

*Oleh BAZHAN**, *Mykola MYKHAILUTSA***

**THE “ROMANIAN OPERATION” OF THE NKVD OF THE
UKRAINIAN SSR IN ODESA OBLAST IN 1937-1938:
TECHNOLOGY, TARGET GROUPS, SCOPE**

Abstract: The article examines the repressive campaign of the Great Terror period in Odesa Oblast of the Ukrainian SSR that went down in history under the name of the “Romanian operation” of the NKVD. Based on the documents from the Branch State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine, the features and intensity of the terrorist actions in the south of Ukraine are highlighted, the technology of “extraction” of the non-national element from the Soviet society, and the nature of the accusations against citizens of foreign origin are analyzed.

Keywords: “Romanian operation”, NKVD, Stalin’s totalitarian regime, Odesa Oblast

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Introduction

The problem of researching Stalin’s tyranny, in particular the study of the scope and specific directions of political terror, as a decisive and significant manifestation of the communist dictatorship in the USSR and in the republics that were part of this totalitarian state, is not only of scientific interest but also, importantly, requires a memorable rehabilitation of post-Soviet civil societies. This necessitates their undeniable post-traumatic historical radical therapy, as noted by Ya. Hrytsak, by settling scores with communism through the deconstruction of previous history and the construction of their own historical identity and consciousness.¹

Stalin’s policy of terror, especially in the context of national politics, serves as a paradigm for understanding the epistemological essence, ideology, and domestic and foreign policy of the modern Putin’s regime in Russia, which has been observed

* Department of the History of State Terror of the Soviet Era of the Institute of History of Ukraine, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2328-4512> (bazhancio@ukr.net).

** Maritime Institute of Humanities, Odesa National Maritime University; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4896-0580> (Michailuca@ukr.net).

¹ *Розмови про Україну. Ярослав Грицак – Іза Хруслінська*. Переклад з польської Богдани Матіяш. Київ : ДУХ І ЛІТЕРА, 2018. С. 11.

in the form of Putinism for the past 20 years.² The latter, according to A. Piontkovskyi is asserted exclusively “on the basis of hatred of a certain ethnic group”, while at the same time “throwing overboard the flag of democratic freedoms and human rights.” Nowadays the same process is taking place in Putin’s Russia as it was during Stalinism. While Nazi ideology was banned and condemned by law in the post-war world, Communist (Stalinist) ideology escaped punishment by the International Tribunal. Consequently, its roots grew into modern Russia, having created a threat to the world order. Ukrainian human rights defender and dissident M. Marynovych, in a conversation with the Director of the Harvard Ukrainian Institute S. Plokhii, offered a very characteristic feature of past and present political models, “Putin’s regime is the reincarnation of Stalin, who still remains a great hero for Putin and a lot of Russians.”³ Therefore, the investigation of crimes against humanity, the repressive actions of Stalin’s special services in various forms and manifestations, and the determination of the scale, locations, social groups and individuals remains an extremely urgent task for Ukrainian, Romanian, German, Polish, Bulgarian, and Moldovan researchers, since the repressive policy in the USSR was aimed at all people of the communist empire, to one degree or another.

Research analyzes

The national aspects of political repression during Stalin’s Great Purge (1937-1938), which contemporary researchers in Ukraine rightfully consider the most extensive one in terms of political killings in the USSR, have been the subject of numerous works by domestic and foreign historians. Since the beginning of Ukraine’s state independence restoration in 1991 and throughout the 1990s and 2000s, previously closed funds and an archival documentary base were made public. At the same time, a number of journalistic works on those arrested and convicted for “anti-Soviet activities” members of the so-called “Polish”, “German”, “Hungarian”, “Bulgarian”, “Greek”, and other “counter-revolutionary” organizations, fabricated by the NKVD (Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del) as political processes, have been published.

The implementation of Soviet security agencies’ (NKVD, NKGB (Narodnyy Komissariat Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti) special directives for the elimination of the so-called “foreign national element” is examined in scientific works by A.

