

## THE CLASH OF CLICHÉS: MIGRANTS ANT LOCAL PEOPLE DURING II WORLD WAR (THE CASE OF THE URALS, THE USSR)

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**Abstract:** *Migrations have become an important factor in social stability. Caused either by extreme circumstances or increasing professional mobility they affect the life of both local people and newcomers. Local and migrant population live side by side and inevitably share and exchange their experience. The locals have distrustful attitudes towards refugees and vice versa. The role of social prejudices, so-called clichés, turns out to be significant if not crucial. The authors scrutinize migrants' stereotypical images of the Urals and its provincial population and compare them with clichés that the population of the Urals had about evacuated people. Both evacuees and locals perceived each other as 'strangers'. It is concluded on the factors determining Soviet people's prejudices such as lack culture, ethnical differences, low living standards and low mobility. The article deals with the nature of domestic and ethnic, often antisemitic, conflicts. Another point of the research is to find out if there is a way to overcome the stereotypes impeding the atmosphere of trust and social solidarity. The experience of the Soviet people lived in the rear during the Soviet-German war shows some paths towards social stability. In the case of the USSR, the elimination of clichés was due to the national-scale tragedy of the war and the sense of common grief as well as to the single economic market and internationalist politics of the Soviet government. The subject matter of the article lies at the intersection of social and military history. The study is based on published and archival materials. Among primary sources, there are*

*archival documents, memoirs and personal diaries, former Soviet residents' interviews and memoirs. Some of the materials have been published or filmed in documentaries.*

**Keywords:** *refugees, cliché, local population, USSR, Urals, World War II.*

## INTRODUCTION

### *Introduction to the problem*

Scientifically grounded migration policy is one of the key factors of state stability. State regulation of migrations is particularly significant during wars and other extreme situations, that explains both scientific and practical importance of this question. The Second World War was the biggest demographic catastrophe of the 20th century. One of the massive migratory flows was the escape from the western Soviet territories to the rear because of the Nazi invasion. Demographic characteristics of the refugees have a high epistemological importance as they give the information about the Soviet state role in the save of civilian lives and the strength of the migratory pressure on the rear regions. The evacuation started at the beginning of the war, in June 1941, and continued until the autumn 1942. The enemy occupied the European part of the USSR inhabited by about 85 million people. The evacuation implied the urgent transfer of population, industrial equipment and objects of artistic and historical value from the frontline areas to the east. It resulted in the displacement of the industrial centre of the country to the Urals. The article deals with clichés that existed between native inhabitants and evacuated people during the Soviet-German conflict of 1941-1945. Stereotypes in this sense are fixed images of local people used as clichés and complicating people's adaptation in the regions of arrival.

### *The relevance of the problem*

The contemporary migration crisis has become one of the biggest challenges for European countries. Being caused by armed conflicts and political turbulence in Asia and Africa, it has brought numerous problems. People had to leave their permanent residence, change the habitual way of life, break continuity in social attitude, customs and institutions. One of the problems faced by forced migrants is a mismatch of expectations evoked by stereotypes and the realities of life in the new residence. Therefore "migration tension" and its causes became the key issue in the contemporary Russian and European historiography. The objective of the article is to analyse the main negative factors affecting social solidarity and explore the migrants' social clichés and stereotypes in their perception of new people and place. The problem is studied through the prism of historical experience of evacuation during the Second World War.

### *Historiography*

Active research of the demographic processes in the USSR during the war did not start earlier than in 1990s after declassification of archives on the quantitative and qualitative structure of refugees in the time of the Soviet-German War. Soviet historians were focused on the mechanism of evacuation and on its qualitative and

quantitative results. They analysed the effectiveness of the transfer of industrial equipment and population to the east. The anthropological angle appeared in the 1970s with the first studies on the labour market and life in the Soviet rear. Those works were written with a touch of bravado in order to maintain an illusion of wellbeing. In the 21 century Russian historiography of evacuation and re-evacuation was significantly developed. They study evacuation in the context of regional specificity historical sources (Potemkina, 2015), socio-cultural or economic problems that people had to face then European and American historiography is represented by many historians, e.g. Nicolas Werth, Stéphane Courtois, Arno Lustiger, Anna Ahternshis, Roger Markwick, Beate Fieseler, Seth Bernstein, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Stephen Kotkin, Golfo Alexopoulos (Bernstein, 2015. P. 24-39; Fitzpatrick, 2000. P. 59-60; Shternshis, Levin, Shneer. 2016. P. 2-2; Markwick, Fieseler, 2015. P. 1115-1118). Analyzing the evacuation during the war, they pay attention to the evacuative process itself. In research papers dealing with the everyday history of World War II, refugees have not been regarded as a specific social group and their survival strategies have never been in focus of consideration. Studies of social clichés or stereotypes are closely related to the notion of “collective conscious” introduced by Emile Durkheim. The ideas of collective conscious and collective unconscious have been studied since the 19th century by European and Russian scholars. The problem of relations between the locals and refugees lies in the field of stereotypes studies which are closely related to the notion of “collective conscious” introduced by Emile Durkheim. One of the first works on social stereotypes was published by Russian sociologist Vladimir Yadov (Yadov, 1960). European and American scholars made a significant contribution to the analysis of stereotypes concerning gender, race and ethnicity. They are focused on the nature of stereotypes (Duijker & Frijda, 1960). Other scholars (Leerssen & Montfrans, 1993) made an impact on the methodology by investigating the image of “self” and “other” and the issue of “borders” and “frontiers”. According to Leerssen, one cultural tradition can produce different images and stereotypes about the same reality. It depends on the historical context. Historians must determine the mechanisms and circumstances of the process of forming, reviewing and updating the stereotypes (Leerssen & Montfrans, 1993). The thorough research on stereotypes in the mutual perception of refugees and locals has not been carried out yet.

