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Life Support of the Belarusian Village in the Post-War Period (the Second Half of the 1940s – Early 1950s)

Zabezpieczenie materialne białoruskiej wsi w okresie powojennym (druga połowa lat 40. – początek lat 50. XX w.)

Жыццязабеспячэнне беларускай вёскі ў пасляваенны час (другая палова 1940-х –пачатак 1950-х гг.)

Abstract

The stabilisation of the Belarusian village in the period of post-war renewal had its own peculiarities. Very clearly they were manifested in the example of Northern Belarus, where co-existed areas with different types of socio-economic structure and, accordingly, with different levels of well-being of the population, which was characterised by different mentalities. The revival of agriculture in the Eastern regions of Northern Belarus took place on the basis of the collective farm state system. In the Western regions in the post-war period, individual farms prevailed, which provided the bulk of agricultural production. The search for material resources for life by the rural population in different areas of the region revealed an intra-ethnic division into 'Westerners' and 'Easterners' with a wide range of mutual socio-cultural stereotypes formulated in the memories of local residents about the post-war years.

Archival data and oral history materials indicate that during this period a major role in the search for funds for the life of the peasants was played by private farms both in the Eastern and Western regions. However, if it was the main source of income for individual farmers, the peasants in collective state farms were forced to combine the processing of personal plots with work on the farm, the payment for which was not a factor in stimulating agriculture and usually was minimal. The lack of material stimulation caused the desire to minimise labour participation on the collective farm. The materials of oral history represent the cruel reality of the post-war period during which atypical forms of economic and commercial activities of the villagers arose or became relevant: in addition to traditional occupations, illegal forms of commercial entrepreneurship developed, which often had a criminal nature. A special manifestation of the illegal economic activity of Belarusian villagers was home brewing, which became widespread

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because it was an effective way to change agricultural products into 'real money' and thus brought the necessary financial means to upgrade their own economy.

Keywords: Belarus, post-war reconstruction, agriculture, collective farm, illegal economic activity

Abstrakt

W okresie powojennym proces stabilizacji na białoruskiej wsi posiadał cechy, które były szczególnie zauważalne w północnej części kraju, gdzie współistniały regiony zróżnicowane społecznie i ekonomicznie, a – co za tym idzie – charakteryzujące się różnym poziomem życia oraz odmienną mentalnością mieszkańców. We wschodnich rejonach północnej Białorusi odbudowa gospodarki wiejskiej odbywała się w systemie kołchozów i sowchozów, w rejonach zachodnich przeważały gospodarstwa jednoosobowe. Odmienne sposoby pozyskiwania przez ludność wiejską środków utrzymania doprowadziły do podziału na „tych z zachodu" oraz „tych ze wschodu", a także – w konsekwencji – do powstania dużej liczby utrwalonych we wspomnieniach miejscowej ludności stereotypów. Dane archiwalne oraz przekazy ustne świadczą o tym, że w badanym okresie zarówno w rejonach wschodnich, jak i zachodnich pozyskiwano środki do życia przede wszystkim dzięki pracy we własnych gospodarstwach rolnych. Jednakże o ile rolnicy indywidualni pracowali wyłącznie na swój rachunek, o tyle chłopi zatrudnieni w kołchozach byli zmuszeni do dodatkowego wysiłku, za który otrzymywali niewielkie wynagrodzenie. Brak motywacji finansowej wpływał na niską jakość ich działań. Przekazy ustne świadczą o brutalizacji powojennej rzeczywistości, kiedy to powstawały i rozkwitały nielegalne (a często także kryminalne) formy działalności gospodarczej, do których należy zaliczyć m.in. pędzenie bimbru jako efektywny sposób wymiany produkcji rolnej na „żywą gotówkę".

S**łowa kluczowe:** Białoruś, powojenna odbudowa, rolnictwo, kołchoz, nielegalna działalność gospodarcza

Анатацыя

Стабілізацыя беларускай вёскі ў перыяд пасляваеннага аднаўлення мела свае асаблівасці. Вельмі выразна яны прасочваюцца на прыкладзе Паўночнай Беларусі, дзе суіснавалі раёны з рознымі тыпамі сацыяльна-эканамічнага ўкладу і, адпаведна, розным узроўнем дабрабыту насельніцтва, якое характарызавалася адрознай ментальнасцю. Аднаўленне сельскай гаспадаркі ва ўсходніх раёнах Паўночнай Беларусі праходзіла на аснове калгасна-саўгаснай сістэмы. У заходніх раёнах у паваенны час пераважалі аднаасобныя гаспадаркі, якія і забяспечвалі асноўны аб'ём сельскагаспадарчай вытворчасці. Здабыванне матэрыяльных сродкаў для жыцця вясковым насельніцтвам у розных раёнах гэтага рэгіёна выяўляла ўнутрыэтнічны падзел на "заходнікаў" і "ўсходнікаў" з шырокім спектрам узаемных сацыякультурных стэрэатыпаў, сфармуляваных ва ўспамінах мясцовых жыхароў пра паваенныя гады.

Архіўныя дадзеныя і матэрыялы вуснай гісторыі сведчаць пра тое, што ў гэты перыяд асноўную ролю ў пошуках сродкаў для жыцця сялян адыграла асабістая гаспадарка, прычым як ва ўсходніх, так і ў заходніх раёнах. Аднак, калі для аднаасобнікаў,

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яна была асноўнай крыніцай забяспечанасці, то сяляне-калгаснікі вымушаны былі спалучаць апрацоўку прысядзібнай гаспадаркі з працай у калгасе, аплата за якую не з'яўлялася фактарам стымулявання сялянскай працы і была вельмі мізэрнай. Адсутнасць матэрыяльнай матывацыі выклікла імкненне мінімалізаваць працоўны ўдзел у калектыўнай гаспадарцы. Матэрыялы вуснай гісторыі прадстаўляюць жорсткую рэальнасць пасляваенных гадоў, у якія ўзніклі або сталі актуальнымінетыповыя формы эканамічнай і гандлёвай дзейнасці сялян: сярод традыцыйных заняткаў развіваліся і нелегальныя формы гандлёвага прадпрымальніцтва, якія часта мелі крымінальны характар. Адмысловай праявай нелегальнага гаспадарчага занятка беларускіх сялян з'яўлялася самагонаварэнне, якое стала масавым, паколькі ўяўляла сабой эфектыўны спосаб замены сельскагаспадарчай прадукцыі ў "жывыя грошы".

