military and several regional archives in Slovakia. In addition, the analysis relies on foreign and Russian scientific publications and papers on the research topic, which appeared in the 1990s and at the present time.

To address research goals, the work applies general scientific and traditional methods of analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction and the historical and comparative method. Particular importance in the paper is attached to the methods of concretization and generalization, which allowed us to extend the general framework of the Soviet repatriation operation in 1944–1952 using the example of one country – Slovakia with the focus on the operation's practical implementation. The paper also leverages the statistical method which made it possible to show the total number of Soviet citizens repatriated from Czechoslovakia.

3. Discussion

The range of problems related to the repatriation of Soviet citizens (which took place at the end of World War II and in the post-war period from 1944 to 1952) from Western and Central Europe and other countries of the world has been one of the least studied in historiography until recently and has not been covered in historical works. With no source base (the documentation on this issue was classified in the USSR until the late 1980s) and, accordingly, with no objective information available, the process gave rise to a plethora of various statements, including complete myths. This is true to many publications that came out in the West and in Russia.

In the 1990s, researchers, primarily Russian ones, gained access to previously closed sources, and this allowed for a number of papers and publications on the issue of post-war repatriation (see [Zemskov, 1990, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c и др.](#); [Shevyakov, 1993–1994](#); [Polyan, 1996](#); [Arzamaskin, 2001](#); [Galitskii, 1996 и др.](#)). The authors of these publications were divided into “statesmen” who generally approve of the activities rolled out by the Soviet government as they believe they were pre-conditioned by actual economic and political necessity, and into “human rights advocates” focusing on the legal and humanitarian aspects of the issue ([Andreev-1](#)).

The Soviet repatriation operation was launched in post-war -- renovated in 1944-1945 – Czechoslovakia. Naturally, the Czechoslovak historiography of the second half of the 20th century was unable to consider these issues. Activities, conducted by the Soviet authorities as the front advanced in the territory of Czechoslovakia in 1944-1945, became an object of study only in the 1990s, primarily in the Czech Republic (but without complete results). The Slovak historiography has failed to pay sufficient attention to this problem so far, while the need to study this topic has been stressed by several publications (see [Konečný, 2002](#); [Šmigel', 2004a](#); [Šmigel', Kruško, 2005](#); [Šmigel', Mičko, 2006](#)). In general, today's Czech Republic and Slovakia place the issues of the Soviet repatriation among the problems that are yet to receive careful investigation.

The goal of the proposed study is to provide the general framework of the Soviet repatriation operation of 1944-1952, so to say, to extend or, more precisely, to clarify the practices used to implement it by analyzing the example of repatriating Soviet citizens from Slovakia. The paper is aimed to show how the repatriation was carried out, how much force was exerted, what role the Slovak side played through its security agencies (in the general Czechoslovak context) throughout the process. The research offers a general analysis of the methods and fields of action that the bodies involved in the repatriation of Soviet citizens worked in.

4. Results

4.1 The Post-war Soviet repatriation operation (1944-1952)

The Directorate of the Commissioner of the Council of People's Commissars (Council of Ministers) of the USSR for the repatriation of Soviet citizens (it was founded in October 1944), headed by Colonel General Filipp Ivanovich Golikov, former head of the Soviet military intelligence (see [Kulagina, 2012](#)), revealed that about 5 million Soviet citizens survived by the end of the war

and found themselves outside the USSR. “Most of them were “eastern workers” (“Ostarbeiters”), i.e., Soviet civilians driven away for forced labor in Germany and other countries. Some 1.7 million POWs, including those who were employed by the enemy military or police services, also survived. This number also included dozens of thousands of their accomplices and refugees of all kinds who retreated with Germans from the USSR, often together with their families. All this mass of people is usually called “displaced persons”. Of this overall mass, more than 3 million were present in the zone of operations carried out by the Allies (Western Germany, France, Italy, etc.), and less than 2 million in the Red Army's zone of operation abroad (East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc.)” (Zemskov, 2010: 401). “Some, although it may sound strange,” A. Applebaum emphasizes “were Soviet citizens not at all. Anti-communist emigrants and “white” Russians, i.e. those who lost the struggle against Bolshevism and settled down in the West, were scattered throughout Europe (mainly in Yugoslavia).” Stalin wanted to bring back even them: no one could escape the retribution of Bolsheviks” (Applebaum, 2004: 380).

The Soviet Union, which suffered a huge number of casualties, naturally was very interested in returning each citizen, more precisely, people of “Soviet” origin. The senior Soviet leadership set out itself a goal to return them all without exception, despite the desire of some of these people to remain in the West[†] (Zemskov, 1995b: 5).

In early November 1944, Colonel General F.I. Golikov gave an interview to a TASS correspondent (it was published in the Pravda newspaper November 11, 1944), in which he outlined the policy of the Soviet government on the repatriation of Soviet citizens. Among other things, he said: “...People who feel hostile towards the Soviet state are trying to through deception, provocation, etc., to poison the consciousness of our citizens and make them believe in the monstrous lies, as if the Soviet Motherland has forgotten them, renounced them and does not consider Soviet citizens any longer. These people are intimidating our compatriots by saying that if they return to their Motherland, they would be subjected to repression. It is unnecessary to refute these absurd statements. The Soviet country remembers and cares about its citizens who have been taken as German slaves. They will be welcomed at home as the sons of their Motherland. In Soviet circles, they believe that even those Soviet citizens who committed acts contrary to the interests of the USSR, pressed by German violence and terror, will not be brought to justice if they honestly fulfill their duty to their Motherland upon return.” F.I. Golikov's Interview was later used as an official address of the USSR Government to prisoners of war and internees (Zemskov, 2011: 79).

