

MILITARY COLLABORATIONISM OF SOVIET CITIZENS AND PECULIARITIES OF ITS MANIFESTATIONS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1939–1945)

ВІЙСЬКОВИЙ КОЛАБОРАЦІОНІЗМ РАДЯНСЬКИХ ГРОМАДЯН ТА ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ЙОГО ПРОЯВІВ В РОКИ ДРУГОЇ СВІТОВОЇ ВІЙНИ (1939–1945 РР.)

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The peculiarities of manifestations of the military collaborationism of the citizens of the peoples of the former Soviet Union during the Second World War have been studied. The main reasons and motives that influenced their participation in the military units of the Wehrmacht, SS troops and police of Nazi Germany have been analyzed.

Keywords: Second World War, Third Reich, collaborationism, occupation regime, totalitarian regime.

Досліджуються особливості проявів військового колабораціонізму громадян народів колишнього Радянського Союзу в роки Другої світової війни. Проаналізовано основні причини та мотиви, які впливали на їхню участь у військових формуваннях Вермахту, військ СС та поліції нацистської Німеччини.

Ключові слова: Друга світова війна, Третій рейх, колабораціонізм, окупаційний режим, тоталітарний режим.

(стаття друкується мовою оригіналу)

Collaborationism, i.e., the cooperation of population of the states captured by the aggressor with the occupation regime, is a common phenomenon in the world history. The period of the Second World War was no exception – neither of the occupied European countries could escape cooperation with Nazi Germany. The very term «collaborationism» (French collaborationisme – to cooperate) originates from the meeting between A. Hitler and French Marshal A. Petain in Montoire on October 24, 1940. During the conversation about German–French relations, A. Hitler used the word «collaboration», which later his translator P. Schmidt repeated in the sense of cooperation [30, p. 274–276]. Subsequently, the principle of the relationship of Nazi Germany with the governments that co-operated with Germany was officially called this term. Foreign citizens in national military formations of the German Wehrmacht, SS troops, and the police also began to be called collaborationists.

The political elite of the Third Reich during the Second World War tried to attract various peoples to implement its aggressive plans: 1) the state, which, through authoritative authoritarian government circles,

cooperated with the Nazis and provided Germany with ideological, military and logistic support; 2) historically stateless peoples or those deprived of state independence, who, through cooperation with the German authorities, sought to change their political status. Among the peoples of the USSR, A. Hitler and his entourage focused on: 1) the anti-Bolshevik reformist forces that tried to play the role of consolidating force in the struggle against the Stalinist USSR (Russian General A. Vlasov and his supporters); 2) stateless autonomists, which saw the priority task in achieving territorial and national autonomy (Cossack, Crimean Tatar, Kalmyk, Caucasian and other activists); 3) anti-communist forces who sought to restore the state independence that they lost after the occupation of their lands by the Bolshevik Russia in the 1920s–1940s (Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Ukrainian, Georgian, Armenian, Byelorussian, etc.) [6, p. 155–156].

Unlike Western European states, there was no classical collaborationism on the territory of the former USSR. Representatives of the aforementioned nationalities, who collaborated with or served German invaders, did not betray their states according to domestic historians, because they did not actually exist [20, p. 86–87]. Military cooperation on the side of Nazi Germany of peoples, whose territories after the collapse of the Russian Empire were occupied by the Bolsheviks and forcibly included in the USSR, was much more complicated and confusing than the collaborationism of Western European peoples. The reasons that impelled the representatives of the peoples of the USSR to begin a struggle against the Bolshevik regime, which became the main motive for collaborationism, matured through decades and long before the Second World War. It is worth noting the activities of the Bolsheviks led by V. Lenin during the First World War took the form of an open collaborationism with Kaiser Germany. Having received funding from the German General Staff – about 60 million marks, they carried out the coup d'état in Petrograd in October 1917 and brought Russia out of war [29, p. 216–242].

Strengthening of the totalitarian Stalinist regime, bloody repressions, became a prelude to the culmination – the large-scale collaborationism of Soviet citizens during the Second World War. The American historian T. Snyder states: « Soviet terror at that time was not only superior to the Nazis on a scale – it was far more deadly ... In 1937–1938, 267 people were sentenced to death in Germany, while in the Soviet Union 378,326 only during one campaign to fight the kulaks. Again, given the difference in the number of people, the risk that a citizen of the USSR will perish during the campaign against the kulaks was 700 times higher than the risk that a German citizen would be sentenced to death in Nazi Germany» [25, p. 98]. Soviet propagandistic stereotypes about the «monolithic unity of the working people» in the early 1940s mistook the wish for the reality. Famous Ukrainian historian M. V. Koval notes that at the beginning of the «fatal forties» an invisible gulf totally deepened the split of the people into the members of

the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), non-party members, the «Soviet patriots» and «enemies of the people», into the «upper» and «lower» classes. In essence, the civil war, launched in the country in 1918, although in other forms – «armed» or «cold», continued all the time [17, p. 247].

