

УДК 94(477.82)«1921/1928»+364.334:347.627.4

DOI: 10.20535/2307-5244.56.2023.288769

**O. Buravskiy**

ORCID: 0000-0002-1847-4605

*Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University*

**I. Vlasyuk**

ORCID: 0000-0003-4679-4101

*Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University*

*O. A. Буравський*

*Житомирський державний університет імені Івана Франка*

*I. M. Власюк*

*Житомирський державний університет імені Івана Франка*

**THE STRUGGLE AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT:  
THE VOLYN HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE  
IN THE NEP PERIOD**

*Боротьба проти безробіття:  
історичний досвід Волині періоду НЕП*

*The issue of unemployment and the strategies devised to combat it have remained a persistent challenge both in Ukraine and globally throughout the twentieth century and into the present day. This article seeks to conduct a comprehensive examination of the approaches adopted by Soviet authorities in the Volyn region to tackle unemployment during the NEP (New Economic Policy) period.*

*The novelty of this study lies in its inaugural in-depth analysis of the unemployment issue and countermeasures implemented in the Volyn region during the NEP years. This examination is bolstered by the introduction of previously unexplored archival documents and periodical materials, as it strives to offer an objective evaluation of the circumstances at that time.*

*The analysis reveals that unemployment surged in the aftermath of the civil war, driven partly by the downturn in industrial production and staffing cuts across various institutions that characterized the NEP era. Contributory factors also included demobilization initiatives stemming from the Red Army and the forcefully executed establishment of market mechanisms by the Bolshevik regime, which instigated inherent conflicts.*

*Inspecting the state's anti-unemployment strategies in Volyn unravels several critical observations: establishing robust control over labor market metrics was a challenging endeavor; administrative-command procedures predominated in unemployment resolution efforts, and the bureaucratic focus on facilitating the smooth operation of labor exchanges was inadequate. However, the regime's initiative to extend financial assistance to the jobless on a monthly*

*basis marked a positive step, channeling substantial funds to address related issues and leveraging public works projects as a vital avenue to reduce unemployment numbers.*

*Notwithstanding the strides made, the discourse surrounding unemployment among women and teenagers in Volyn remains underexplored and warrants deeper investigation. This article constitutes a pioneering effort to scrutinize the complexities of combating unemployment in Volyn during the NEP period, aiming to shed new light on a topic of enduring relevance.*

**Keywords:** unemployment, Volyn, labor exchange, new economic policy, Soviet power.

*У статті комплексно проаналізовано підходи радянських органів влади на Волині для боротьби з безробіттям під час періоду Нової економічної політики (НЕП). Виявлено, що встановлення надійного контролю над показниками ринку праці було складним завданням; адміністративно-командні процедури переважали в зусиллях із подолання безробіття, а бюрократична спрямованість на полегшення безперешкодної роботи бірж праці була недостатньою. Проте ініціатива режиму щодо надання фінансової допомоги безробітним щомісяця визнавалася позитивним кроком, що дало змогу спрямувати значні кошти на вирішення дотичних проблем і використання громадських робіт для зменшення кількості безробітних. Попри все, дискусія щодо безробіття серед жінок та підлітків на Волині залишається малодослідженою і потребує глибшого вивчення.*

**Ключові слова:** безробіття, Волинь, біржа праці, нова економічна політика, радянська влада.

In the contemporary period, Ukraine, along with other nations, continually grapples with the persistent issue of unemployment — a problem that significantly affects the socio-economic fabric of society, including its stability and future trajectory. This pressing issue is corroborated by current Ukrainian statistics and extensive research dedicated to this topic. Given the gravity of the unemployment problem, it seems pertinent to delve into the historical strategies employed to combat this social issue, focusing on the experiences of the Volyn region during the New Economic Policy (NEP) era. Drawing parallels between the past and the present, this research suggests that insights gleaned from historical strategies to curb unemployment in Volyn could potentially offer valuable lessons and frameworks to address the modern-day unemployment crisis, despite the differences in the contextual backdrop of the two time periods.

The Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. The problem of unemployment in Ukraine during the NEP period has been addressed in a number of scientific papers. Specifically, O. Murashova carried out a comprehensive anal-

ysis of social policy in Ukraine in the 1920's, inclusive of the initiatives undertaken by public authorities to mitigate unemployment<sup>1</sup>.

The social insurance of the unemployed during the 1920's — 1930's was explored in O. Melnychuk's monograph (Melnychuk, O. 2009). Additionally, the collaborative research work «Society and Power in Soviet Ukraine during the NEP (1921–1928)» (Vol. 1. K., 2015) sheds light on the unemployment situation and the kinds of assistance rendered to the unemployed during that period (Кульчицький, С. & Мовчан, О. 2015). R. Prylypko delved into the financial aid extended to the unemployed in Ukraine in the 1920s in a recent article (Прилипка, Р. 2020).

Furthermore, Bukharenkova's monograph pays detailed attention to the legal groundwork of the labor market in the USSR from 1921 to 1927, and scrutinizes the role of various public organizations in executing state policies aimed at unemployment eradication. The work also highlights the deficiencies and contradictions embedded in that state policy (Бухаренкова, О. 2013).

The struggle against unemployment in Volyn during the NEP has not been sufficiently covered in historical science, necessitating a comprehensive analysis based on archival sources, periodicals, and recent research concerning this issue in Ukraine.