² Дем’яненко Б., Дем’яненко В. «Путінізм» як різновид авторитарного політичного режиму. https://ipend.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/demianko_putinism.pdf

³ Дем’яненко Б., Дем’яненко В. «Путінізм» як різновид авторитарного політичного режиму. https://ipend.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/demianko_putinism.pdf

Aisfeld, I. Kashu, S. Kokin, O. Rublov, V. Nikolskyi, N. Potapova, M. Junge, and others.⁴

The specifics of political persecution of citizens in the territories of Odeshchyna (within its administrative boundaries) during 1937-1938, taking into account the nationality of the repressed, were partially addressed by the authorial team of the scientific documentary series of books “Rehabilitated by History.”⁵ This is also explored in individual historical publicistic articles published in several separate volumes of the regional publication “Odesa Martyrology.”⁶ However, the mechanisms and methods of implementing the so-called “Romanian Operation” by the NKVD in Southern Ukraine in the second half of the 1930s remain entirely unstudied, prompting our research interest.

The problem statements

The study of the repression of the Romanian population in Southern Ukraine, particularly in Odeshchina, is essential for understanding the policy of the Stalinist regime in the Romanian border region. The communist regime viewed this region as a platform for expanding ideological influence and territorial annexation. The use of exclusive sources from central Ukrainian archival institutions, particularly the documents from the Branch State Archive of the Security Service of

⁴ *Великий терор в Україні. Німецька операція 1937-1938 років* / Упоряд. Альфред Айсфельд, Наталя Сердюк. Київ: К.І.С., 2018; Нікольський В. М. *Репресивна діяльність органів державної безпеки СРСР в Україні (кінець 1920-х – 1950-ті рр.)*. Історико-статистичне дослідження. Монографія. Донецьк: Вид-во ДонНУ, 2003; Рубльов О., Репринцев В. Репресії проти поляків в Україні у 30-ті роки. *З архівів ВУЧК-ГПУ-НКВД-КГБ*. 1995. №1/2: 116-156; *Великий терор в Україні. «Куркульська операція» 1937–1938 рр.* У 2-х частинах / Упорядн.: С. Кокін, М. Юнге; Редакційна колегія: О. Довбня, М. Юнге, Р. Біннер, С. Кокін, Б. Бонвеч, І. Смирнова, Г. Бордюгов. Частина 1. Київ: Видавничий дім «Києво-Могилянська академія», 2010. *Справа «Польської Організації Військової» в Україні. 1920–1938 рр.* / Упорядники: С.А. Кокін, Р.Ю. Подкур, О.С. Рубльов. Київ : Головна редколегія науково-документальної серії книг «Реабілітовані історією», 2011.

⁵ *Реабілітовані історією. Одеська область: Книга перша* / Упорядники Л. В. Ковальчук, Е. П. Петровський. Одеса: АТ «ПЛАСКЕ», 2010.

⁶ Малинова Г. Дело антисоветской немецкой организации преподавателей Одесского педагогического института. *Одеських мартиролог : Данні про репресованих Одеси і Одеської області за роки радянської влади*. Том 1 / Укладач: Л.О. Ковальчук, Г.О. Разумов. Історико-меморіальне видання. Одеса, ОКФА, 1997. С. 710-720; Бринош І., Петровський Е. Заручники системи: справа контрреволюційної організації болгарських політемігрантів. *Одеських мартиролог : Данні про репресованих Одеси і Одеської області за роки радянської влади*. Том 3 / Укладач: Л.О. Ковальчук, Г.О. Разумов. Історико-меморіальне видання. Одеса, ОКФА, 2005. С. 847-869.

Ukraine, enables the achievement of the research goal – to reconstruct the structure of punitive bodies on the ground, exemplified by the Odesa Branch of the NKVD. This includes determining the numerical composition, direct initiators, and executors of repressive actions, and individuals who became effective puppets in implementing Stalin's tyranny. The research task also attempts to identify and select representative sources that most accurately reflect the studied processes in the region in 1937-1938. The analysis of sources aims to illustrate their features, properties, and ideological orientation. The choice of a quantitative method in working with historical documents was crucial to reveal statistical trends and patterns in mass social phenomena, such as the volumes of planned arrests, the number of repressions, and consequently, convictions, death sentences, etc. An essential aspect of the research is the rehabilitation of the honest names of citizens whose presumption of innocence was violated, and whose rights and freedoms were unjustifiably crushed by the Soviet punitive authorities.