### *Hypotheses*

The study of evacuation in the anthropological aspect will provide some knowledge about the social experience of migrants who had to integrate into a new culture. It probably resulted in the gradual overcoming of numerous clichés that affected negatively the relations between the newcomers and the locals. The research will help to elicit the factors leading to the elimination of stereotypes. It could be fruitful to analyse the role of the single economic market and common political space in the USSR, the patriotic and liberating character of the war perceived as a shared grief and national tragedy, the historical experience of multicultural coexistence and the internationalist nature of politics in the Soviet Union. The results of the research can be valuable for different migration studies dealing with modern problems of forced migrants' adaptation in a new culture.

## METHODS

The study is based on various primary sources such as archival documentation, memoirs and personal diaries, some of them are already published or filmed in documentaries. A large group of primary sources is formed from ego-documents such as memoirs, diaries, interviews. Their authors are former residents of the USSR, those who survived the evacuation and currently live not only in Russia but in post-Soviet countries and abroad, namely, in Germany or Israel. In addition, the investigation implied the use of oral history materials preserved in the collections of Department of World History, Nosov Magnitogorsk State Technical University. This kind of sources is tendentious and biased. The documents show authors' world outlook and political attitudes. The special consideration is to be applied to the social nature of thinking. The authors differentiate three levels of ideas in the world outlook: the ideas of a certain epoch, the ideas of social community and individual ideas. Oral history methods have proven to be fruitful. They let us not only to expand a primary source database but also carry out a proper analysis of eyewitnesses' evidence about evacuation. First and foremost, oral history methodology involves interviewing the people who participated in or observed the past, that facilitated the analysis of the impact of social circumstances on refugees' everyday life.

The subject matter of this article is at the intersection of social, military and oral history and it is studied through the prism of everyday history. This fact determined the use of the complex approach represented by the Annales School, German, American and British social history. Understanding the social reality as a result of everyday human interaction led the authors to investigation both of the regular, consistent behavioural patterns and of the new ones developed in the situation of instability and unpredictability. These new ways of behaving are the survival strategies which are under the scope of this research. The article is also based on the theory of stereotyping (Lippman, 1965). According to Lippman, stereotypes are pictures that arise spontaneously in people's minds come to exist for them, in other words, people live in second-hand world of stereotypes. Stereotypes come from the social environment people live in. Before coping with it, people simplify the model. Stereotypes are stable and simplified beliefs about the characteristics of social groups or events. The most typical stereotypes are about gender, race and ethnicity. The group Agreement about stereotypes comes from the fact that people living in the same culture have similar contacts with members of other social groups. In the scale of big social groups stereotypes have two functions: integrative and disintegrative; and the latter is more frequent. Tension over migration rises due to external factors (war, crisis) and internal ones (economic decline, low standard of living, shortage of resources).

Describing this process, researchers use the terms 'evacuees' and 'refugees' that reflects the fact that migratory flows have different level of organization. In our view, this terminology is relevant to this context and applicable to the different streams of migrants. The authors were guided by the principle of historicism considering the social actions as inescapably conditioned by the past and the historical situation in which they arise. Among the other very basic principles are respect for the integrity of knowledge, objectivity, collegiality and openness.