At the Yalta Conference February 11, 1945, the USSR and its Western Allies signed bilateral Soviet-American and Soviet-British agreements on mutual compulsory repatriation. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Joseph V. Stalin agreed that all Soviet, American and English citizens, regardless of personal circumstances, should be returned to their homeland. A document similar to the Yalta agreements was concluded by the USSR and France in June 1945 (Zemskov, 2004: note 4). The event initiated a process known as repatriation. Here, we can partly speak of the forced repatriation (that in principle ignored any individually expressed will) or of deportation[‡] (Zilynskyj, 2000: 21; Polyan, 2001: 48).

While the countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe, which belonged to the Soviet sphere of influence, and their Soviet bodies, which handled the repatriation process[§], managed to

* After Bolsheviks swept to power in Russia, and the internal political crisis escalated, hundreds of thousands of people emigrated from the country to neighboring states. Europe saw the emergence of the so-called “Russian” (“White”) Emigration which became a mass phenomenon during the Civil War. The consequence was that from 1.5 to 2 million people – mostly Russians, Ukrainians and members of other ethnic groups – left the territory of the former Russian Empire in 1917-1922 (see Harbul'ová, 2001: 8).

† Moreover, those, who were born in the USSR, were regarded as people who were brought up in the spirit of the Soviet and Bolshevik ideology. Therefore, they were considered as human material which is not suited to assimilate in the Western world (see Zemskov, 2004: 4).

‡ The Soviet leadership exempted from the compulsory repatriation only two categories of persons, who had been citizens of the USSR by June 22, 1941: 1) Bessarabians and Bukovinians, who registered Romanian citizenship (more than 4 thousand); 2) women who married foreigners and had children by them (in the early 50s – around 30 thousand) (Zemskov, 2004: note 7).

§ Representatives of the Directorate of the Commissioner of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR for repatriation were sent to the active army, to be more precise, to collection and transit points (CTP) established at the front and in the army. In addition, screening and filtration stations and NKVD camps were

ensure its relatively smooth progression, Western European countries experienced much more difficulties with the operation.

The overwhelming majority of Soviet citizens (prisoners of war and interned civilians) wanted to return to their homeland. However, the desire was not unanimous – there were opponents of repatriation as well. “Others feared what they could face. However, NKVD officers, who visited the camps that collected prisoners of war and apatrides, persuaded them to return. The officers went from camp to camp and looked for Russians, Ukrainians and other members of ethnic groups that lived in the USSR and offered illusory pictures of a bright future, full of happiness and joy. Some, especially those who had previous experiences of Bolshevik practices, naturally did not want to return. “Our Motherland has enough space and a place for everyone,” a Soviet military attaché said to a group of detainees at the POW camp in Yorkshire. “Oh yes, we know very well what place there will be there for us,” one of the prisoners answered” ([Applebaum, 2004: 381](#)).

Undoubtedly, these people, including those who were not hostile to the Soviet government, had a lot of fears of being investigated regarding the facts of their lives abroad, the circumstances of their captivity (initially, there was no clarity in the issue what responsibility prisoners of war bore for having being taken captive alive*) and possible repressions. “But the greatest concern was related to a completely different problem,” V.N. Zemskov says. Knowing of the negative views and suspicions of the ruling circles in the USSR to the “foreignism” and to the people who were abroad, they feared that the Soviet government would not allow them to return to their Motherland” ([Zemskov, 1995b: 4](#)).

Based on abundant testimony, V.N. Zemskov argues that no less than 80% of the “Easterners” (i.e. those who lived in the USSR within the borders that existed as of September 17, 1939), would choose to return to the USSR provided repatriation was voluntary. As for “Westerners” (i.e. those who lived in the Baltic states, Western Ukraine, Western Belarus, Right-Bank Moldova and Northern Bukovina, who were not USSR citizens until September 17, 1939), they were significantly different from “Easterners” in their mentality, morale and psychological state, as well as their political position and core values, and their circles were indeed much more dominated by non-returnees. Those of them, who were caught up in the Red Army's zone of operation, were forcibly returned to the USSR. On the other hand, “Westerners,” who were located in the western zones, had a right to refuse from repatriation, granted to them from the very beginning by Anglo-Americans, who handed over to the Soviet authorities only those of them who expressed such a wish[†]. During the war with Germany and in the first months after its end, Anglo-Americans most often forcibly handed over “Easterner” non-returnees – mostly collaborators – to the Soviet Union ([Zemskov, 1995b: 5](#)).

There were often rallies against the transfer to the Soviet authorities among Soviet POWs and refugees who did not want to return to the USSR. They escaped from camps or often posed as citizens of other countries or Jews, to whom the Allies showed more leniency. There were also cases of suicides, including mass ones. July 12, 1945 in Kempten and June 29, 1946 in Fort Dix witnessed group suicides when the US administration tried to forcibly repatriate them. In another tragic incident in Austrian Linz, British soldiers had to resort to bayonets and rifle butts to force

created in the liberated territories. The personnel at these points and camps were tasked to collect, register, do primary verification and dispatch Soviet citizens to the USSR (see [Andreev-1: 2](#)).