Statement of the basic material

The mass national operations during the Great Terror were entrusted to the 3rd Department of the UDB (Upravleniye Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti) UNKVD in Odesa Oblast, created in January 1937. At the end of the spring of 1937 it consisted of the 1st Department – the Western one; the 2nd Department – the Romanian one with a foreign group; the 3rd Department – the Polish and Ukrainian counter-revolution and espionage one; the 4th Department – the Eastern European and Eastern one; the 5th Department – the white counter-revolution one with a foreign group; the 6th Department – heavy industry; the 7th Department – light industry; the 8th Department – agriculture; the 9th Department – the informational one. According to the staff list, the “Romanian” Department had 5 staff members: one chief, 3 operational officers, and 1 assistant operational officer.⁷

The position of the head of the department remained vacant for two months after its creation. In January-February 1937, the deputy head, a senior lieutenant of State Security Hryhorii Yosyfovych Hryshyn (Shenkman) temporarily led the department. At the end of February 1937, a senior lieutenant of State Security Volodymyr Lvovych Pysariev-Fuks was appointed head of the counterintelligence department of the UDB UNKVD in Odesa Oblast. The department was later headed by a senior lieutenant of State Security Hryhorii Yosyfovych Hryshyn (Shenkman) from August 8, 1937, to November 1937, followed by a senior lieutenant of State Security

⁷ Галузевий державний архів Служби безпеки України (ГДА СБУ), ф. 9, спр. 7, арк. 284-285.

Oleksandr Hryhorovych Schnaider from November 1937 to June 1938. From the end of June 1938 to April 1939, Yosyf Yukhymovych Rybakov served as the temporary chief of the 3rd Department of the UDB of the NKVD in Odesa Oblast.⁸

Restrictive and coercive measures aimed at neutralizing the “terrorist, subversive, and espionage activities of Romanian intelligence” in Odeschchyna began long before the official start of the “Romanian operation” of the NKVD (last decade of August 1937) on the territories of the Ukrainian SSR. Arrests of “foreign nationalists”, “foreign nationals”, unreliable individuals, and target groups determined by the specifics of the punitive action of Soviet State Security authorities spread in the early summer of 1937.

In the first decade of June 1937, Bernhard Matviyovych Vinkler, a native of the Bessarabian town of Sarata, was taken into custody. The Chekists accused him of “counter-revolutionary fascist work among German colonists”, allegedly at the behest of Romanian intelligence. On June 8, 1937, Ihnatii Dmytrovych Zaveriukha, a participant in the uprising on the battleship “Prince Potemkin Tavrycheskii” that took place in June 1905, was taken to the Central Detention House located on the premises of the criminal investigation in Odesa. For some time, he had been in Romania to avoid tsarist repression. In 1926, a sailor-emigrant volunteered to cooperate with the foreign department of the Joint State Political Directorate of the USSR. According to the version of Stalin’s special services, I.D. Zaveriukha was recruited by Siguranța when he worked abroad and continued espionage activities in favour of monarchical Romania after returning to the Soviet Union in 1930. On August 21, 1937, the criminal case of I.D. Zaveriukha was heard at a meeting of the Troika at the NKVD in Odesa Oblast. Following the decision of the extrajudicial body, endowed with unlimited power and authority in the USSR, the suspect was shot on August 25, 1937.

As a result of overt and covert counterintelligence measures by the employees of Odesa Oblast Directorate of the NKVD in late June 1937, the so-called residency of Romanian intelligence, led by the former deputy head of the Ukrainian Canning Trust Zihmund Borysovykh Svichnykar (codenamed “Traitor”), was “neutralized.” According to the investigation, Svichnykar “created and led a wide spy network. Here are the names of the agents who were in contact with him: SUVOROV-Hroyser⁹, who arrived from Bessarabia in 1921 and, on the order of Siguranța, infiltrated the NKVD of the Moldavian ASSR, recently worked at the

⁸ Золотарьов В., Бажан О. Керівний склад УНКВС Одеської області доби ежовщини. *Південний захід. Одесика. Історико-краєзнавчий альманах*. Одеса, 19 (2015): 133-134.

⁹ Oleksandr Mykhailovych Suvorov (Hroyser) was arrested by the NKVD on October 16, 1937. By the decision of the NKVD of the USSR and the Prosecutor of the USSR dated February 11, 1938, he was sentenced to execution.