*The main body of the article*

The forced migration that took place during the Second World War was one of

the biggest displacements of population in the 20th century. Having passed two – three thousand kilometres people often found themselves in a different climate zone and ethnic environment. As for the local people in the Urals, Siberia, Transcaucasia, Soviet republics of Kazakhstan and Central Asia, when they saw newcomers at the railway station, they attributed them some imaginary qualities which turned into stereotypes. The accuracy or falsity of the stereotypes can be determined only through the analysis of every case. Thus, the forced migrants who arrived in the eastern regions of the USSR under evacuation of 1941-1942, had a set of typical clichés. The first one is about the Uralian region. The Urals was thought as a sparsely populated and poorly urbanized region with dense forests. Former head of the Kiev plant “Bolshevik” V. P. Kurganov remembers, “We imagined that life in the Urals had been scarce with cities surrounded by forests and situated far from working settlements (Kurganov, 1973). Those who evacuated together with industrial enterprises and placed to the Uralian cities, in a short while realized that they had arrived in the old and rapidly developing heavy industry centre of the country, after that their stereotypes were quickly eliminated. People's stereotypes about the Urals and Siberia were formed by the school education representing the Asian part of the country as a sparsely populated area with atypical climate conditions and severe weather. These expectations are especially typical for those who were coming during a cold time of the year without warm clothes and footwear.

The second stereotype concerned Uralic people. They were said to be wild, illiterate and uncivilized. Such expectations were common for evacuated Muscovites and Leningrad residents. Here is the description of a Uralic village left by Mikhail German, who evacuated to the Molotov region (the former city of Perm was renamed in 1940 to honour V. Molotov, the Soviet foreign minister), “In the years of war, we lived in the Perm region, in the village of “Chernaya” (means “black”). The name perfectly suited the village. There was deep mud in autumn and spring, in which even horses bogged down. Darkness. Neither electricity, nor radio. Gloomy and tired, all women seemed old. Nearly all men were in war. The evacuated were hated and indiscriminately called Jews. Rather, it was not anti-Semitism, but biological hatred of people from another world. Over time, the prejudice the evacuees turned into condescending indifference because there was nowhere to go” (German, 2018. P. 23). This image started to destroy because evacuated “intelligentsia” (people from scientific and art circles) went to work to schools, universities, libraries, theatres and hospitals. Being in the deep province of the country, they were unexpectedly surprised by people’s attitude to knowledge, “I got used to reading in the Urals because local people had kept a lot of old books at home and in the libraries. I found literature by repressed authors; in this region, they even did not know that those authors had become victims of political repressions” (Opalenoie detstvo: vospominaniya detey voyny, 2009).

Lastly, according to migrants, they were heading to the region of exiles where the people would be evil, severe and have anti-Soviet attitudes. Here are some memoirs of Vladimir Fridkin, “During the evacuation, I saw the city of Orenburg, at that time, called “Chkalov”. Along very long streets, there were houses with porches and their residents were gloomily nibbling sunflower seeds.” “It was a region of exiles and, probably, people waited for Hitler with impatience» (Opalenoie detstvo: vospominaniya detey voyny, 2009). Leya Kantor and her mother were evacuated to the village of Maslyankla, which is at twenty kilometres from Shadrinsk (the Kurgan region). “The local people, mainly Russian, did not want to take the evacuees in their houses. But they could not refuse. Most of the people did not support the Soviet

authorities as not far from the village there was the well-known Great Siberian tract; it took convicts to Siberia". The given memories are partly true. For many years, it was a place of political exile during Stalin's industrialization and collectivization. As for the local cultural particularities, it is doubtless that Uralic and Siberian people are more silent and tend not to use gestures as often as southerners. However, it was not a principal reason for mutual dislike between the local and newcomers. The negative attitudes and the division into "us" and "them" were brought by everyday difficulties such as the rise of prices in the markets or housing tightness that followed forced migrants' arrival.

The image of other receiving regions was different. Most of the evacuated wanted to stay in the Soviet Central Asia and often chose the city of Tashkent. Artist from "Kukryniksy" (a collective of three caricaturists) N. A. Sokolov remembers, "The farther we were from Moscow, the more difficult it was to decide where to go: Sverdlovsk, Novosibirsk, Tashkent, Almaty, Kazan, Kuybyshev... We had long and hot discussions about it. I witnessed how people were persuading famous Soviet composer Shostakovich to go to either Tashkent or Kuybyshev. Dmitri Dmitriyevich! What are you going to Kuybyshev for? All people are going there. There will be difficulties with food and housing problems. You had better go to Tashkent. The situation with provision is much better there and, in general, it is much safer for children. After all, knowingly say, Tashkent is the city of bread" (Sokolov, 1984). The last words reflect a common image of Tashkent in those years. The city associated with the name of the novel by Alexander Neverov "Tashkent, City of Bread" (1923). The author told about famine years after the civil war. Although it was a story about a boy who went to Tashkent to find some bread, the book led to a new stereotype about Tashkent: a warm place, rich in food. Having arrived in the cities and settlements in the republics of Central Asia, the evacuated witnessed a different picture. The stereotypes began to transform. People saw "lands burnt by the sun, vast valleys ... neither a tree nor a shadow... Everything is of the camel colour, yellow and grey, surrounded by the yellow and grey, of the camel colour. Not a sound. Some trickles of smoke are seen in the distance" (Bolshintsov, 1959). People felt enormous longing as if a huge desert covered them, it was. From childhood, they got used to see white Russian birches and black, loose and wet soil. Unusual landscapes and climate produced several opposite emotions – from admiration to rejection. In this regard, it is necessary to pay attention to the figurative epithets used by the evacuated who described their first impressions. Documentarist G. Shirokov's family evacuated to Almaty, his wife Tatiana wrote a letter to their friend, playwright L. Malugin. She told that Almaty "whimsically spread out at the foot of the snowy mountains", the city is "lovely", "clean and excessively green" (Gromova, 2002).