* These fears were well-founded because no one in the USSR officially discharged the responsibility for being captured. Finally, the problem was addressed by the Resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR “On amnesty in connection with victory over Hitler's Germany” dated July 7, 1945. It was not until this day that this document exonerated Soviet soldiers of criminal responsibility, who were taken or yielded themselves prisoner ([Zemskov, 1995b: 6](#)).

[†] The Allies had not yet recognized the new borders of the Soviet Union, when the Yalta Conference (February 4-11, 1945) took place. For them, the basic criterion for identifying the group of people liable for compulsory extradition to the Soviet authorities was their residence in the territory of the USSR within its borders until the above date before September 1, 1939. Neither at the Halle talks (May 1945) nor at the Potsdam Conference (July 17 – August 2, 1945) did Soviet diplomacy succeed in persuading the Anglo-American Allies that displaced persons from among the residents of Baltic states, Western Ukraine, Western Belarus, etc. were Soviet citizens, and the Yalta agreements on forcible repatriation should apply to them (see [Zemskov, 2004, Prim. 5; Polyan, 1996: 200-201, 242](#)).

thousands of women and children to board trains that proceeded to the USSR. Preferring death to “return,” women threw their children off bridges and followed them. Cases were recorded when men killed their wives and children and then committed suicide. Soviet people feared what would happen to them when they came back to the USSR – hostile propaganda spread rumors about firing squads or the Gulag (Tolstoj, 1998: 13; Applebaum, 2004: 381). As a Czech publicist, V. Bystrov, said, “These Soviet citizens, who refused to return home, were not initially welcomed with open arms in the West. Just like a quarter of a century ago*, the world again faced the decision – to what extent it should allow the USSR to strengthen its authority and the communist positions to consolidate, or to what extent it should defend the democratic principles of the social order and prevent their destruction by communist ideals. And, just as it happened around a quarter of a century ago, the world again chose the path of compromise. As a result, blind utilitarian interests were replaced with irreplaceable losses and tragedies. Unfortunately, the masses of people who did not want to live in the USSR were perceived by politicians of the Western powers, above all as a threat to the foundation of potential mutually beneficial coexistence and cooperation with the Soviet Union” (Bystrov, 1999: 131).

It might be the influence of the growing number of incidents connected with the unwillingness to return to the USSR, which persuaded the Allies to reconsider their approach to this issue. Moreover, according to V.N. Zemskov, the Directorate of the Commissioner of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR for repatriation had information in August 1945 that American and British services had rolled out a real “hunt for brains” in the camps for displaced persons. They sifted out professors, associate professors, doctors and candidates of sciences, designers, technologists, engineers and other specialists from the “Easterners,” and by using active propaganda tried to manipulate them into refusing to return to the USSR (Zemskov, 2011: 84).

At the same time, relations with the Soviet Union also soured in the political sphere, which marked the start of the Cold War. Eventually, November 29, 1945, US President Harry Truman prohibited further forcible repatriation from the American zone. In parallel with it, the USA issued the so-called McNarney-Clarke directive, which specified the categories of Soviet citizens who were still liable to deportation. Gradually, this policy was joined by the United Kingdom and other Western European states (Tolstoj, 1998: 13).

The Soviets expressed a protest and even raised this issue as high as at the level of the United Nations Organization (UN). In this regard, the Slovak communist press informed that in early February 1946, a meeting by the UN Committee on Social and Humanitarian Issues discussed the problem of refugees concentrated in Western Europe. When discussing the issue, “a member of the Ukrainian delegation drew attention to the fact that there were people under the guise of refugees, who took part in the murders of civilians and who feared to stand trial by their people. Such people do not deserve to be helped by the United Nations and should be returned to their homeland.” After other delegates in the committee delivered their reports, the floor was taken by the representative of the Soviet Union, who focused on the fascist activities of refugee collaborators and traitors. He said: “It would be very strange if Hitler's the agents found help and forgiveness in the United Nations.” The Soviet delegate stressed that the United Nations did not have the right to create the problem of eternal refugees and expressed hope that this issue would be now handled more efficiently than it was the case after World War I (VP: 6.02.1946).

The Kremlin insisted that repatriation should be carried out on a broad basis and in accordance with the applicable international principles. This clearly showed the USSR's efforts to control all its citizens outside the country. In addition, the Soviet Union was in need of workforce to

* The Bolshevik government carried out the very first repatriation operation in the early 1920s, when it realized the outcome of the “white” emigration (1917-1922) and declared a political amnesty to all emigrants from Russia. The repatriation campaign was implemented by the Unions for Repatriation of Russians Abroad and its branches in European emigrant centers. Part of the emigration was influenced by the propaganda machine for various reasons and returned to their homeland during the campaign. Thus, about 180 thousand people were repatriated between 1921 and 1931. However, the “returnees” were subjected to one scenario by the Soviet authorities. Former officers, military officials and soldiers were shot right after returning, and others died in camps in the northern and eastern USSR. This made clear the true plans of the Soviet authorities regarding emigrants who were viewed by Bolsheviks as traitors to their homeland (Harbuřová, 1999: 8).

restore the country that lay in ruins following the war (Zilynskyj, 2000: 20). Besides, the Soviet authorities were committed to inflicting the most severe punishments for some of the returnees, because, from the viewpoint of the USSR, they became collaborators and traitors to their socialist homeland. However, this intention was not put into practice according to the plan.