UNKVD in Voronezh; DEMARE, who arrived from Bessarabia in 1917, a former NKVD employee, currently the director of a factory in Voronezh; RAPOPORT¹⁰, who arrived from Romania in 1926, infiltrated the NKVD, and recently served as a translator of the 25th Border Patrol /was arrested, confessed/; NEIMAN¹¹, who arrived in 1926 from Romania, infiltrated the NKVD, worked on the line of Foreign Department (Inostranny Otdel – INO), recently the head of the 3rd department of the UNKVD of Odessa.”¹²

On August 2, 1937, a political emigrant and native of Bendery, Borys Yukhymovych Yakovliev-Levit, as well as the head of the tailor’s workshop of Odesa Oblast Police, Avrum Khaimovych Tolpin, were detained (the Case of “Emigrants”) for active collaboration with the secret information service at the General Staff of the Romanian Army. A few days later, State Security officers arrested Edhar-Avhust Heorhiiovych Heydok-Hammler, a former foreign department agent of the NKVD and a native of Tauragė (Lithuania), in South Palmira on suspicion of collaboration with Siguranța and German intelligence (the “Keller’s Case”). At the same time, Izabella-Mariia Brusniakova, a native of Kyshynev, was placed in the NKVD pre-trial detention centre and accused of providing her own apartment in Odesa for regular visits by Romanian intelligence (the “Yavka” Case).

The proposal to extend the distribution of the operational order of the NKVD of the USSR No. 00485 “On the operation to repress the members of the Polish Military Organization (POW – Polska Organizacja Wojskowa) in the USSR” dated August 11, 1937, on the Moldavian ASSR regarding “Romanian spies” belongs to the People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs of the Ukrainian SSR Izrail Leplevskyi. While in Tiraspol in order to coordinate the actions of Moldovan Chekists during the implementation of the “Romanian” punitive action, I. Leplevskyi sent an encrypted telegram to Moscow at 9:07 p.m. on August 6, 1937, addressed to the People’s Commissar for State Security M. Yezhov, with the following content:

“The state of the Chekist work of the NKVD in the Moldavian ASSR is extremely difficult – the almost complete absence of cases. Three people confessed

¹⁰ The document mentions Abram Semenovych Rapoport, a native of Orhiiv (now part of Moldova), who illegally arrived from Romania to the Soviet Union in 1926. He was accused of passing secret materials about the structure of the NKVD of the Moldavian ASSR to Romanian intelligence.

¹¹ It also refers to State Security Lieutenant Oleksandr Solomonovych Neyman, who, from January 1937, served as the deputy head of the counterintelligence department of the NKVD Administration in Odesa Oblast. Later, he held the position of deputy head of the 3rd Department of the UDB of the NKVD of the Moldavian ASSR. In June 1937, he was dismissed and transferred to the reserve by the appointment of the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR. In July 1937, he faced repression. He committed suicide in prison.

¹² ГДА СБУ, ф. 16, оп.1, спр. 117, арк. 284.

to Romanian espionage, 23 people were arrested on nationalist grounds, of whom 6 people confessed, 4 “right-wing group” people were arrested, and 6 Trotskyists.

A check of records provides the following picture: 1) There are about 2,000 defectors who are mainly in the border zone. 2) There are 450 former intelligence officers and former foreign agents who have settled in the border zone since 1935. 3) There are 60 Romanian political emigrants.

The figures presented do not fully reflect the actual situation. Today, I am planning an operation involving three hundred people. I will organize an investigative apparatus on the spot. I consider it necessary to raise the question of extending your order on the Polish operation to the Moldavian ASSR regarding Romanian defectors, emigrants, intelligence officers, former foreign agents, and NKVD employees.”¹³

At Lubyanka, I. Leplevskyi’s advice was carefully listened to. In a record-breaking short time, a corresponding order of the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) of the USSR was issued stating that the operational order of the NKVD of the USSR No. 00485 became a “model” for making arrests and delivering investigative decisions in the “Romanian” operation.

Soon, the “Romanian” punitive action, started within the Moldavian ASSR, extended to the entire territory of the Ukrainian SSR and then covered other areas of the Soviet Union. It is likely that M. Yezhov’s directive on the “Romanian operation” was sent on August 17, 1937, to all heads of Republican NKVD, Oblast and territorial UNKVD.

It is known that in the Ukrainian SSR, the “work to expose and defeat Romanian espionage” in a republican format began on August 20, 1937. Punitive measures gained a wide scale mainly in the border regions of the Ukrainian SSR – the Moldavian ASSR, Odesa, and Vinnytsia Oblast. The major efforts of the security forces were focused on identifying Siguranța agents – among the defectors from Bessarabia and Romania; within the ranks of the Romanian Communist Party; in the apparatus of the Foreign Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (Bolsheviks); among the personnel of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, the Romanian diplomatic mission in Moscow; among the employees of the party and Soviet apparatus in the Moldavian ASSR, the intelligence department of the Kyiv Military District.