One of the least well-known examples of collaborationism in the USSR is the cooperation of former Soviet citizens with Japan. A group of Soviet citizens, who escaped from the Siberian prison at the end of the 1930s, was included in the Japanese army (Asano Detachment) and took part in battles of Lake Khasan from July 29 to August 11, 1938. During the military action, the head of the NKVD administration of the Far Eastern area G. Liushkov, who, because of the danger of being repressed, fled from the USSR to Manchukuo on June 13, 1938, granted great aid to the Japanese side. He handed over all the secrets of Soviet intelligence in Manchuria and Japan to the Japanese command, which allowed the Japanese authorities to quickly defeat the Soviet intelligence network, which had been establishing for a long time [33, p. 127–138].

Another attempt to create collaborationist military units from Soviet citizens (Russian People's Army) was made during the Soviet-Finnish War of 1939–1940. Representatives of the emigrant Russian All-Military Union and B. Bazhanov, a former functionary from the secretariat of J. Stalin, took part in it [26, p. 281–282]. In the beginning of January 1940 B. Bazhanov met with Marshall C. G. Mannerheim, who allowed him to work among the captives of the Soviet Red Army and commanders. B. Bazhanov's suggestions were as follows: 1) to create the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) among the Soviet prisoners of war, and subordinate the troops of the Russian People's Army (RPA) under its chairmanship; 2) to form in parallel the units of the RPA, which should take place in the lines, first with propagandist, and later military purposes; 3) to use the RPA units on the northern shore of Lake Ladoga in order to cut the railway Leningrad – Murmansk [4, p. 34–35]. In February 1940, B. Bazhanov during the conversations with the captives (5,615 people) revealed 550 Red Army soldiers and commanders who enrolled in the RNA on February 12. 250 – 300 people among them were sent to the front in March 1940. In a single military encounter with the Soviet troops, they captured about 200 Red Army soldiers – defectors [22, p. 185].

In general, the political basis of manifestations of the large-scale collaborationism of Soviet citizens during the war was the totalitarian regime, which created the conditions because of which many of its opponents appeared among the citizens of the USSR. The famous Russian writer O. Solzhenitsyn expressed it most fully: «And now ... you need about those who before 1941 had nothing to dream of as to take the weapons and beat the red commissars, the chekists, the collectivists... These people survived 24 years of communist happiness first-hand, and already in 1941 knew what nobody else knew in the world: that there was no more evil and bloody and, at the same time, crafty and insidious regime on the whole planet and throughout history than the Bolshevikist... Now it's time

to give weapons to these people in hands...» [14, p. 186–187]. These citizens were mainly appointed by the occupation authorities as burgomasters, elders, police chiefs, complemented auxiliary police, which worked closely with the German Wehrmacht, the Sicherheitsdienst (SD), and the secret state police (Gestapo). Domestic researchers note that in a short period of time Ukrainian auxiliary police exceeded even the Soviet infamous punitive bodies by its number, branching and activities [17, p. 127].

In summer of 1941, the population created police units to ensure maintenance of order often on its own initiative, but before the arrival of the German troops. The total number of auxiliary police in the occupation zone until July 1, 1942 amounted to 165,128 people, and in early 1943, it reached 330 thousand, and the guard police, gendarmerie and fire security involved 253 thousand people [8, p. 102–103]. Already in June 1941, the German authorities began to involve Soviet prisoners of war in the creation of the camp police. The Regulations on Camp Police, approved by the General Staff of the Wehrmacht on September 8, 1941, stipulated: «Police in camps and large working teams shall be created from the trusted Soviet prisoners of war that will be used to bring order and maintain discipline» [31, p. 254].

In the course of the Second World War, German troops captured about 10% of the territory of the USSR: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltic republics, and partially or completely 12 territories and regions of the RSFSR became occupied. 40% of the population of the USSR (80 million people) remained behind the enemy lines. The population of the occupied territories faced, first of all, the problem of survival and search for livelihoods. According to the researchers, about 22 million Soviet citizens (including 20.8 million peasants) were forced to cooperate with the German occupation authorities in various spheres [19, p. 236–237]. Moreover, the Stalinist regime granted right to the Soviet people in the occupied territory only in two cases: 1) to go to the woods and lead a partisan struggle against the Germans; 2) die from starvation, or be shot and tortured by occupants. Everything that did not fit into the official Soviet rules was considered a betrayal and cooperation with the enemy.