Despite the pressure from Moscow, the former Western Allies of the Soviet Union continued to refuse to extradite the “Westerners” in 1946, who were not Soviet citizens before September 17, 1939 and persons with Nansen passports*. The Allies also adopted a more sympathetic approach to other groups of citizens. Hence, beginning in September and October 1945, the principle of voluntary repatriation was extended to “Easterners” to become permanent in early 1946 (Zemskov, 1995b: 5).

Influenced by the policy of “anti-Sovietism,” the command of the allied armies put various obstacles to visits by Soviet commissioners to camps and collection points to explain the repatriation policy of the Soviet government (Shevyakov, 1993: 7). Subsequently, individual Western European countries gradually suspended the repatriation of Soviet citizens, and unilaterally banned the activities of Soviet repatriation missions in their control zones in Germany and Austria in August 1951 (Tolstoj, 1998: 214).

The period of mass repatriation reached its climax in 1945 and was actually completed by the first half of 1946. According to statistics produced by F.I. Golikov's agency, they repatriated 4,199,488 Soviet citizens (2,660,013 civilians and 1,539,475 POWs) by March 1, 1946, of whom 2,352,686 were sent from the Allies' zones of operation, including Switzerland (1,392,647 civilians and 960,039 POWs), and 1,846,802 – from the Red Army's zones of operation abroad, including Sweden (1,267,366 civilians and 579,436 POWs) (Zemskov, 1995c: 12; see Table 1-2).

In the years that followed, the scale of the repatriation operation dramatically shrank. Only 105,547 people were repatriated between March 1, 1946 and July 1, 1952. In total, since the mid-1944 up to July 1, 1952, repatriation affected 4,305,035 citizens and persons of “Soviet” origin (Zemskov, 2004: 10).

Although the repatriation reduced significantly in scale, it continued after 1952. With the abolition of the Directorate of the Commissioner of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR for repatriation, the Soviet Union assigned the task of returning the Soviet citizens to its embassies. Considering all these aspects, V.N. Zemskov estimates the total number of Soviet citizens, who were caught up abroad following the war and subsequently returned to the USSR, at about 4.5 million people (Zemskov, 2004: 10). Almost 450–500 thousand Soviet non-returnee citizens remained outside the USSR to create a foundation for the so-called second (Soviet) emigration vo svete (see Zemskov, 1991).

Table 1. Number and composition of repatriated Soviet citizens (as of March 1, 1946)

Country	Total people	Including		From the civilian category		
		prisoners of war	civilians	men	women	children
Germany	2,995,312	1,064,039	1,931,273	891,178	840,178	199,917
Austria	326,929	84,820	242,109	55,979	121,050	65,080
Romania	133,552	28,799	104,753	41,853	34,850	28,050
France	120,917	85,409	35,508	17,463	15,984	2,061
Finland	101,184	42,778	58,406	7,328	29,180	21,898

* Nansen passports refer to special travel documents that were first issued by the League of Nations in the 1920s to refugees without citizenship. The name originates from the name of Fridtjof Nansen, the League of Nations commissioner for Russian refugees and the founder of the Geneva Committee of the International Center for the Care of Emigrants from Russia. The Nansen passport gave its holder the status of a stateless person and conferred rights on an equal basis with the rights of citizens of a host country or of privileged foreigners. The passports were broadly issued to emigrants from the former Russian Empire Since 1924 and were especially appreciated by representatives of the Russian and Ukrainian emigration. The Nansen passports were used up to the 1940s.

Poland	87,850	9950	77,900	12,060	34,860	30,980
Norway	84,775	77,812	6,963	5,268	1,306	389
Italy	53,240	44,205	9,035	8,472	483	80
Czechoslovakia	40,655	6,423	34,232	8,086	16,684	9,462
England	26,329	21,900	4,429	4,346	37	46
Yugoslavia	25,738	11,370	14,368	6,842	6,580	946
Belgium	12,344	7,352	4,992	1,561	3,032	399
Switzerland	9,807	6,060	3,747	1,710	1,841	196
Denmark	7,570	4,635	2,935	1,660	980	295
USA	3,950	3,823	127	127	—	—
Bulgaria	3,682	643	3,039	1,102	1,046	891
Hungary	3,259	698	2,561	456	1,280	825
Sweden	3,208	2,156	1,052	715	261	76
Greece	1,402	1,288	114	46	53	15
Albania	805	805	—	—	—	—
Holland	234	74	160	50	104	6
No data available for countries	59,769	6,506	53,263	16,151	—	8,782
Total	4,102,511	1,511,545	2,590,966	1,082,453	—	370,394

Note: As of March 1, 1946, no relevant information was available for 96,977 returnees, most of whom were kept in camps and collection and transit points abroad.