Ключавыя словы: Беларусь, пасляваеннае аднаўленне, сельская гаспадарка, колхоз, нелегальная эканамічная дзейнасць

The problems of life support in the modern historical science are actively discussed in the interdisciplinary discourse. In this paper, the primary issue of the life support culture is complemented with information regarding the psychological microclimate, the value system in peasant collectives of different sises, as well as the mechanisms of overcoming difficulties of the socio-economic and political transformation, developed by the village community. The latter is very evident in wartime and the post-war period, when it was the priority of the Soviet government, with its economy ruined, to restore the collective farm system in the liberated territories as an effective mechanism for providing products and raw materials to cities, industrial centers, and the army. For the rural population, the 'post-war reconstruction' denoted the return to standard private farming, the main source of livelihood to a peasant family. However, the return to 'Stalin's collective farm' implied that it was necessary to work almost for nothing and there was practically no opportunity to move to the city. The geographical scope of the study covers the territory of Northern Belarus (Belarusian Podvinje or Dvina region), a historical-ethnographic region. During the period examined in this paper, this area was a part of the Polotsk and Vitebsk administrative regions. The socio-economic differences between those regions were due to fact that the first included districts which had been part of Poland until 1939, and thus were dominated by individual farming (Braslavsky, Vidsky, Glubotsky, Dzisnensky, Dokshitsky, Dunilavitsky, Myorsky, Plisky, and Sharkavshchynsky). As a result, the region was composed of areas of different types of socio-economic structure and, accordingly, varying levels of well-being among people of different mentality. As to the chronological framework of the paper, it covers the period of the post-war restoration of agriculture and the collective farm system in the eastern regions of Northern Belarus, the gradual elimination of individual farms, and the transition to forced collectivisation in the western regions, which was accompanied by the destruction of the traditional peasant way of life.

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Upon the liberation, Northern Belarus was in an extremely difficult economic situation. In the Verhnyadvinshchyna region, 426 villages were burned, while the settlements of Dzernavitsky, Rasitsky, Saryansky and Yuzefavsky selsovets (village councils) were almost completely destroyed. Not a single whole building remained on the territory of the Asveysky district, and of its 21,062 pre-war inhabitants – only 6,430 people remained (Pamâc′, 2000, p. 209). Of the 59,000 inhabitants the Vitebsk region at the time of the liberation, only 12,000 remained. In Sirotsinsky, these were 24,449 of 48,775 people (Vitebŝina 2009, p. 128, 212). The total rural population of the Vitebsk region (14 districts) amounted to 433,000 as of January 1, 1945 (61% of pre-war data), 123,000 (52.3%) in the eastern regions (6 districts) of the Polotsk region, whereas 241,200 (75.5%) in the western regions (9 districts) of the Polotsk region (Vitebŝina, 2009, pp. 241–242).

> Ну, кончылася вайна, тады ж прыехалі – нідзе нічога нет. Толькі вот так во зямля. Нідзе нічога нет. Во так во, на сабе гэту хатку насілі. Усё пад качалку, усё паскуды папалілі. Прышлі – толькі папялок быў. Там дзярэўня была – спалілі, і тут была – спалілі, толькі папялок быў. Нямецкія зямлянкі былі, там троху дальшэ выкапаныя. Дык мы ў тых зямлянках і жылі, пакуль гэта хаткі сабе папастроілі. На сабе во насілі браўнушачкі, насілі на сабе і строілі.(Полацкі р-н)[1] (FAPDU, 6).

The western districts (Braslavsky, Vidsky, Glubotsky, Dzisnensky, Dokshitsky, Dunilavitsky, Myorsky, Plisky and Sharkavshchynsky) were in a much better economic situation than the eastern parts of the region. Although the population in the entire BSSR was facing difficulties, it was noted in July 1944 that people in the west remained on their agricultural estates and did not experience the full extent of the occupation (Chiari, 2008, p. 317). Where there were forests and the Nazis took intense punitive actions against the partisans (Braslavsky, Sharkavshchynsky), the situation was grave, which is reflected in the memories of rural residents.

> Вайна сільна скурожыла нас (Браслаўскі р-н)[2] (FAPDU, 22).
> Бедна, бедна (жылі) пасле вайны. І ліпу елі, і верас елі, што было… нада ж было выжыць і ўсё. У нас спалілі ўсё датла ў 44-м гаду. Вясной усіх выгналі з дзярэўні, на падводы… У Зябкі ў баракі гналі нас (Глыбоцкі р-н)[3] (FAPDU, 5).

[1] Well, the war ended, then we came back and there was nothing anywhere. Only land. There's nothing anywhere. We carried this hut on our backs. All to the rolling pin, the bastards burned it all. We came to see ashes. There was a village – burned, and here was one – burned, burned to ashes. There were German dugouts a bit further. So we lived in those dugouts until these houses were built. We carried logs on our backs, carried them and built (Polatsky district).

[2] The war crippled us severely (Braslav district).

[3] (We lived) in very poor conditions after the war. And we ate linden, and we ate heather, that was ... it was necessary to survive and all. We had everything burned to the ground in '44. In spring, everyone was driven out of the village, to the carts ... To Zyabki, into the barracks, we were driven (Glybotsky district).

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> Я адслужыў шэсць гадоў, матушка пяхота, прайшоў. (І дзе?) Кіненсберг. І адслужыў шэсць гадоў. І пяцьдзесят первым гаду прыйшоў дамоў, а тут усё голае і ўсё спалена – ні хаты, ні дама якога – усё абсалютна. Толька асталася пуня, а астальное… Прыйшоў на голае места (Глыбоцкі р-н)[4] (FAPDU, 18).

However, it should be noted that the bulk of major punitive expeditions of the Nazis ('Winterzauber', 'Waldwinter', 'Schneehase', 'Greif', etc.) were launched in the eastern part of the region, which was part of the rear zone of the Center army group, and where the guerrilla movement was much more intense.

Memories of the villagers indicate that the problem of physical survival in the devastated territory was very urgent. The oral discourse of hunger and famine food in the occupation period remains virtually unchanged in the memories of the first post-war years. Anything that was edible became food. In the first year after the liberation, it was commonplace to see people eat frozen potatoes which had not been harvested from the fields (often littered with landmines as the Germans were retreating). Other types of food included sorrel, quinoa, or hemp pancakes. People would eat young leaves of linden or calamus roots. Various herbs and potatoes were added to bread. Some respondents said that they still vividly remembered the taste sensations of the post-war extreme gastronomy, which remained relevant due to hunger in the winter-spring period of 1946–1947.

> После вайны была галадоўка. Асталіся дзеці і старыкі, ані ніякай скаціны не было. (Сенненскі р-н)[5] (FAPDU, 1).
>
> На трудадзень на той дадуць па сколькі грам гірсы, а мы і тога змелем, рэдка дзе жыціна пападаецца, змелем, хлеб пячом. А якія хлябы пяклі? Саўсім значала ірвалі шышкі такія, асакі шышкі жоўценькія бываюць растуць, і вот пірог з тэй шышкі спячэш. А тады як спячэш, дык і неяк гэта аправіцца,так цябе скрапіць жалудак шышкамі гэтымі. І не дай Бог, як жылі, з вайны з гэтай (Лепельскі р-н)[6] (РЕС, 2011, p. 259).
>
> Пасля вайны такія смачныя дранікі з мерзлай бульбы былі. Ну, яна сладкая была. Тады я не знаю якім яна (мама)повадам даставала льносемя, малолі ўжо і яна пірагі пекла, я толькі да роту і не магла, ну не магла я іх перанесці. А з канаплі любіла клёцкі. Яна

[4] I served six years in the infantry, and then moved. (And where?) Koenigsberg. I served six years. And in 1951, I came home, and everything here is naked and everything was burned – no hut, no house of any kind – absolutely nothing. Only the barn remained, and the rest ... I came to see a bare place (Glybotsky district).

[5] After the war, there was starvation. There were children and old people and no cattle. (Sennensky district).