Military collaborationism had different dimensions and did not necessarily implied solidarity with the ideology and practice of fascism. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between forced and voluntary collaborationism, the extent and nature of cooperation with the enemy. Part of Soviet citizens did it with a desire to be enriched, others simply for the sake of saving their lives, and third to achieve political goals that had nothing to do with the Nazi regime. Declaring themselves enemies of the Stalinist regime and turning over to Nazi Germany, the vast majority of collaborators did not set themselves a goal of harming their people. Almost none of the Soviet collaborators were convinced national socialists – the ideas of National Socialism for Soviet citizens were mostly unattractive. They relied primarily on the military power of the Third Reich, believing that such an alliance would be temporary.

Russian political and military collaborationism, by its nature, differed from the collaborationism of other Soviet peoples. It was, first of all, focused on the struggle against the Stalinist regime, and for the peoples of the Baltic States, who lost their state independence before the German–Soviet war, the USSR became the number one enemy. According to researches, two important factors played a role in the collaborationism of the Ukrainians and the Belarusians: 1) on the one hand, the national state aspirations of certain political figures who hoped to create national states with the help of Germany; 2) On the other hand, relatively long German occupation of the territory of Ukraine and Belarus, when time forced even passive people to make a choice: join the guerrillas, try to adapt, or go to serve the occupants [10, p. 15].

One can agree with the assessment of Ukrainian collaborationism of the Ukrainian historian I. Patryliak, who believes that it can only be conditionally applied to Ukrainians. He describes Ukrainian collaborationism as a collaborative–like behavior, which developed as a consequence of the stateless existence of the Ukrainian people and was largely due to the moral disorientation of population, which was caused by the policy of the Soviet Bolsheviks and Nazis [20, p. 89]. The issue of collaborationism is closely linked to the moral and ethical criteria of assessments of actions and deeds of people in the extreme conditions of war and occupation. Many scholars, especially of the Soviet period and contemporary Russia, ignore the issue of whether the USSR and Stalinist totalitarian regime can be identified with the notion of «Motherland». It is known that the USSR was formed not only with violations of international legal rules regarding the expression of will of the population, but rather as a result of the occupation by the Bolshevik forces of the territory of the peoples of the former Russian Empire. For the millions of Soviet citizens living under the bloody Stalinist regime, the USSR has never been their state, just as most opponents of Bolshevism in the Soviet republics did not perceive them as their independent states. As noted by foreign researchers, the notion of collaborationism can only be used when it comes to the legitimate government of the state, elected through free expression of will by the majority of population of the country. Therefore, only collaborators of democratic states cooperating with Nazi Germany during the Second World War can be classified as collaborationists [1, p. 5–6].

Politicization of collaborationism and its moral and ethical criteria is closely linked with the artificial substitution of concepts by Soviet, some foreign, Russian and pro–Russian researchers. Some of them, despite the large–scale nature of the cooperation of the Soviet citizens with the occupants, and not taking into account the motives which they were guided by, call them exclusively «traitors to the Motherland». They emphasize that the German authorities, using military forces from Soviet citizens for their own purposes, did not intend to render state independence to their peoples, and therefore there is the reason to regard these forces as «Fascist accomplices». A distinct all–or–nothing thinking should be emphasized in

the estimates of collaborationism by contemporary Russian historians B. Kovalyev, M. Semiryaga et al. Using a large amount of archive materials, they try to prove in their works at all costs that hundreds of thousands of Soviet collaborators were typical traitors and criminals. Condemning the moral aspect of the cooperation of Soviet citizens with Nazi Germany, the Russian historian M. Semiryaga calls such collaborationism «a kind of fascism» and emphasizes that it cannot be justified in principle [15, p. 12, 366; 16; 23, p. 9, 473; 24].

The well–known German historian J. Hoffman holds here the opposite position, which denies the sweeping announcement of all Soviet collaborators, especially soldiers of the army of General A. Vlasov (Russian Liberation Army, RLA), military criminals and traitors to the Motherland [11]. Similar views in his works written on the basis of a large number of archive materials are also adhered to by Russian historians K. Aleksandrov, P. Krikunov, S. Drobyazko, et al. All of them treat the Soviet citizens who participated in hostilities on the enemy’s side differently. However, at the same time, they have a typical general and, in our opinion, proper conceptual approach, the essence of which is that the unprecedented by the scale cooperation of Soviet citizens with Nazi Germany was an objective consequence of the Stalinist socioeconomic system, which influenced the motives and deeds of various categories of people [2; 3; 12; 18].