Source: http://www.pseudology.org/Pobeda/Repatriacia1944_1956.htm

Table 2. Ethnic composition of repatriated Soviet citizens (as of March 1, 1946)

Ethnic group	Total people	Including	
		prisoners of war	civilians
Russians	1,631,861	740,114	891,747
Ukrainians	1,650,343	460,208	1,190,135
Belarusians	520,672	134,776	385,896
Lithuanians	50,396	3,019	47,377
Latvians	35,686	3,456	32,230
Estonians	14,980	2,749	12,231
Moldovans	36,692	5,094	31,598
Jews	11,428	4,762	6,666
Georgians	33,141	25,541	7,600
Armenians	25,063	20,657	4,406
Azerbaijanis	24,333	21,985	2,348
Tatars	43,510	32,178	11,332
Uzbeks	31,034	29,588	1,446
Kazakhs	26,903	24,448	2,455
Kirghiz	6,249	4,299	1,950
Tajiks	4,711	4,258	453
Turkmen	3,968	3,791	177
Kalmyks	6,405	4,087	2,318
Bashkirs	5,793	4,578	1,215
Poles	53,185	2,702	50,483
Karelians	3,441	2,194	1,247

Finns	4,705	583	4,122
Ingrians	43,246	-	43,246
Other	173,156	34,505	138,651
Of them, members of indigenous groups of the USSR*	97,560	31,586	65,974
Members of non-indigenous groups of the USSR**	75,596	2,919	72,677
Total	4,440,901	1,569,572	2,871,329

* Udmurts, Mordvins, Ossetians, Kabardians, Chechens, Ingushs and others.

** Germans, Greeks, Bulgarians, Romanians and others.

Note: The statistics include the total number of 4,199,488 returnees and 241,413 internally displaced persons (i.e. within the USSR).

Source: http://www.pseudology.org/Pobeda/Repatriacia1944_1956.htm

According to Russian historians, the legend that almost all repatriates were repressed in the USSR simply has no truth behind it. However, dozens of thousands of Soviet displaced persons (especially Red Army officers) met a tragic fate. Meanwhile, most of the repatriates avoided arrests, and the Soviet leadership chose not to mount large-scale repression. The percentage of people subjected to repression or “transferred to the disposal of NKVD” was less than 2% among repatriated civilians. The percentage of repressed former Soviet POWs was, however, much higher (Andreev-2: 2), and their fate was very grim.

4.2 Specific features of the Soviet repatriation operation in Slovakia (1944–1950)

Post-war Czechoslovakia (ČSR) naturally could not avoid the Soviet repatriation operation. We should note that the Czechoslovak launch of the campaign started much earlier than in the rest of Central and Western Europe. It was tied to the advancement of the Soviet Red Army.

It is general knowledge that immediately after the front passed Slovakia, an elite unit of troops started operating in the country. It was initially a military counter-intelligence agency – the so-called “SMERSH” (“Death to Spies”). Its second (operational) department was assigned a special task – to urgently track down and arrest opponents of the Soviet system and communist ideology in the newly occupied settlements. The most common “booty” seized by SMERSH was precisely Soviet emigrants (Letz, 1994: 107) and refugees from the USSR, who in the war years and especially before its end (following the advancement of the Eastern Front) moved to the territory of the then Slovak Republic (1939-1945)*. Soviet emigrants, who had no time or wish to go further to the West, were forcibly transported back to the USSR after specifically organized search. Local Slovak authorities explicitly rendered their support to these activities (SNA-1), which is confirmed by numerous surviving reports (SNA-9; ŠALpP).

Since the second half of 1945, Czechoslovakia witnessed the “repatriation operation of Russian citizens, i.e. all individuals who, by their origin, place of residence or naturalization, have acquired citizenship on lands that are currently under the sovereignty of the USSR” and the individuals who left these territories after 1940 “regardless of how they arrived here – voluntarily or involuntarily, as prisoners of war, deserters or demobilized persons” (ŠABpT).

One of the orders by the Committee of the Interior of the Slovak National Council (SNC), addressed to the General Directorate of National Security, clearly documents its attitude to the Soviet repatriation operation and to the Soviet population “roaming” across Europe: “Two groups of individuals liberated from the camp in Romania will soon arrive in Bratislava. One group

* At the late summer of 1944, the government of the Slovak Republic (1939–1945) agreed with German bodies to receive a group of Soviet refugees numbering 18,500 people (mainly from Galicia in Ukraine), who were granted asylum and issued documents allowing them to permanently reside in Slovakia. However, after the Slovak National Uprising broke out August 29, 1944, and as the Eastern Front approached the country, most of them left Slovakia (they were transported by German and Slovak authorities to Austria) (see Šmigel, Mičko, 2006).

consists of 96 people, including 31 Slovaks, 7 Czechs and 58 Ukrainians. The second group consists of 111 people, including 56 Slovaks, 4 Czechs and 51 Ukrainians. Arrange the reception of all the liberated. Interrogate each Slovak separately about the circumstances under which they ended up in the camp, and only after due verification they can be released. Send Czechs to the Third Department of the Ministry of the Interior in Prague, and Ukrainians to NKVD in Bratislava” (SNA-3). The cited document is self-explanatory.

The search, detention and repatriation of Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and members of other ethnic groups, living in the USSR, who were in the republic, were carried out in several (basic) phases.