[6] On a workday they will give us some grams of chaff, and we grind it, rarely come across a rye grain, we grind, we bake bread. What kind of bread? Well, we pluck those cones, yellow cones of sedge which grow in some places, and here we will bake a pie of these cones. And when you bake, then somehow you will recover, so you will seal the stomach with these cones. And God forbid we lived the war like this (Lepelsky district).

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> высокая-высокая. У нас там у Барсуках, каля фермы было поле бальшое, мы з братам пабяжом, нацярушым, тады мама на вецер выцерушывала, а тады ў ступу. А што будзем варыць? Ай, клёцачкі…(Верхнядвінскі р-н)[7] (FAPDU, 4).

In order to survive, the inhabitants of the destroyed villages were forced to resort to begging. In the pre-war period, a special social group of 'elders' specialised in this sacred craft, but after the war it became more common and largely profaned as the elementary pragmatics of life support came to the fore. Beggars would frequent areas which had not been as damaged after the war, mainly in the western part of Vitebsk region, which was in a relatively better economic situation than the destroyed eastern regions. Traditional attitudes prohibited refusing alms to beggars as they were considered to be God's people.

> Мы не хадзілі, а да нас пасля вайны з васточнай Беларусі прыхадзілі. Яны ж там папаленыя былі, бедна жылі, так ішлі да нас. Прыйдуць, паглядяць ёсць ці абраз, перакрэсцяцца і „Падайце раді Хрыста"… і так ішлі, ішлі, ішлі… (Глыбоцкі р-н)[8] (FAPDU, 15).

In the eastern regions of Northern Belarus, the restoration of agriculture took place on the basis of the collective and state farm production. It was already in July 1944 that the Central Committee of the CP(b) and the SNK of the BSSR adopted a resolution 'On the Restoration of Collective Farms in the Areas Liberated from the German Invaders of the Belarusian SSR' (Poslewoennoe razwitie Glubokskogo rajona, 2010, p. 10). In the Eastern regions of the Polotsk region, 668 collective farms were restored by the end of 1944 (ZSA, 1947, 1, 3, 27). In the areas affected by the war to the greatest extent, the process of restoring collective farms took several years. For example, in some selsovets (village councils) of Asveishchyna, collective farms were restored only two or three years after the liberation, as the burned villages were settled (Pamâc′, 2000, p. 209). In the western regions, individual farms dominated in the post-war period, and the number of collective farms was not significant. The sources record a decrease in the number of collective farms compared to the pre-war period. In the first year after the liberation, 25 collective farms were restored in 9 western districts of the Polotsk region, which combined 379 farms (before the war there were 141 collective farms,

[7] After the war, there were such delicious pancakes from frozen potatoes. Well, they were sweet. Then I do not know how she (mother) got flaxseed, already milled, and she baked pies, I just could not take them in my mouth, well, I could not bring them to the mouth. And I liked hemp dumplings. It's so tall, tall. There in Barsuki, around the farm, there was a big field and my brother and I would run and pick it, then mom sifted it in the wind, and then in a mortar. And what would we cook? Oh, the dumplings... (Verkhnyadvinsky district).

[8] We did not go, but after the war people came to us from Eastern Belarus. All was burned there, they lived in poor conditions, so they came to us. They would come, see if there is an icon, cross themselves and "Give for Christ's sake"… and so they went, went, went ... (Glybotsky district).

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which combined 4789 farms) (Vitebŝina 2009, p. 398). These were mainly small collective farms. For example, 2 collective farms in the Sharkavshchynsky district only combined 9 farms, whereas there were 441 farms in these collective farms before the war. In 1945, the land fund of 9 western districts of the Polotsk region was distributed as follows in respect of land use: collective farms had 8723 hectares (including 4165 ha of arable lands and gardens and 1320 ha of hay pastures), state farms – 8185 ha (2060 ha of arable lands and gardens, 1578 ha of hay pastures), peasants – 423,436 ha (250,430 ha of arable lands and gardens, 92,585 ha of hay pastures)

The diverse socio-economic structure actualised the division into 'Westerners' and 'Easterners' and predetermined the specifics of the life support system of the rural population. Oral history shows that the main role in the life support in the period under review, both for the rural population of the eastern and western collectivised areas, was played by the individual farm, the restoration of which was a priority. It was a common situation that people who worked and lived together on a peasant farm were connected by family relations. All members of the family were involved in the production. Children were engaged in farm work early: they grazed cattle, helped to mow the grass, participated in weeding, etc. However, the status of the peasant as a collective farmer and an individual farmer differed. The latter owned his land, which encouraged him to work with full dedication, as it was his only source of life support.

> У каго свая зямля, таму лягчэй. Займаліся сваёй зямлёй. Зямлі было многа, зямля была харошая. Тата быў рабацяшчым, не гультай. Жыта па чэцьверці! Я такіх каласоў не бачыў ніколі. Ён сам знаў, якое зерно, дзе сеяць. Я не відзіў, калі ён клаўся і калі ён уставаў (Глыбоцкі р-н)[9] (FAPDU, 15).

Collective-farm peasants had the right to homestead as well. It was legislatively confirmed in the 1936 Constitution of the USSR, which recognised 'a small plot of land for personal use and a subsidiary farm on the plot, a house, animals and small agricultural implements for personal possession [for every collective household] aside from the principal income from public collective farming' (Verbickaâ, p. 62). They combined the cultivation of the household plot with the work on the collective farm, where almost entire work in the first years following the liberation had to be done manually and in extremely difficult conditions. The system of payment for workdays was not an important factor in stimulating peasant labour. During the initial phases of the post-war reconstruction of the collective farms, there were, in fact, no resources for their maintenance. Almost all the products of the Belarusian collective farms were first sent to the fund of the active army, and then to the reconstruction and creation of new

[9] Who has his own land, has it easier. They were committed to their land. There was a lot of land, the land was the good. Dad was hard-working, not lazy. Rye a quarter! I have never seen such ears. He himself knew what kind of grain to sow and where to sow it. I didn't see him when he went to bed or when he got up (Glybotsky district).

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industries, energetics, urban economy (Smâhovìč, p. 52–53). Villagers remember that they received hardly anything on workdays in the post-war years:

> Пасля вайны галадавалі крэпка, цяжка было жыць. Калок запішуць. Давалі на яго якого хлеба. А які хлеб быў? Гірса[10] была. Трудадні, ну, як валы робілі. (Полацкі р-н)[11] (FAPDU, 9).
>
> Мамка прышла дамоў, мы пяць ртоў галодных сідім, я самая малая была, і ана вот так вот палажыла на патрэсканныя ручкі галаву і плакала, прынесла палтара пуда герцы. (Верхнядзвінскі р-н)[12] (FAPDU, 7).
>
> Дзень работаеш, палку паставіць. Давалі грам сто гірсы. Яна пахожая на жыта, але лёгкая такая і там не хрэна нету унутры, усё раўно ж малолі. (Полацкі р-н)[13] (FAPDU, 17).