The German military and police leadership in the regulatory documents clearly divided all forces of foreign citizens according to their functional purpose: 1) volunteers of auxiliary service – «Hiwi»; 2) auxiliary police to maintain order in the rear regions; 3) military units of foreign volunteer groups. Among them, the most numerous group was the volunteers of the auxiliary service – «Hiwi» (abbreviation of the word «Hilfswillige» – voluntary assistants). The first volunteers from the Soviet prisoners of war and residents of the occupied territories appeared in the German Wehrmacht almost from the very beginning of the war. During the war, about 5.7 million Red Army soldiers got into German captivity. About 4 million Soviet prisoners of war were released from captivity, mainly because of their consent to serve as «Hiwi» in the Wehrmacht [32, p. 233]. For most prisoners of war this was the only way to avoid dying of hunger behind the cold barbed wire of the camps, and for others, who experienced all the «benefits» of the Stalinist regime, it was a conscious choice, a desire to take revenge. The German chief of the department of «Foreign Armies East» (1942–1945) R. Gehlen emphasized in his memoirs that in the summer of 1942 there were from 700 thousand to 1 million such volunteers. Some of them participated in the battles of the German units against the Red Army [9, p. 81 to 82].

In total, according to relevant studies, about 2 million foreign citizens served in the German armed forces during the Second World War – most voluntarily, and the rest as the result of various conscription campaigns. Foreign researchers, such as J. Hoffman, refer to a figure from 400 to 600 thousand Soviet citizens, K. Aleksandrov – about one million Soviet

citizens in the military service of the Third Reich. A domestic scholar V. Shaikan calls the figure of 899 366 people (Ukrainians among them 205,810 people – 22.8% of the total number of military units from Soviet citizens) [11, p. 28; 4, p. 5; 28, p. 239]. The most likely number, according to the author, makes about 1, 2 million people: 1) Russians – 380 thousand; 2) Ukrainians – 250 thousand; 3) Byelorussians – 70 thousand; 4) Latvian – 150 thousand; 5) Estonians – 90 thousand; 6) Lithuanians – 50 thousand; 7) Azerbaijanis – 38 500; 8) Georgians – 25 thousand; 9) Armenians – 22 thousand; 10) the peoples of the North Caucasus – 28 thousand; 11) the peoples of Central Asia – 45 thousand; 12) the peoples of the Volga region and the Urals – 12 500; 13) Crimean Tatars – 10 thousand; 14) Kalmyks – 7 thousand [12, p. 523–524].

A large number of Soviet military servicemen went over to the German troops not so much because of their positive attitude towards Nazi Germany, as through the hostile perception of the Stalinist regime in the USSR. It should be stated that their surrender was largely influenced by Soviet propaganda, which during the period of August 1939 – June 1941 formed a positive image of Nazi Germany in the minds of many Soviet citizens as a progressive state that builds socialism (albeit national) and strives to create the «New Europe» on the principles of equal rights of European peoples. Therefore, soldiers, officers and generals of the German army noted with amazement in their memoirs that in 1941 the people of the USSR were extremely friendly with the German troops, and the Red Army soldiers and commanders voluntarily surrendered. Only later on, the Nazi practice of violence and terror would reveal to them their true essence. It is also known that the attitude of Stalin's leadership towards the Red Army soldiers who were captured was no less terrifying than the attitude of the Nazis towards them. Captivity in the USSR before the war was considered a grave war crime, a betrayal of Motherland, and was punished exclusively by the supreme penalty – a sentence to be shot with the confiscation of property [21, p. 74]. Therefore, it was no big deal for German recruiters from the Wehrmacht to persuade Soviet prisoners of war that the voluntary joining the «struggle against Jewish Bolshevism» was the only alternative to death.

As a result, only in the Russian Liberation Army served the former servicemen of the Red Army in the spring of 1945 – 9 generals and brigade commanders, 95 senior officers from major to colonel [24, p. 494]. There were even 2 Heroes of the Soviet Union among them – pilots senior lieutenant B. R. Antylevskiy and S. T. Bychkov, who were captured, voluntarily agreed to be enrolled in the Air Force of the RLA [7, p. 324–326]. While the mobilized to the Red Army citizens of Western Ukraine, Western Belarus, Bukovyna, and the Baltic States voluntarily passed on to the German Army, they were captured in central and eastern regions as a result of the talentless actions of the Soviet command. Despite the circumstances of captivity, J. Stalin declared the first and the second to be traitors of the Motherland. According to German historians

the fate of Soviet prisoners of war was substantially affected by the fact that before the German attack, the USSR had not finally ratified the Geneva Convention on the POWs of 1929 and did not recognize the Hague Convention of 1907 on international rules on land warfare. Nazi leadership of Germany made use of it to the full [32, p. 247]. It should be noted that the Declaration on the accession of the USSR to the Geneva Convention of 1929 was signed by M. Litvinov, the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the USSR on August 25, 1931, but not ratified by the Supreme Council of the USSR.