As a basis for searches for the “hostile element” in Odesa Oblast, the Chekists chose:

a) the “Bessarabian colony” (a term used in departmental documents by the NKVD employees to denote political emigrants, defectors, and settlers from

¹³ ГДА СБУ, ф. 16, оп. 1, спр. 131, арк. 36.

Bessarabia, former participants in the Tatarbunary uprising of 1924), which numbered 7-8 thousand people in the region;

b) residents of Odesa Oblast who had contacts with Romanian citizens and were connected with residents of Bessarabia by family ties.¹⁴

During June-August 1937, as part of the “Romanian” operation in Odesa Oblast, 410 individuals were incarcerated (political emigrants – 48, defectors – 220, former employees of the foreign department of the GPU-NKVD and the intelligence department of the Red Army – 60, counter-revolutionary nationalist elements – 82 among them).

In the course of operational and search actions in the oblast, 7 residencies were “exposed”, and 16 agents of Romanian intelligence were arrested. These agents had infiltrated defence and canning industry enterprises, objects of the power system and the publishing sector, rooted in the ranks of the Communist Party of Ukraine, the organs of the NKVD and border service. According to the investigators of the NKVD, the activities of Romanian intelligence residencies were aimed at obtaining information about the political and economic situation in Southern Ukraine, the mood of the local population, information about the location and condition of military units in Odesa garrison, the structure and deployment of border units, the operation of military and industrial enterprises, and the support of emigration mood among representatives of the Romanian national minority and migrants from Bessarabia.

Due to overt and covert counterintelligence measures taken by Odesa Chekists, the “nationalist spy organization” led by the former corporal of the Romanian gendarmerie Paladii was liquidated. As a result, 11 people came under investigation, mainly defectors from Romania and deserters from the Romanian army, who were involved in the agent case codenamed “Zabuti” (the Case of “Forgotten”).

Later, the employees of the 3rd Department of the UNKVD in Odesa Oblast “neutralized a disguised Romanian agent” – a police officer Solomon Zelmanovych Imas. The native of Bendery was accused of close “contacts” with Siguranța in 1920 during his imprisonment in the Kyshyniv prison for revolutionary activities.¹⁵

In the early autumn of 1937, Soviet special services uncovered the “intentions” of the former participants in the White movement, the emigrants from Romania – Volodymyr and Pavlo Malomuzhevy, and sea captains – Mykola Malomuzhev and Kyyrlo Popov. According to the Chekists’ scenario, the task of anti-Soviet elements was to unite “White Guard cadres in Odesa for organizing sabotage in the defence industry.” This agent case was given the codename “Dyversiiia” (“Sabotage”).

¹⁴ ГДА СБУ, ф. 16, оп.1, спр.117, арк. 70.

¹⁵ Там само, спр. 152, арк. 113.

As of the last decade of September 1937, the number of individuals detained within the framework of the “Romanian” operation by the NKVD in Odesa reached 518 people. However, the Odesa Chekists were not planning to stop at what they had achieved. In the “Memorandum on the Results of Operational and Investigative Work in the Struggle Against Romanian Espionage and Nationalist Counter-Revolution,” sent to the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR at the end of September 1937, Colonel Mykola Fedorov, the head of the NKVD in Odesa Oblast, and a senior lieutenant of State Security Hryhorii Hryshyn, the head of the 3rd Department of the State Political Directorate (UDV) of the NKVD in Odesa region, emphasized the need to accumulate efforts aimed at the “final defeat of all espionage and counter-revolutionary activities of Romanian intelligence organs” and committed to conducting additional arrests among political emigrants, defectors, former employees of the intelligence apparatus of the Kyiv Military District, and the foreign department of the NKVD totalling 1,000 people.¹⁶

Repressions along the so-called Romanian line intensified sharply after the implementation of the operational order No. 00693 by the NKVD on October 23, 1937, which provided for the imprisonment of all defectors without taking into account the circumstances of crossing the border to enter the territory of the Soviet Union.¹⁷ The 26th Odesa Maritime Border Detachment of the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR was involved in the “Romanian” operation. During the summer and autumn of 1937, border guards unravelled a “Romanian sabotage organization” at the Odesa water supply station “Dnister” and arrested 170 individuals on the same “Romanian” charges.¹⁸