In the first phase, agencies of the Slovak National Security (NS) drew lists and based on them they summoned people to subsequently go to or be directly deported to the Soviet collection camps (ŠALpP-1). It was often the case that the Soviet agencies (to whom such lists were handed over) ignored the ČSR central bodies and directly requested regional NS commanders to bring this or that “detected” USSR citizen to the nearest Soviet collection point (Vaculík, 1995: 14) or issued direct orders to the Slovak security for their transportation to individual collection camps. For example, in June 1945, the Regional NS Command in Žilina informed NS district headquarters (while the Committee of the Interior in Bratislava was given the document simply to the information purposes): “According to the oral instructions by the Russian commander for the Ružomberok and Žilina regions, the Soviet civilian population (men, women, children), which arrived in the territory of Slovakia after 1939 and currently live in villages that fall under the control of Regional NS Command in Žilina, should be immediately deported. The deportation will be implemented in the following manner: district national committees will provide carts to transport these people to the city of Bielsk in Poland. Transportation of this population is to be carried out in transit (people from Žilina should be transported to Čadca, and the National Committee for the Čadca district will arrange their transportation to Bielsk). For the travel, district national committees will provide these people with the required food or clothes, if necessary.” The district NS departments in Čadca, Kysucké Nové Mesto, Žilina and Veľká Bytča were to inform their subordinate local NS departments and district national committees, as well as to ensure the “proper transportation of the corresponding persons” (SNA-4). Similar instructions were received in other regions at the time.

Since early 1946, the second phase of repatriation took place. It was put into operation in close cooperation between the Soviet and Czechoslovak security agencies (SNA-5; DG: 12. 10. 1946). Even the Czechoslovak army assisted in the search for individuals who originated from the USSR and forced them to leave the Czechoslovak Republic (VHA). A Czech historian, J. Vaculík believed that the “hunt” for people “not only contradicted the UN position that repatriation should be conducted according to the principle of complete voluntariness, rather than through forcible deportation, but also violated the sovereignty of the Czechoslovak state” (Vaculík, 1995: 14).

Deported Soviet citizens – except for the wives of Czechoslovak citizens, individuals with post-war Soviet passports and those who emigrated from the USSR before December 1, 1939 (Konečný, 2002: 32; SNA-12) – were concentrated in several collection camps – repatriation centers scattered throughout the republic. In particular, they were located in the following cities and towns: in the Czech lands – Prague, Brno, České Budějovice, Pardubice, Tyn, Vlašim, Jindřichův Hradec, Třeboň; in Slovakia – Bratislava (Patrónka district), Malacky, Košice (SNA-2; SNA-10; SNA-11; ŠABBpL). Provisions for the return of repatriates to the USSR were made by Lieutenant Colonel Deyev from early 1946. He was a special representative of the USSR Government Commissioner for Repatriation in Prague, who was replaced in the position by Lieutenant Colonel Kuvyrkin in August 1946 (Vovkanich, 2000: 259). Between 1947 and 1948, documents also mention the name of Lieutenant Colonel Panov, Deputy Commissioner of the Council of Ministers of the USSR for Repatriation in Czechoslovakia (SNA-6).

In September 1946, the SNC Committee of the Interior ordered district and regional commanders of the Slovak National Security to prepare new lists of individuals, who could be of interest to the Soviet authorities in Czechoslovakia, and render them support in the process of their repatriation to the USSR. The register of names should be prepared in three parts.

The first list was to include USSR citizens who stayed in Slovakia without corresponding foreign passports issued by a special body in their homeland and who appeared in the Czechoslovak territories after September 1, 1939. These included: “a) individuals who held USSR

citizenship before September 1, 1939 and who were taken to Slovakia as POWs or hired workforce by military or civilian authorities, or who came here after they escaped and returned from other countries and temporarily stayed in Slovakia or came here together with the Red Army; b) former Polish or Romanian citizens who in the initial period of the war officially resided in the territories that now belong to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, especially in Bukovina, Eastern Galicia or Belarus.”

The second list was to specify individuals who used to live in settlements in Transcarpathian Ukraine (the former Subcarpathian Rus, annexed by the USSR in 1945 in agreement with the Czechoslovak government), including those who, at the time of the option (carried out on the basis of Czechoslovak and Soviet treaties of 1945–1946 on the option and mutual resettlement of the population (see Šmigel, 2004a)), did not opt for Czechoslovak citizenship.

The third list included individuals who “held Soviet citizenship and subsequently lost it, and individuals who had a certificate of residence in Poland, Romania or Austria and acquired Czechoslovak citizenship, or individuals without nationality, still claiming their Russian, Ukrainian or Belarusian ethnic origin.”

We should emphasize that in case of the first and second lists, the SNC Committee of the Interior focused on the following: “The lists should be compiled simultaneously with the arrest of individuals who are to be collected for repatriation. It is imperative to necessarily ensure that the above individuals will not escape before their collection, therefore the lists should be compiled after the repatriates have been collected.” The listed individuals (except those who had a Transcarpathia residence permit but owned real estate property in the Czechoslovak Republic – whose repatriation was to take place later in accordance with a special directive) were to be transported under an escort provided by state security agencies to Bratislava and transferred to the repatriation center in Patrónka from where they were supposed to be taken to the USSR. People, who had a Transcarpathia residence permit, but owned real estate in Czechoslovakia, as well as individuals indicated in the third list, were not to be temporarily concentrated, and no security measures should be taken against them (SNA-7).