In August 1942, the Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht F. Halder approved the «Use of Local Auxiliary Forces in the East» instruction, which became the first collection of orders concerning Soviet volunteers from the occupied eastern territories in the German army. All «local auxiliary forces», according to the instructions, were divided into the following categories: 1) servicemen from representatives of the Turkic peoples and Cossacks (including the Crimean Tatars); 2) local security units from volunteers, who included the released from captivity Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Finns, Ukrainians, Belorussians and Volksdeutsche used to ensure order; 3) units from local volunteers and released prisoners of war to perform police functions; 4) «Hiwi» (stablemen, chefs, aidmen, ammunition bearers, sappers, etc.); 5) volunteers from local residents in the auxiliary service in the units of supply, engineer units of the German army [6, p. 262–263]. According to these orders, all released Soviet soldiers could be enlisted for service in the German army only after a two-month trial.

The German commandant's office had to decide on the issue of the number of «Hiwi» locally. All representatives of the «local auxiliary forces» took the oath of loyalty to the Führer A. Hitler. A number of incentives were envisaged for «eastern volunteers», in particular, remuneration, uniforms, rank insignia. «Hiwi» wore a white bandage on the left sleeve with the inscription «In the Service of the German Army» in German language as the rank insignia. The bandage, entitled «On the Service of the SS Troops», was issued to volunteers of the SS Military Forces. By mid-1942, in the ranks of divisions of the 6th Army of the Army Group Don there was a mixed German – Russian staff. In most of them, the number of servicemen from Soviet citizens reached 50%, while in others exceeded. The German command noted their bravery in the battles with the Red Army, especially at Stalingrad. At the same time, their presence at the front contributed to an increase in the number of defectors – Red Army soldiers [6, p. 266].

At the end of 1941 and during 1942, the main front line spread out to the territory of Russia and Belarus, and the Red Army was replenished mainly from the Russians, who became the largest national group of prisoners of war. During that period they included the biggest number of «eastern volunteers» in the ranks of the German troops. Thus, the 11th Army of Field Marshal E. von Manstein had 47,000 of «eastern volunteers – Hiwi» in the summer of 1942. In the 6th Army of F. Paulus, in the winter of 1941–1942,

there were 51,780 Russian auxiliary personnel and an anti-aircraft artillery division equipped with Ukrainians. Russian researchers argue that every fifth soldier of F. Paulus's army was Russian at Stalingrad [13]. According to the staff of the Wehrmacht Infantry Division established on October 2, 1943, the availability of 2005 volunteers for 10,708 German troops have been envisaged, representing about 15% of the total number of the division [27, p. 62].

Particularly contradictory are the assessments of collaborationism of national minorities living in the occupied territories of the Soviet republics. Describing the peculiarities of German policy towards the peoples of the Caucasus, for example, the American historian D. Armstrong points out the reasons that predetermined them: 1) Caucasus was seen as a springboard for the advancement of the Germans to the Middle East, and therefore the colonization of the region was not required; 2) the peoples of Caucasus were not Slavic, but were considered «Aryans»; 3) the Caucasus was the most distant from the Third Reich, and therefore could not become a place for settlement of the Germans; 4) the influence of Turkey and emigrant Caucasian politicians on A. Rosenberg in pursuing a more reasonable policy towards the Caucasus; 5) unlike other occupied regions of the USSR no civil occupation administration was established in the Caucasus [5, p. 214–215]. The German authorities used similar tactics in relation to the Crimean Tatars and other Muslim peoples who got under occupation.

In general, from the standpoint of historical science, it is practically impossible to precisely and unambiguously assess such a phenomenon as the collaborationism. It reflects a difficult for understanding dilemma of the Second World War, since the struggle had two contradictory aspects: two ideological systems competed among themselves in the eastern front: 1) Hitler's racist theory deprived him of anti-Soviet support, the only factor that could bring him victory; 2) Stalin's theory of class struggle led to such a level of hostility of a large part of the population that many Soviet citizens did not resist the German troops. Therefore, today, and this is obvious, one cannot estimate all the collaborationists from the representatives of the peoples of the USSR only as trivial traitors. Any case of betrayal can certainly be considered an example of collaborationism, but not every case of collaborationism, as experience of the Second World War shows, has become a manifestation of treason for its people.

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