The life support issue was further complicated by the taxes imposed on the rural population. Each peasant household had to pay a land tax, supply the state (often without taking into account the actual capacity) with the amount of agricultural products (meat, potatoes, milk, eggs, etc.) determined by local authorities. The resolution of the USSR Council of Ministers of June 30, 1948, amended the law on agricultural tax by increasing the rates by 30%, while sources and rates of profit remained the same (Gìstoryâ Belarusì, 2011, p. 84). A characteristic feature of the new regulations was the expansion of the range of payers by reducing beneficiaries. Previously, men over 60 and women over 55 had been exempt from taxes, but now they were taxed at 50%. The financial situation of the families who had lost the breadwinner during the war, where children under 8 years of age remained dependent, deteriorated (Gìstoryâ Belarusì, 2011, p. 85). The payment of taxes was carried out with difficulties. It cost the peasants their last savings and supplies, which greatly affected the standard of living of both collective farmers and individual farmers, as taxes increased exponentially for the latter.

> Яйцо, сметану, масла збівалі і ўсе на налогі. Вазілі ў Полацк і прадавалі. Ці масла здавалі. У Варонічы трэба было занесці малако. Масла аддасі – грошы палучыш – налог заплаціш. Калатуху варылі. Шчавельнік вялікі кацёл варылі і елі, і галодныя хадзілі. (Полацкі р-н)[14] (FAPDU, 9).

[10] Girsa (bot.), Bromus secalinus, a perennial herb of the grass family, a seed weed that infests rye crops; used as a forage crop for feeding livestock.

[11] After the war, we were starving, it was difficult to live. We would put down stakes. They gave us some bread. What kind of bread was it? Girsa. On workdays, well, we worked like oxen.

[12] Mother came home, we were five hungry mouths, I was the smallest, and she put on a cracked handle head and cried, she brought half a pood of girsa.

[13] On work days, we put down stakes. We got one hundred grams of girsa. It was similar to rye, but it was so light, there was nothing inside, yet we ground it anyway.

[14] Egg, sour cream, butter and all on taxes. Everything was taken to Polatsk and sold. Or we gave them butter. In Varonichi, it was necessary to give milk. You gave them butter – you got money

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> З кожным годам накладалі і накладалі.. 9000 налогу, а саду ў нас – дзве яблыні… але ж мама прадавала парасят і гэты налог выплаціла. У 1949 г. тожа выплацілі гэта, а ў акцябрэ ўжо ў калхоз. (Глыбоцкі р-н)[15] (FAPDU, 15).

In the conditions of insufficient wages, the household economy became the main source of life support for the family of collective farm peasants. The peasants had to defend their right to personal farming in the fight against the collective farm system, often sparked by a conflict over the size of the 'personal estate' (Sovetskoe gosudarstvo, p. 151). In the first post-war years, there was an inaccurate accounting of land and part of the land fund was independently distributed among the peasants, who did not want to return it to the collective farm fund, as they actually survived at its expense. The clarification and measurement of plots of land began after the decision of the Council of Ministers and the Central Comittee of BCP (b) 'On Measures of Liquidating the Violations of the Charter of the Agricultural Artel in Kolkhozy' of September 19, 1946. At the beginning of 1947, 202,243 cases of 'seizure' of public lands in the amount of 21,572 hectares were recorded in the country, of which 20,505 hectares were returned to collective farms (Gìstoryâ Belarusì, 2011, p. 79). The documents of the Polatsk regional Prosecutor's office show that the following years saw many violations of the law on the land-use. In 1948, 6412 cases of unauthorised seizure of land with an area of 921 hectares were registered in the region, in 1949 – one case regarding an area of 162 hectares, whereas in the first half of 1950 – 733 cases regarding an area of 83 hectares (ZSA, 964, 1, 59, 161). At the same time, there were 55 people held criminally responsible for violating the agricultural Charter in 1949 and 72 of them in the first half of 1950 (ZSA, 964, 1, 59, 162). In a number of collective farms of Vetrynsky, Dryssensky, Polatsk, Ushatsky districts, several farmers had homestead lands of 0.70 to 0.90 hectares at the established rate of 0.30 hectares (ZSA, 686, 1, 118, 25). Household management, however, required hard work in the amount of the total working day of the collective farmer. Taking into account the demographic component, it was carried out mainly by women, who spent 4–6 times more time performing farm work than men (Verbickaâ, p. 67). Given the lack of financial resources to remunerate farmers for their work on the state farms, which could guarantee a certain level of welfare, peasant farmers sought to minimise labour engagement in the farm. To feed the family, some peasants were employed in other jobs, engaged in the construction of housing, livestock and cultural and administrative facilities. This, in turn, led to the fact that collective farmers did not work the required minimum of workdays. In 1946, only at the collective farms of the Polatsk region, 5676 collective farmers did not work

– you would have to pay the tax. We cooked kalatucha omelettes. We cooked a big pot of sorrel soup and ate it and still went hungry. (Polatsk district).

[15] The tax increased with every year… 9000 roubles, and our whole garden was mere two apple trees... but my mother sold the piglets and we manager to pay the tax. We paid it in 1949, too, and in October we were already in the collective farm. (Glybotsky district).

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the required minimum: 5312 from the eastern areas and 364 from the western areas, 2287 of whom were able-bodied collective farmers and 3389 teenagers below the age of 16 (ZSA, 964, 2, 30, 204). The respondents mentioned a case where the administration of the collective farms allowed one able-bodied family member to leave the farm for a couple of months to earn money after the main seasonal works were over, taking into account the difficulty of his situation. This was one of the actual strategies of the post-war period and had its own specifics in the region examined. Oral history records indicate that the residents from the destroyed eastern regions of Northern Belarus emigrated to the western regions for work purposes.

> У мяне папа ў 45-ым вярнуўся ранены. Тады гэтыя васточнікі і хадзілі, гэтымі гадамі. Да, да, да, с торбамі. Каму дзе што рабілі, і служылі, і жалі, і ўсё на свеце. (Глыбоцкі р-н)[16] (FAPDU, 12).

Most of adults performed various seasonal works, while children were mostly engaged in grazing. The respondents mentioned that they worked mainly for food in the first years after liberation. Very significant are the memories of Vera Kirylavna from the Verkhnyadvinsk district, where she tells the story of her mother's journey to Western Belarus for work in order to save her children from hunger.

> А тады жабраваць мама хадзіла ў Храброва (на той старане, за Дзьвіной). Увозьмець саначкі, мяшкі і паехала, а ваўкі тады ж хадзілі. Паехала, і адзін дзень нет, і другі. А яна там у бабкі была, трое рабятак, мужыка яе забілі там, у западнай, там дзярэўня, мама мая асталася і папрасіла тая бабка, каб дроў парэзаць і насочкаў рабяткам навязаць, ну, мама мая гэта ўмела. А як, кажа толькі ў хату прыйшла: ну, садзісь, кажа, я цябе пакармлю... наліла мне капусты, а як ёсць мяса так і капуста разумная. А я ж хацела естачкі, я схваціла, кажыць, а яна гарачая, абпаліла ва рту, есць хачу, а рот увесь падняўся. Мама ёй там усё справіла: насочкаў навязала, ў хаце прыбрала, і баньку вытапілі…Ну, і мама кажыць: гляджу, насыпаець адзін мяшок зярна, падагнала каня, другі, трэцці…[17] (FAPDU, 4).