The lists drawn up by individual NS district headquarters in Slovakia in September-October 1946, suggest that people, which were qualified in the two above categories, were not in Slovakia (some were wanted) or were transferred to Soviet repatriation points.

The first list mentions 159 people: the information reveals that the number included 62 people who arrived in Slovakia in late July or early August 1944. This may provide a suggestion that they were Ukrainian and Russian refugees accepted by the Slovak Government.

The second list specified 449 people, of whom around one third had already been transferred to the Soviet repatriation center in Patrónka.

The third list, which contains 792 individuals, reveals that, after it was thoroughly worked on, the personnel of the Soviet authorities showed no interest in 446 people (primarily those who had emigrated to Czechoslovakia in the inter-war period, especially in the 1920s, and, so to say, settled people who had families, owned real estate, etc.). We can only speculate about the fate of the rest in the last, third, category. Available documents speak only of four individuals handed over to the Soviet repatriation center (SNA-8). Probably, the third list was intended only for informational purposes, i.e. it was to serve the Soviet authorities only as a summary of former Russian citizens – emigrants who lived in Slovakia*.

Numerous violations were committed in the process of collecting individuals liable for repatriation and their transferring to the Soviet authorities. Often, sick people, women with

* According to V.N. Zemskov, repatriation was compulsory only for Soviet citizens. Other individuals (White Guards, etc.) were not liable for compulsory repatriation. There were exceptions to this rule, but in general it was observed. There are known facts of the forcible deportation to the USSR of certain white emigrants from Czechoslovakia and other countries where Soviet troops were deployed (the documents of F.I. Golikov’s agency did not mark these individuals anywhere, who, apparently, are included in the total number of Soviet citizens repatriated from the zones where the Red Army operated abroad) (Zemskov, 2005: 240; Zemskov, 2004: note 18). Arrests of white emigrants in Czechoslovakia were carried out from May 1945 as long as until 1955. The group of the first 215 individuals arrested in Prague included Russian Consul V.T. Rafalsky, 79-year-old prince P.D. Dolgorukov, one of the founders of Eurasianism, P.N. Savitsky, architect M. Kovalevsky, the scientist A.L. Bem and other (Dom v izgnanii, 2008: 164, 306, 308, 414-416).

children or pregnant women in recent months of pregnancy became objects of repatriation. Their deportation broke up families as some people had a Slovak partner. It is interesting that the harsh attitude towards repatriates was exercised by, first of all, the Czechoslovak law enforcement agencies.

This situation was flagged in one of its circulars by the SNC Committee of the Interior in Bratislava: “As a result of this outrage, the Committee of the Interior strongly urges district National Security Commands to inform the subordinate security agencies responsible for this operation that they should treat the individuals liable for registration and collection in a decent and humane manner and without hostility and should not separate families (mothers from children and husbands). As for families in which one of the spouses was (and still is) a Soviet citizen, while the second one is a Czechoslovak, let them get out of here and go with their documents to the USSR Consulate General in Bratislava, where they should apply for a residence permit in Slovakia. If it is about the repatriation of an entire family, it is prohibited to separate them – they should be together transported to Bratislava. People should be given the opportunity to take their movable property with them.”

At the same time, the Slovak Committee of the Interior instructed that if there is a need to recount the individuals on the third list, they should be “treated as politely as possible, rather than rudely, because former Russian emigrants, now Czechoslovak citizens, now consider an aggressive attitude as a crime committed against them and spread various harmful news about their possible repatriation” (ŠAPpH-1).

The final (main) phase in the repatriation of Soviet citizens took place from the beginning of 1947 until the end of 1948 (in fact until the middle of 1952). The Soviet authorities provided the lists of individuals, who were subsequently tracked down by the National Security Departments of Slovakia, directly to the SNC Committee of the Interior in Bratislava. The lists included dozens of people. They tried to identify the whereabouts of “the remainder” in Czechoslovakia, regardless of the time when they arrived. They also searched for those who fled from annexed Transcarpathia in 1946-1947 (ŠABBpL-1) or escaped from other repatriation centers (ŠAPpH-2). Particular attention was given to the so-called Ukrainian apatrides – holders of Nansen passports issued by the so-called the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938), Ukrainians from Bukovina, Northern Bessarabia and former Polish territories annexed to the USSR (SNA-13). Meanwhile, the SNC Committee of the Interior pointed out that many Ukrainians posed as Poles, Belarusians, Romanians, or Slovaks, or even as re-emigrants (ŠAKpM) (the subordinate agencies were ordered to draw up further lists) (ŠAPpH). The SNC Committee of the Interior issued a new instruction on the repatriation of Soviet citizens in late 1947 and even warned several national committees that, if they refused to search for the specified individuals, the guilty agency would be punished (ŠAKpK).

There were also few individual cases when Soviet citizens were searched for and repatriated from Slovakia (Czechoslovakia) in the early 50’s of the 20th century (ŠAPpB).

Evidently, we will never be able to determine the exact number of Soviet citizens (prisoners of war, refugees, emigrants), who were repatriated from Slovakia to the USSR after the arrival of the Soviet Army, as well as the number of Soviet repatriates in the post-war years.