The achievements of the Road Transport Department of the Main Directorate of State Security of the NKVD of Odesa Railway proved to be rather modest. In the second half of 1937, the employees detained two agents of Romanian intelligence. The Chekists credited themselves with the arrest of Moisei Stepanovych Shevchenko, a resident of the village of Korytne in the Slobodzeyskyi district of Moldavian ASSR at the Rozdilna railway station, who, along with his father in 1932, was “illegally transporting agents of Romanian intelligence to Romania.”¹⁹

Following the instructions from Lubyanka (headquarters of the NKVD USSR in Moscow), employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Ukrainian SSR arrested 5,915 individuals for espionage in favour of Romania from June 1, 1937, to January 15, 1938. “Informants”, “saboteurs”, “terrorists”, and “participants in counter-revolutionary formations” were seized from various sectors: “from the coal

¹⁶ Там само, арк. 71.

¹⁷ *История сталинского ГУЛАГА*. Москва, (2004), том 1, с. 284-285.

¹⁸ ГДА СБУ, ф. 16, оп. 1, спр.181, арк. 64.

¹⁹ Там само, спр. 217, арк. 81.

industry, metallurgy, sugar, and other industrial sectors – 583 individuals; defense industry – 41; transport and communication – 244; party apparatus – 21; Soviet authorities and economic institutions – 1,009; rural areas – 3,185.”

Stalinist security services systematized all the arrested individuals by national identity, dividing them as follows: Romanians – 218; Moldovans – 265; “Ukrainians from Bessarabia” – 1,016; “local Ukrainians” – 1,174; “Jews from Bessarabia” – 159; “local Jews” – 175.²⁰

The forced cleansing of the “counter-revolutionary element” among Romanians also took place within the borders of Odesa Oblast. The counterintelligence department of the UNKVD in Odesa Oblast “discovered” the so-called Siguranța agents in practically all branches of production, including maritime transport. The “spy nest” was neutralized in the Black Sea Fleet Administration. In mid-December 1937, the Chekists “tracked down” a Romanian spy in the Odesa Port Administration. He turned out to be the head of the electrical engineering department of the port, Leonid Mykhailovych Lanhoda, who, after a brief investigation in early February 1938, was sentenced to execution by an extrajudicial body (the “Dvoika”).²¹

In total, during the development of the so-called Romanian operation by the UNKVD in Odesa Oblast from June 1937 to January 10, 1938, 790 individuals²² were arrested. Among them, 350 were sentenced to the first category, and another 225 individuals were sentenced to the second category.²³

At the end of January 1938, Izrail Leplevskyi was removed from the position of People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs of the Ukrainian SSR. He was replaced by Oleksandr Uspenskyi. The new head of the punitive department demanded increased operational work and an increase in the number of repressed individuals, including in-line operations, from regional Chekists. The results were not long in coming. If by February 26, 1938 there were 81 individuals in the prison cells of Odesa under investigation within the framework of the “Romanian operation”, by March 9, 1938, there were already 153 prisoners; by March 21, 1938, there were 211 detainees.²⁴ The representatives of various professions and positions were among the detainees – a roofer from the Odesa plant named after Lenin A.I. Sudler (as a keeper of a secret flat); a railway carriage master of the 9th wagon section of the Odesa-Holovna railway station H.I. Biehlietsov (he was accused of allegedly providing information about political mood among workers at the Odesa railway junction to Romanian

²⁰ Там само, спр. 239, арк. 41.

²¹ Там само, ф. 16, оп. 31, спр. 35, арк. 22-34

²² Там само, ф. 42, спр. 33, арк. 69-71.

²³ Там само, ф. 16, оп. 1, спр. 239, арк. 50.