[16] My dad returned in 1945, wounded. At that time, these Easterners came. Yes, yes, yes, with bags. They served whoever they could, they reaped, and did all kinds of things. (Glybotsky district).

[17] And then my mother travelled to Khrabrova (on the other side of the Dvina river) to beg. She took the sleigh, bags and left. There were wolves at that place. She did not come back the first day and the second. There was a woman with three kids there, her husband had been killed there, in the West, in the village. My mother stayed at that woman and asked her to let her cut firewood and to knit socks for her children, Ah, my mother was skillful. As soon as she came home, she told me to sit down, she said she would feed me... she poured me some cabbage soup, and when there is meat, then cabbage is good. And I wanted to eat it so much, I grabbed and it was hot so it burned my mouth. My mother did everything for her: knitted socks, cleaned the house, and heated the bathhouse... Well, Mama said, look, put one bag of grain on the horse, then the second, the third

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The residents of the western regions also searched for temporary jobs, but rather in Latvia or Lithuania, and worked mainly for money. This specific feature had a solid socio-economic implication, which confirms the existence of strong ties between the Western lands, Latvia and Lithuania, formed as a result of labour migration while this region was still part of Poland.

> Мая мама служыла ў Латвіі, пасля вайны ў хазяіна, зямлі ў яго было многа, скаціна. Кароў там мама даіла. У нас пяцёра дзяцей, а коні ў нас здыхалі. А які хазяін без каня? Так вот паедзе, заробіць грошы. Два разы ездзіла, кідала малых рабят і ехала. Сезон работала: кароў даіла, бульбу капала. (Пастаўскі р-н)[18] (FAPDU, 8).

Remembering the post-war years, villagers noted that the private household allowed them to achieve a certain degree of economic autonomy. It provided food and raw materials.

> Хлеб быў свой дамашні, булкі пяклі. Сыры дзелалі з тварагу, масла. Халадзец, свіней жа то гадавалі, авец гадавалі. (Глыбоцкі р-н)[19] (FAPDU, 12).

Along with grains, flax played an important role in the structure of crops. It was a return to homespun clothing and homemade shoes (FAPDU, 7). Some of the products and services produced by households were consumed by the family, and some were distributed through social channels. The respondents stressed that it was necessary to use some cost minimisation strategies in the post-war period:

> Былі свае каровы. У каждага хазяіна карова свая была. Авечкі былі, свінні былі. Сваімі абхадзіліся. Вот што. На базары можа каму нада было дык хадзілі, куплялі, но, бальшынство абхадзіліся сваім. (Мёрскі р-н)[20] (FAPDU, 2).

Speaking about the relative stabilisation of the post-war life, the respondents, especially those from the eastern regions, focused notably on such significant events as the appearance of a cow in the household. It was considered as a special indicator of well-being. At the same time, it was quite problematic to maintain cattle in the post-war period, especially within the framework of the collective farm system, when the

[18] My mother served in Latvia after the war, at an owner who had a lot of land and cattle. My mother milked the cows there. She had five children and our horses were dying. And what kind of owner does not have a horse? So she would go and earn money. She went twice, left her small children. She worked the whole season: milked cows and dug potatoes. (Pastavsky district).

[19] We made homemade bread and baked buns. We used cottage cheese to make cheeses and butter. We made jam, raised pigs and sheep. (Glybotsky district).

[20] There were private cows. Each owner had his own cow. There were sheep and pigs. We managed everything ourselves. That's it. If it was necessary, we went to the market to buy some things, but mostly we managed to sustain ourselves. (Miyorsky district).

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collective farmer was obliged to mow hay for the collective farm herd first, and only then for himself.

> Вясной мама саламяную крышу зніміць, карове дасць, а ўвосень накрыець[21] (PEC, 2011, p. 255).
>
> Мы жылі ў Юсціянаве, чуем, што трактар – вязуць салому, мы з братам вяровачкі ў руку, кароўку нечым карміць, і ад Барсукоў да Юсціянава сабіралі саломку гэту. Добрыя людзі былі, што другі раз возьмуць і нагой спіхнуць. Во што робілася. Радасці было, хоць саломкай кароўку накормім[22] (FAPDU, 4).

Such crafts as hunting, fishing, gathering, depending on the localisation of the settlement, were an additional and important source of life support in the post-war years. Considering that the region had a large number of water bodies, fishing became an additional resource. Not only were fish included in the family diet, but they were also considered as a possible source of income. The respondents mentioned that the sale of fish was a very profitable business in the post-war city under the rationing system. Snezhyn Stanislava Grygoryevna remembered that her father usually sold the fish he was carrying before even reaching the market (FAPDU, 19). Children of different ages were mainly engaged in gathering, adults – to a lesser extent, as they worked either in the collective farm or in their own household. The products gathered were included in the daily diet and were also a source of income. Children often sold berries and mushrooms in the nearest town or city to buy necessary things, for school for example, or for some delicacy (FAPDU, 3, 4). The respondents who had lived in the western regions of Northern Belarus noted that gathering became more common after the liquidation of individual farms:

> Гэта ўжо после сталі іх прынімаць. Ну капейку можа якую мне.. я ж ужо помню хадзіла мне можа гадоў было дзесяць.(А колькі сабралі?) Ну, сабіралі сколькі каму хто сколька можаць. Вядро хто насабіраець, ну. А як не было дык і эта ж капейка, ну. Тыя ж капейкі, ну, куды, у хатуж, дамоў. Нада ж было нешта купіць, надаж было нешта і надзець, і абуць. (Глыбоцкі р-н)[23] (FAPDU, 5).

[21] In spring, my mother would remove the straw from the roof and give it to the cow, and in autumn we would cover the roof back.

[22] We lived in Yustsiyanava. We heard that a tractor was carrying straw. My brother and I took the ropes we used to lead the cow and collected this straw from Barsuki to Yustsiyanava. There were good people who sometimes helped and pushed the straw by foot. We were happy that we could feed the cow with straw at least.

[23] They began to take me along. Well, there may be some kopeks for me... I remember going with them, I was about ten years old. (How much did you collect?) Well, everyone collected as much as they could. Even a whole bucket. And if there was not much, it was still a kopek. We needed that at home. To buy something, to put something on. (Gluboksky district).

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In order to survive, the peasants were forced to turn more often to illegal ways of life support, one of which was home brewing. In the conditions of the post-war supply rationing, trade deficits and the poverty among the rural population during the period under review, illicit distilling became a sought-after 'currency' in illegal barter operations, the means of payment for small household services, a real source of earning money necessary for self-maintenance, restoration of own household, and for tax purposes (Sumko, 2018, p. 134). With its wide scope and mass character in the post-war years, it can be thus characterised as an illegal trade in the manufacture of alcohol for sale or for personal needs (depending on the period). At the same time, the documents of the Polatsk Prosecutor's office show that the production of homemade alcohol had the greatest scope in the western regions of the district, where there were still individual farms with sufficient resources for the production of homemade vodka. Recalling the first post-war decade, the respondents from Verkhnyadvinsky district noted that they mainly brought homemade samogon from across the Dvina river, which was the border with Poland until 1939. For instance, they would cross the river and agree about the finished product to celebrate a wedding or wake:

> Я помню, што мама, калі бацька яе памёр, запрагла каня, бацька яе тут ляжыць дома, а нада ж самагонкі – стол. І вот яна павезла туда (у Западную – аўт.) зярно і прывязла самагонкі. Ну, можа яна знала да каго ехаць. Адзін аднаму можа падскажуць. Яны прадавалі самагонку. Дагаварваліся на сколькі зерна дадуць самагонку. Я помню, што первая куцця была ячменная. Як паміралі, первы стол ставяць куццю. Мама паехала і прывязла тады ячменню, а затым паехала за самагонкай. (Вярхнедзвінскі раён)[24] (FAPDU, 4).