The materials provided by Russian researchers contain only data on entire Czechoslovakia. According to them, as of March 1, 1946, 40,655 Soviet citizens (6,423 prisoners of war and 34,232 civilians) were repatriated from the Czechoslovak Republic, and of civilians 8,086 were men, 16,684 women and 9,462 children. Another 2,051 people were repatriated in the period from March 1, 1946 to July 1, 1952. Thus, in total, 42,706 people had been repatriated from Czechoslovakia by July 1, 1952 (Zemskov, 1995b: 10). In percentage terms, this accounts for only 1% of the total 4,305,035 Soviet citizens repatriated in this period from Europe and across the world. The repatriation operation of Soviet citizens from Czechoslovakia (1944 - first half of 1952) had the following trends: in 1944 – 835; 1945 – 34,665; 1946 – 5,155; 1947 (from January to June) – 293; July 1947 – June 1952 – 1758 people (see Table 3).

Table 3. Trends in the repatriation of Soviet citizens to the USSR (1944–1952)

Countries	Repatriation by year					Total
	1944	1945	1946	1947	7/1947 – 6/1952	
Germany	-	3,013,133	179,807	12,324	17,281	3,222,545
<i>Soviet zone</i>	-	834,022	168,853	10,810	11,867	1,025,552
<i>British zone</i>	-	1,064,352	5,243	898	3,052	1,073,545
<i>US zone</i>	-	1,031,590	5,011	532	1,899	1,039,032
<i>French zone</i>	-	83,169	700	84	463	84,416
Austria	-	325,508	1632	334	5318	332,792
<i>Soviet zone</i>	-	325,508	-	-	4752	330,260
<i>British zone</i>	-	-	688	120	277	1085
<i>US zone</i>	-	-	799	158	203	1160
<i>French zone</i>	-	-	145	56	86	287
Romania	68,068	65,272	1,635	225	2,656	137,856
France	-	120,422	2,132	368	345	123,267
Poland	-	86,953	1,142	2,801	11,382	102,278
Finland	73,754	27,387	123	-	95	101,359
Norway	-	84,362	413	-	2	84,777
Italy	7,215	45,749	670	438	278	54,350
Czechoslovakia	835	34,665	5,155	293	1,758	42,706
England	9,907	16,416	493	82	1,069	27,967
Yugoslavia	706	24,866	451	2	243	26,268
Belgium	-	12,122	899	26	567	13,614
Switzerland	-	9,807	61	-	4	9,872
Denmark	-	7,470	272	66	27	7,835
USA	-	3,950	118	-	2	4,070
Bulgaria	629	3,053	32	41	51	3,806
Hungary	-	3,259	-	-	170	3,429
Sweden	1,289	1,894	81	8	137	3,409
Greece	-	1,402	-	-	2	1,404
Albania	-	805	19	-	-	824
Holland	-	226	61	3	43	333
Luxembourg	-	-	-	77	-	77
Egypt	-	-	-	18	11	29
Other countries	-	-	-	-	105	105
Total	162,403	3,888,721	195,273	17,029	41,609	4,305,035

Source: <http://www.politpros.com/journal/read/?ID=141&journal=68>

5. Conclusion

Although the Slovak post-war documents contain no more specific figures on the number of Soviet citizens repatriated from the country, they, nevertheless, provide much information (even despite the data is fragmentary) revealing the progression of the repatriation process itself and the fate of thousands of people destined to return to their homeland that they abandoned for various reasons, often seeking shelter in neighboring nations and countries of Central and Western Europe.

One can agree with the opinion of Russian historians that some countries of the Eastern Bloc were strongly committed to the Soviet repatriation operation, and local state security agencies actively cooperated with its representatives. V. Zemskov said: “Even the authorities of the countries where the Soviet occupation forces were stationed (Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc.) clearly

demonstrated their interest in using the principle of compulsory repatriation to transfer to the Soviet authorities as many people who lived in their countries and were previously USSR citizens as possible. It was a “purge” of “foreign elements.” The Polish, Czechoslovak and Austrian authorities even willingly delivered Soviet women married to local men to the Soviet collection points, and there, at the collection points, had no idea how to deal with them” (Zemskov, 2011: 83-84). This view generally provides a true description of the situation in Slovakia.

The Soviet authorities performed arbitrary actions, first of all, in the march of the front when actual Soviet citizens and people of “Soviet origin” from Slovakia (including opponents of the Soviet system and communist ideology) were forcibly taken away. As the war ended, the situation in the country normalized and after the Soviet troops withdrew from Czechoslovakia (at the end of 1945); repatriation was already conducted in the interpretation of the Slovak security agencies and army authorities (often with numerous violations in a gross and hostile manner). It was aimed to clear the territory of Russian emigrants and all sorts of wartime refugees from the USSR (in a broader sense, all foreigners who did not have a residence permit) and it was brought about by the country's subordinate and lackey relations with the USSR and the influence of the left forces in society that generally accepted a concept of an ethnically pure national state of Czechs and Slovaks, which had no minorities and various foreign elements.

There is little doubt that the Soviet repatriation operation was carried out in extreme hardship – in the post-war devastation, lack of infrastructure and a catastrophic economic situation. And moreover, it took place in a challenging foreign policy environment.

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