Tatiana Lugovskaya had a different impression, she wrote, "Tashkent is a city built to die. It is neither beautiful, nor kind. The water always smells with dust and disinfection; in summer, the water can be boiling in the sun, in winter, the dirt is nearly everywhere, as nowhere in the world. The city that gathered together fashionistas and grief from all over the Soviet Union, where in the streets, there are camels and donkeys together with trams. Local people call you "aha", but you have no idea why; talking about Moscow and Leningrad regions, your relatives say "Russia" (!); one of the most demanded and scarce goods are coffins. I am afraid of this city. It seems to me I may stuck here forever (Gromova, 2002). Tashkent is "Istanbul for the poor", as remarked writer Aleksey N. Tolstoy. As for the local people, they also had some clichés about newcomers. The evacuated wearing unusual clothes, a peculiar dialect, were received with curiosity and vigilance. This ambiguous

first impression was one of the reasons for forming negative stereotypes. Many people said that only the rich managed to evacuate. The idea that only well-off people had opportunities to evacuate brought unexpected consequences: the rise in food, housing and firewood prices. The memoirs and diaries reveal a lot of evidence of speculation and fabulous prices. In fact, they looted forced migrants. Antagonism between the residents and newcomers became more apparent in villages (by 1943, the Urals had already had 52,1 % of the evacuated). However, urban areas also witnessed regular conflicts in the domestic environment. Sometimes the pretext for the conflicts came from the migrants themselves. For example, some Estonians brought with them valuable possessions: cameras, radios, typewriters, first aid kits full of medicaments. In the eyes of Uralic rural residents, those things looked exotic or even spy. Party Secretary of Verkhneuralsk district Committee V. Trofimov remembers, “The citizens that arrived from Estonia have typewriters, radios, drugs, cameras as their personal belongings. I think they should be confiscated, but the NKVD (the interior minister of the USSR) is hesitating.”

This case is an example of mutual claims. The Party functionaries and Soviet authorities of Estonia thought that Estonians were placed in the disadvantaged regions for the victims of dekulakization and repressions. In turn, the local authorities notified that Estonians had a lot of personal belongings and money, do not want to work and are often unreliable in terms of politics (Potemkina, 2015). According to one of the common stereotypes, forced migrants from urban areas are arrogant people shirking rough or dirty work. The reason for such attitude was the behaviour of high officials’ wives. They demanded special conditions and refused to work while most refugees had to prove their ability to work hard on a par with the locals. V. Lyasnikov tells, “A year later we became local people and almost friends. They understood that “intelligentsia” are not “rotten” people, they are industrious. But it took a year”. Sometimes evacuated were alleged to be people who did not want to fight at war and refused the call up. S. Litichevsky remembers, “Our relationships with local population were bad. They did not know the realities of war and raised prices at the markets. The housing problem became more acute because of the increased density of population. The high-skilled specialists were considered rivals as they made the situation more vulnerable for the local. The women whose husbands were at the front were indignant over seeing strong and healthy men were under evacuation and avoiding the army” (Potemkina, 2015).

## CONCLUSIONS

Numerous clichés brought some tension that resulted in conflicts between migrants and local population. Every group saw and explained the situation from its own side and there was no trust. When the stereotypes corresponded with experience, people started to believe in them as if it was a reality. In other words, they turned their opponents into the source of problems. The process of stereotypes formation was determined by different factors: low mobility (many people never left their villages), low standard of living, life at the level of survival, ethnic and cultural differences, lack of culture. Gradually, migrants’ social experience integrated into the local way of life; it helped people to overcome stereotypes. Archival materials and memoirs gave us a lot of examples of hospitality and generosity of the local: migrants were provided with food and household possessions; children’s homes were taken under patronage by “timurovtsy” (youths bunches of do-gooders). Among the factors that helped to eliminate negative stereotypes, there were the single economic market

and common political space in the USSR, the patriotic and liberating character of the war perceived as a shared grief and national tragedy, the historical experience of multicultural coexistence and the internationalist nature of politics in the Soviet Union. Religious beliefs could not become a subject of contradictions in the atheistic Soviet state. Ethnic conflicts took place in the form of antisemitism. Social and psychological stereotypes appeared to be the most stable.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors confirm that the data presented do not contain a conflict of interest.

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