The illegal nature of making samogon integrated the village collective to a certain extent, as more people were interested in producing the forbidden alcohol. The 'common secret' created a clear contrast between the village community and the local authorities, and allowed them to successfully avoid punishment. However, this situation was typical of relatively small villages, remote from large settlements or large towns, where the composition of the population basically did not change.

> Тайна, ноччы. За кладбішчам, у Каркальцы, там куст быў і вада на месце, там балота было. Ну, дак самагонку гналі і хату строілі. (Не сдалі ніхто?) – Не здалі. Там уся дзярэўня гнала. 22 хаты было і дзярэўня настаяшчая была. Дзярэўня ў лясу была.

[24] I remember that my mother harnessed a horse when her father died. Her father was here at home, and it is necessary to put moonshine on the table. So she took some grain there (to the West) and brought moonshine back with her. Well, maybe she knew who to go to. People would tell each other. They sold moonshine. They agreed on how much grain could be traded for it. I remember that the first kutya was from barley. When they died, you would put kutya first on the table. My mother went and brought barley and then she went for moonshine. (Verkhnyadvinsky district).

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> Цяпер можа і здалі. (А чаму тады не здавалі?) Тады людзі былі гаратныя, але яны дружныя былі. А цяпер яны пазвярэлі ўжо ад багатства[25] (FAPDU, 20).

Field expedition materials indicate that villagers produced artisanal vodka both for personal consumption and for additional income. However, in the first post-war years, the pragmatics of illicit distilling was mainly commercial in nature, as it was an effective way to 'convert' agricultural products into 'real money'. It should be noted that only the production and storage of moonshine for sale was a criminal offence until April 1948. By the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR 'On Criminal Liability for the Production and Sale of Samogon' of April 7, 1948, more stringent sanctions were imposed on producers of moonshine, including other purposes than trade. In the Polatsk region in 1948, 673 persons were brought to trial for illicit distilling and sale of illegal alcohol (ZSA, 964, 2, 49, 7). But the fear of punishment gave way to pragmatic considerations. The majority of respondents are women whose memories regard the period of the second half of the 1920s–1930s. Due to their age, they recalled the experience of their parents, so the actual price of samogon in the first post-war years cannot be determined on that basis. However, the protocols of the prosecution indicate that it was possible to earn at least 25 roubles for a bottle of samogon on the black market in 1948. It was a very profitable business, especially for a peasant who worked for no remuneration on the collective farm.

The respondents recall that samogon was a kind of currency in barter operations both within rural society and between the town and the village. Considering the fact that samogon was prohibited, the exchange took place secretly, in markets where eggs, milk and other products were sold. In the first post-war years, sellers and buyers of moonshine specified and agreed on the time and place of sale in advance:

> Яна ж ідзе на базар. Таргуець. Яны і папросяць: „Ты мне ў такую та хату прынясі, дамоў". Гналі з бульбы, зярно прарошчвалі. Баня стаяла пад ракой, там і гналі. Мама насіла ў Дрысу. Занясець у хату знаёмым жыдам бутылку ці дзве і на мыла там, на соль, на табаку, запалкі. Гэтага не было ў магазінах. Плацілі тым жа, што яна прасіла. (Верхнядзвінскі р-н)[26] (FAPDU, 19).

[25] The secret of the night. There was a swamp behind the cemetery, in Karakaltsy, where there were bushes and water in the town. Well, so they made moonshine and built a house. (No one reported it?) – No one reported. The whole village brewed it. There were 22 houses, a true village, located in a forest park. Today they would probably report it. (And why did they not report back then?) At that time, people were poor, but they were friendly. And now they are already furious with wealth.

[26] She would go to the market to trade. They would ask her to bring it to a particular house. We took potatoes and sprouted grain. The bathhouse was by the river and they brewed it there. Mom brought it to Drysa. She would bring a bottle or two into the house of a Jew family she knew, and traded it for soap, for salt, for tobacco, for matches. You wouldn't get that in the stores. They paid with what she asked for. (Verkhnyadvinsky district).

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In the period under review, samogon was used in various aspects of life. In respect of the household economy, mead was used to feed domestic animals. 'Pervach' was a folk medicine ingredient for preparing various medicinal tinctures. It was also used during the most important rites of the calendar and family cycle. In the absence of money, samogon was included in the 'food set' which allowed the peasant to solve a variety of life problems in the form of bribes.

A large part of farm produce was for sale: 'Well, so... we would not eat it but rather sell it' (Verkhnyadvinsk district) (FAPDU, 20). The peculiarity of post-war trade and exchange operations was that Belarusian peasants were deprived of such intermediaries as Jewish traders, who actually monopolised this sphere in the interwar period, so they had to build their own trade and exchange model. It should be emphasised that the nature of the exchange and trade operations in the first years after the liberation was rather specific in that the collective-farm peasants had no money due to the workday payment system. In their recollections, the villagers highlighted that it was almost impossible to obtain 'real money' for work in the post-war collective farm, and the actual amounts were extremely meagre. In the absence of cash, there were exchange transactions between the villages and it was considered as a trade operation by the peasants. The subject of exchange were usually deficient things that could not be produced within the household (salt, nails, sewing machines).

> Кароўку мы за машынку купілі тады. А машынка ў цёткі асталася з вайны за жалезнай дарогай. Яна наша была. І кароўку купілі. Як выязджалі ў парцізаны ўсё ж не саберыш. Ну, вот цётка забрала нашу машынку. А тыды, як фронт прыйшоў, яна аддала нам машынку. (*А куды вы яе прадалі?)* – У Западную прадалі. Завязлі, з сястрой вазілі на санках зімой і купілі кароўку. (*А вы зналі каму прадаваць?)* – Гэта ўжо дагаварыўшыся былі раньше, сразу ня можна было. А тады карову хадзілі купляць. Тут жа гола-гола было. Мы там, дзе прадалі машынку, там і карову купілі. (Так вы можа абмянялі на карову? Вы ім – машынку, а яны вам – карову?) – Да, да. (Верхнядзвінскі р-н)[27] (FAPDU, 20).

The main points of sale of farm products were cities, large towns, or railway stations, where the population received wages in cash. The population of the eastern regions brought eggs, milk, and fish for sale, and then purchased bread for the money they had obtained. The main sellers of grain and grain products were the residents of

[27] We bought a cow for a sewing machine then. And my aunt on the other side of the railroad still had a machine from the war. It was ours. And we got a cow. Still, we could not take everything along when we left with the guerrillas. My aunt took our sewing machine. And then, as soon as the frontline came, she gave us the machine back. (Where did you sell it?) – In the West. We carried it on a sleigh with my sister in winter and bought a cow for it. (And how did you know whom to sell it to?) – We agreed in advance, it was not immediately possible. And then we went to buy the cow. We bought a cow where we sold the machine. (So you exchanged the machine for a cow?) – Yes, yes. (Verkhnyadvinsky district).