²⁴ Там само, арк. 94, 106, 130.

intelligence); the head of the warehouse of the Odesa railway A.I. Leibelman (he compiled intelligence about the location of strategic objects in Odeschchyna); a nurse from the Odesa Tuberculosis Dispensary B.H. Chokla (she visited illegal gatherings of Jewish youth in the Oblast centre at the direction of the secret police in Romania).²⁵

However, by the end of spring 1938, the intensity of arrests “along the Romanian line” somewhat decreased in Odesa. In total, from January to June 1938, accusations of collaboration with the Romanian special services were brought against 247 individuals by the Directorate of the NKVD.²⁶

Presenting new statistics on the discovery of foreign intelligence networks on the territory of the Republic, People’s Commissar O. Uspenskyi urged his subordinates, first and foremost, “to deliver a targeted blow to the organizing cadres of counter-revolutionary underground.” To please the head of the Republican department, in the first decade of July 1938, as part of the Romanian punitive action, employees of the 3rd counterintelligence department of the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR, led by Uspenskyi, would fabricate a case against the underground “Moldavian National Council.” The primary purpose of the fictional espionage-sabotage and rebel underground was laid out in the report note of O. Uspenskyi to the People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR M. Yezhov on July 8, 1938:

“In recent years, the agency of Romanian intelligence in Ukraine, operating under the guise of “societies of Bessarabians”, at the direction of the Romanian General Staff, has created the nationalist rebel units. Mainly, these rebel groups were formed in the territory of the Moldavian ASSR and the border area of the Vinnytsia and Odesa Oblast, where the Moldavian population live and many Bessarabians reside. The work on creating rebel formations in Moldova and the Transnistrian strip of the Odesa and Vinnytsia Oblast was carried out by the existing “Moldavian National Council” ... The activity of this “Council” was aimed at detaching the Moldavian ASSR and the Transnistrian strip of the Odesa and Vinnytsia Oblast from the Soviet Union and annexing them to Bessarabia.”²⁷

Regarding the escalation of the repression dynamics and the proper approach to the implementation of the directives regarding Polish and Romanian linear operations, People’s Commissar O. Uspenskyi discussed this in a postal telegram to the heads of the Oblast border control departments of Ukraine, “To reveal the ways of work of Polish and Romanian intelligence on our territory, I propose to carefully interrogate detainees who are defectors, intelligence agents about the activities of

²⁵ Там само, спр. 256, арк. 208, 210.

²⁶ *Реабілітовані історією. Одеська область: Книга перша* / Упорядники Л.В. Ковальчук, Е.П. Петровський (Одеса: АТ «ПЛАСКЕ», 2010). С. 247.

²⁷ Там само, спр. 241, арк. 311-320.

intelligence, border guards, and police down to the smallest details ... It is necessary to reveal in detail the techniques, means, methods of preparing and transferring intelligence to our territory. During the investigation, it is rather important to obtain the addresses of the conspiratorial apartments, the characteristics of the spies, their signs, ranks and positions, and comprehensive information on police informers, agents, couriers, contacts and carriers. Record in detail the appearances, secret addresses, passwords, assignments, and routes of each defector spy and thoroughly work out information about their relatives and other connections abroad and in the USSR. In this direction, interrogate all detained defectors, and from now on, with a separate protocol, carefully find out methods of work of foreign special services inside the country and abroad... Provide daily reports to the 3rd Department of the 1st Directorate of the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR on the revealed data about the work of intelligence agencies, and report immediately on especially significant facts obtained by you.”²⁸

The persecution of residents of Odesa Oblast accused of spying in favour of monarchical Romania continued until the publication of the resolution of the RNK (Council of People's Commissars; Sovet Narodnykh Komissarov) of the USSR “On arrests, prosecutorial supervision, and investigation” dated November 17, 1938, which put an end to the Great Terror. The repressive onslaught began to subside gradually.

Conclusion

The Stalinist punitive machine during the years of the Great Terror targeted representatives of various nationalities by removing tens of thousands of their conscious members from Ukrainian society. Repressions against “national” representatives, their ideology, methods, and scope found factual confirmation in primary documents from the archives of special services. In total, during the implementation of the Romanian operation in 1937-1938 in Odesa by the NKVD, over 900 individuals were subjected to the roller of the repressive machine.²⁹ In fabricated political processes traced in archival investigative cases, individuals were typically charged with espionage for Romania, Zionism, Ukrainian nationalism, and so on. Verdicts were issued by commissions of the NKVD and the Prosecutor of the USSR (the Dvoika), the Special Council at the NKVD of the USSR, and the Special

²⁸ Там само, спр. 311, арк. 386-387.

²⁹ *Реабілітовані історією. Одеська область: Книга перша* / Упорядники Л.В. Ковальчук, Е.П. Петровський (Одеса, АТ «ПІАСКЕ», 2010). С. 87.

Troika. Repressions against Romanians followed the patterns of the Polish punitive action.

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