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the western regions. They, in turn, could afford to purchase things that exceeded the necessary minimum:

> Я хадзіла з мамай на рынак у Дрысу. Большынство былі з Западнай, большынство былі крэпкія. Нашых мала было. Нашы яшчэ не такія былі, а тыя... Прадавалі масла, тварог, смятану, яйцо. Зберуць за нядзелю, ну і пруць тады. У каго конь свой быў, ён пасадзіць паню сваю, яна прадасць.. Яны аднаасобнікі былі. *(А што яны куплялі?)*. – Усё на свеце. Трапкі куплялі. Яны хлеб не куплялі. У іх хлеб свой быў. (*А мама, што за денежкі пакупала?*) – А хлеб, а мука. (Верхнядвінскі р-н)[28] (FAPDU, 4).

This specific remuneration system for rural population in different regions of the region in question substantiated its intra-ethnic division into 'Westerners' and 'Easterners' and supplemented it with a wide range of mutual socio-cultural stereotypes ('rich Westerners' vs 'Eastern collective farmers – tarbeshniki'), formulated in the memoirs of the post-war years.

> Ну, западонцы, ну хто прадаець, хто муку прывязе, хто хлеб прадаець. вот ідзеш на базар, а яны едуць на калёсах там удваіх, утраіх, ідзеш і сам сабой гаворыш, во каб ты не вярнуўся. Яны ж на калёсах ужо не пяшком хадзілі, гэта мы калхознікі даўней хадзілі пяшком, які нас чорт вазіў нам нечым было, я сама ў Бабынічы малако насіла вось з Лесава аж у Бабынічы сем кілометраў, на каромысла па два чалавекі і насілі малако здавалі пакуль калхоз каня не зажыў. Хадзілі у Западную мы после вайны, дык туда пойдзем дык яны нас ганялі там: „Тарбэшнікі прыйшлі". Бо яны багацеі, немцы ж не чапалі там. (*Так яны васточнікаў не любілі?*). Не любілі, очень не любілі[29] (FAPDU, 17).
>
> Тады яны нас звалі *тарбэчнікі*. За то, што мы хадзілі туды, у іх пабіраліся[30] (FAPDU, 11). Пасля вайны вот гэту, пасля зімы, значыць, картошку, ну, есці нечага было, так хадзілі гэтую картошку сабіралі, мёрзлую такую, гнілую. Вясной. Дык нас ганялі, мол, што

[28] I went with my mother to the market in Dryssa. Most people there were from the West, most were rich. There were few of us. We were still not like them, and they... They sold butter, cottage cheese, sour cream, or eggs. We would collect our products for a week and bring them there. Who had his own horse, he would let his wife go to the market and sell... They were individual farmers. (What did they buy?). – Everything in the world. Clothes. They didn't buy bread. They had their own bread. (And what did your mother buy with that money?) – Bread and flour. (Verkhnyadvinsk district).

[29] Well, Westerners – some of them would sell, some would bring flour, some would sell bread. You went to the market and see them on a cart there together, three of them. You would go and speak to yourself, what if you did not return. They drove carts, they did not go on foot. Only us, the farmers, would go on foot in the old days, and it was hell. We didn't have anything to ride, I carried milk to Babynichy from Lesava, which is about seven kilometres long. Two of us carried the milk on the yoke until the farm horse was healthy again. After the war, we went to the West, too. 'Tarbeshniki came,' they would say. After all, they were rich, the Germans did not touch anything there. (They didn't like the Easterners?) –Oh, no, they disliked us very much.

[30] Then they called us tarbeshniki because we went there to beg.

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> вы агароды топчыце. А яны то жылі нармальна. Патаму што там усе былі едіналічнікі, калхозаў не было. Так вот мы ўсё звалі „западонцы”[31] (FAPDU, 16).

The life support issue in areas dominated by individual farms was complicated in the late 1940s, when the collectivisation process accelerated. The massive offensive of the party-state structures, the actions of punitive bodies, the increase in taxes, as well as the dispossession allowed for including the bulk of the peasantry of the western regions into the collective-state farm system over a short period of time. The number of individual farms plummeted. By March 1950, Braslavsky and Dokshytsky districts had almost completed the collectivisation process. In 1955, there were no more individual farms in the Vitebsk region (the Polotsk region was abolished in 1954).

> Каліктывізацыя… Забралі ў мужыка ўсё. Забралі прыгожых каней, запраж, плугі, бароны, машыны малатарныя. Аставілі мужыку толькі хату з 4 вугламі з куском зямлі, за якую не зналі якіх падаткаў яшчэ не плаціць. (Браслаўскі р-н)[32] (FAPDU, 14).
>
> Аб’едзянілі ў калхозы ўжо пасля вайны. Я з арміі прыйшоў у 47-м гаду, і гэта, камісар партызанскай брыгады быў первым сакратаром райкомапартыі ў Докшыцах. А мой швагер у Бірулях быў старшыня. Дык аб’едзянялісь, я з арміі прыйшоў. Не хацелі ў калхоз ідці. Кароў паадбіралі. Усё сцягнулі: і бароны, і плугі, і ўсё. Я толькі з арміі, а я з вечарыны шоў, пацягнуў свае калёсы. З Докшыц якпрыехаў Зінкевіч, стукніць кулаком аб стол, так і гэтак, усіх на Сібір сашлём, хто ў калхоз не пойдзець. І пайшлі ўсе. Гэта ў 49-м гаду. А астальныя дзярэўні не пайшлі, потым пайшлі, у 50-м гаду. (Докшыцкі р-н)[33] (PEZ, p. 263–264).

A comparison of the mental perception of collective farms in the post-war period in the available materials of ethnographic expeditions of Polatsk University clearly reveal two concepts of attitude towards collective farms. The first was characteristic of the eastern, collectivised areas before the war, the population of which generally did

[31] After the war, after the winter, there was nothing to eat, so we went to pick up these potatoes, frozen, rotten potatoes. In spring. And we were chased away. They said that we were trampling their gardens. And they lived normally. Because they were all individual farmers, there were no collective farms. So we all called them ‘zapadentsy’. (Westerners).

[32] Collectivization... They took everything from the man. They took beautiful horses, harnesses, plows, harrows, threshing machines. The peasant was left with only a house with 4 corners, and a piece of land for which he would still have to pay such-and-such taxes. (Braslav district).

[33] I joined the collective farms after the war. I came back in 1947. The commissar of the partisan brigade was the first Secretary of the Communist party in Dokshytsy. And my brother-in-law in Birulyah was the Chairman. So I joined it when I came back from the army. They did not want to go to the farm. They took away the cows. They stole everything: harrows, plows, everything. I was just out of the army, and I went there in the evening, took my carts. Zinkevich came from Dokshytsy, banged his fist on the table, and threatened that all those who would not go and work in the collective farm would go to Siberia. And so all of them joined the farm. That was in 1949. And the rest of the villages did not go at first, but eventually they joined it too, in 1950. (Dokshytsky district).

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not oppose the post-war restoration of their own and collective farms. The 'Easterners' fixed their parallel development on the upward trend: 'I bought a cow, so I am a little bit richer' (FAPDU, 4). Regardless whether it is by legal or illegal means, there was a slow build-up of wealth. The population of the western regions, where the farms of the former individual peasants were in a relatively prosperous state which they managed to maintain even during the war, exhibited quite a different attitude as the farms were in a decline upon the collectivisation. The 'Westerners' show a negative vector of development, because the formation of collective farms was associated with the deterioration of living standards and deepening of the crisis.

Oral history records and archival documents indicate various manifestations of informal practices and mechanisms for correcting the official norms regarding the permissible number of animals in personal livestock or other violations of the agricultural Charter, which were sometimes accompanied by attempts to use the collective farm resources for personal purposes. Materials on the expeditions indicate an interesting regularity with regard to the period considered: villagers from the eastern regions, who knew the collective farm system quite well, managed to avoid it to a certain extent, whereas the population of western regions, who had just started to adjust to the new reality, did not have such experience. The prevalence of theft posed a complex issue for the collective farm administration, which was obliged to examine all incidents, yet was aware that many of the workers depended on stolen food to survive poor harvests with collective farm being unable to provide them with payment (Kashtalian, 2016, p.65). Taking into account the catastrophic situation of the people, the administration sometimes turned a blind eye to such incidents:

> (А да таго, да кароўкі, як жылі?) – Мама з фермы насіла. Бралі ўсе малачко. Быў очань харошы прадседацель. І кажыць, ну, я знаю, што вы берацё, ну, глядзіце, каб большае начальства вас не устрэціла. Многа не бярыце, па літру бярыце. Але ж кто там па літру браў? (Верхнядвінскі р-н)[34] (FAPDU, 4).
>
> У іншых выпадках маглі здаць за скрадзены кілаграм бульбы або збожжа (Глыбоцкі р-н)[35] (FAPDU, 12).

On June 4, 1947, a decree was issued on the criminal responsibility for the theft of socialist property. The majority of cases were small, initiated in collective farms during harvest. In comparison with the second quarter (as the responsibility for theft was implemented under the law of August 7, 1932), 2003 persons more were held criminally responsible in the third quarter of 1947 on collective farms in the BSSR

[34] (And before that, before the cow, how did you live?) – Mother would bring something from the farm. Everyone took some milk. He was a very good Chairman. 'Well, I know you steal,' he would say, 'just make sure the big authorities don't see you. Don't take much, take a litre.' But who would take just a litre? (Verkhnyadvinsk district).

[35] In other cases, militia could arrest a person for stealing a kilogram of potatoes or grain.

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(Kaštalân, 2007). The increase in theft of collective farm property was recorded from the second half of the 1940s until early 1950s. The execution of the punitive policy was reflected in people's memories:

> Было ў нас у Мошніцы тры жэншчыны пасадзіўшы. Десяць гадоў ім далі. Яны, ну, некалі такая машына была, што малаціла зерне і яны не зерне ж укралі, а толькі што падмялі каля машыны гэтай, ну от і па дзесяць гадоў далі. Яны адседзілі па тры гады і затым амністыя. (Расонскі р-н)[36] (FAPDU, 10).
>
> Суділі за каласок. З Барадуліна была баба і яй 10 гадоў далі за каласкі. За ракой схадзіла (р. Свольна) калскоў набрала. Не адну пасадзілі. (*А як іх лавілі? Хтосьці данасіў?) – Яны па полю еділі. Спецыяльна чалавек быў, які ездзіў па палях* (Верхнядвінскі р-н)[37] (FAPDU, 20).

After Stalin's death, the search for ways to improve the condition of the peasant population began: the revision of the tax policy in favour of the peasants, the write-off of arrears for the past years, the increase in payment for the workday. This allowed for relative stability and prosperity of private households of peasants. It also figuratively marked the end of the post-war reconstruction in the 'зажыліся', 'закасмацелі' (became richer) folk categories. In the minds of the peasants, the improvement of their situation is identified with the face of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers G. Malenkov:

> (А калі сталі ўжо плаціць зарплату ў калхозе?) – Як памёр Сталін, я ж табе кажу, Маленкоў, Сталін памёр, а Маленкоў сразу аб'явіў, што ўцюгі будуць, ня будзець вугалей, гэты сабіраць, самавар во гэты, што будзець пад электрыку, і вот тады нам, зробілі дзеравянныя стаўбы, а тады давай во гэтыя стаўбы правадзіць[38] (FAPDU, 21).

Thus, in the period of post-war reconstruction, the life support system of the Belarusian village had its own peculiarities. It can be traced very clearly on the example of Northern Belarus, which consisted of regions with different types of socio-economic structure and, accordingly, different levels of well-being of the population. The res-

[36] It was in Moshitsa that three women were imprisoned. They were given ten years. They, well, there was such a machine that threshed grain and they did not steal grain, they only swept around the machine, and still got ten years. They served three years and then came the amnesty.

[37] Judged for a spikelet. In Baradulina there was a woman and she got 10 years for spikelets. She went down to the (Svolna) river and gathered some spikelets. (And how were they caught? Did someone inform on them?) – They drove around the field. There was a special person walking on the fields (Verkhnyadvinsk R-n).

[38] (And when did they begin to pay a salary in the collective farm?) – As Stalin died, I tell you, it was Malenkov. Stalin died, and Malenkov immediately announced that there would be irons, there would be no coal to collect the samovar, that there would be electricity, and then they made wooden pillars for us, and then made us distribute electricity on these pillars.

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toration of agriculture in the eastern regions of Northern Belarus ensued on the basis of the collective and state farm system. In the western regions in the post-war period individual farms dominated, which provided the main volumes of agricultural production. This specific remuneration system for rural population in different regions of the considered region substantiated the intra-ethnic division into 'Westerners' and 'Easterners' and supplemented it with a wide range of mutual socio-cultural stereotypes, formulated in the memoirs of the post-war years.

Archival materials and oral history records indicate that the main part of the peasants' livelihood in the post-war period, both in eastern and western regions, was their own homestead. Much as it was the main source of life support for individual farmers, however, the collective-farm peasants were forced to combine the household work with their obligation to work on the collective farm, for which they were not paid adequately. The lack of material interest of the collective-farm peasantry led to the fact that some peasants tried to minimise their labour participation in the collective economy as much as possible.

In the conditions of the post-war reconstruction, atypical forms of economic and trade activity of peasants are to be found. Beside traditional occupations, there were also illegal forms of trade entrepreneurship, often of a criminal nature. These, however, allowed people to realise their entrepreneurial potential to a certain extent, reduce the shortage of products and essential goods, and survive.

Important additional sources of life support included various crafts of both legal (gathering, fishing) and criminal (illicit distilling, theft of collective farm property) character. At that time, home brewing was a wide-scale phenomenon, massively prevalent among the rural population of the region. It was an effective way to 'convert' agricultural products into 'real money' and, as a result, provided the peasants with necessary financial means for restoring their own economy.

Translated into English by Marharyta Svirydava

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