The source base of the research is drawn from documents housed in the Zhytomyr region's State Archive (funds 28, 272, 280, 326, 434, 865, 1657). Analyzing these documents has facilitated a more objective understanding of the topic. The cases utilized from the Soviet period funds house critical information about the dynamics of unemployment in Volyn during this period, the state's measures concerning population employment, and the operations of labor exchanges. Additionally, select issues of the newspaper «Soviet Volyn» published between 1924 and 1925 were referenced to detail individual state initiatives aimed at assisting the unemployed.

The purpose of the article is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the measures undertaken by the relevant Soviet authorities in Volyn during the NEP period to address unemployment. This includes characterizing the dynamics of unemployment in the region and examining the composition of the unemployed population. Additionally, the article aims to pinpoint the shortcomings of the state's measures to combat unemployment and the issues encountered in organizing the labor exchanges.

The research methodology is founded on general scientific (logical, comparative) and special historical methods (problem-chronological), which facilitated a chronological and logical exploration of the unemployment issue; comparative analysis was employed to illuminate specific unemployment indicators. Moreover,

---

<sup>1</sup> Мурашова О. Соціальна політика радянської влади в Україні у 20-х рр. XX ст.: дис. ... канд. іст. наук; 07.00.01. Вінниця, 2019.

adhering to the principles of scientific rigor, historicism, and objectivity enabled an insight into the political and ideological facets of Soviet power in the unemployment analysis. This approach facilitates a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon within the specific historical context of the NEP period.

An important methodological approach in the study of this topic was the systematic approach, which facilitated the analysis of public employment policy as an element of the Bolsheviks' state administration during the NEP period. The activity approach enabled the examination of the dynamics of unemployment in the specified period. Utilizing the functional approach allowed for consideration of the ideological and other impacts of state policy in the employment sphere.

The scientific novelty of the study is rooted in the first-time comprehensive analysis of the unemployment issue and countermeasures in the Volyn region during the years of the New Economic Policy (NEP). This research brought new archival documents and periodical materials into scientific discourse, representing an endeavor to objectively assess this phenomenon.

This article examines unemployment in Soviet Volyn. Notably, the Riga Peace Treaty of 1921 led to the occupation of western Volyn counties by Poland, while the eastern counties became part of the USSR. In 1923, the counties of the Volyn province in the USSR underwent a transformation into districts. Following this, a 1925 administrative-territorial reform saw the dissolution of the Volyn province. This paved the way for the creation of Volyn (formerly known as Zhytomyr), Shepetivka, and Korosten districts, which were directly subordinate to the central authority<sup>1</sup>.

*The Presentation of the Main Material.* Unemployment represents a socio-economic phenomenon and poses a significant challenge in the development of any state. This issue brings about negative repercussions and necessitates a systematic approach complemented by strategically effective tools for its resolution (Кифяк, В. & Лесько, Н. 2019, с. 101, 103). Pertaining to the initial years of the NEP, it is noteworthy that several distinct resolutions were adopted at the legislative level by the SNC (the Senate of the National Commissars; Ukrainian: ПНК) of the USSR: 1) on April 19, 1921, allowing workers to transfer from one enterprise to another due to domestic or familial reasons; 2) on November 22, 1922, introducing a labor tax as a replacement for compulsory labor (Мурашова, О. 2019, с. 64).

Labor exchanges were mandatory state institutions for labor mediation, and employment agreements conducted outside of state control were prohibited (Кульчицький, С. & Мовчан, О. 2015, с. 201). This demonstrated the de facto monopolization of the labor market by the state, despite the evolution of market relations during that period.

Analyzing the problem of unemployment in the Volyn region during the stated period, it is important to trace the causes and dynamics of this phenomenon

<sup>1</sup> Адміністративно-територіальний устрій Житомирщини. 1795–2006 роки : Довідник: Офіційне видання / Упоряд.: Р. Ю. Кондратюк, Д. Я. Самолюк, Б. Ш. Табачник. 2007. Житомир: Волинь. С. 7–9.

and the contingent of the unemployed. It should be emphasized that the Volyn province in the early 1920s occupied a border position. It faced such problems as the aftermath of the postwar period, the struggle against banditry, various social anomalies, epidemics, and others. All this influenced the demographic situation, economic development, labor relations, etc., in the province. Researchers also pinpoint the general crisis of the industry, agrarian overpopulation, reduction of management staff, and demobilization from the Red Army, among other reasons for the rise in unemployment (Бухаренкова, О. 2013, с. 14).

Unemployment in Volyn was most acute in Zhytomyr and in some specific regions due to the particular industrial development and the nature of the economy in those areas. As of October 1, 1922, 1,495 unemployed individuals were registered at the Zhytomyr Labor Exchange (comprising 847 men, 491 women, and 157 teenagers). The majority of the unemployed were unskilled, a situation exacerbated by the influx of demobilized Red Army soldiers and refugees from provinces afflicted by famine.

The unemployment figures rose with the conclusion of field, seasonal, and construction work, as well as due to staff reductions or complete eliminations of institutions. Additionally, skilled workers from villages and towns sought employment in the provincial center, creating an oversupply in the labor market. Consequently, demand for labor could not keep pace with supply. In October 1922, the demand for skilled labor amounted to only 27% of the supply; for unskilled labor and various services, the figure stood at 83.4%<sup>1</sup>

On October 1, 1923, there were 3,580 individuals officially registered as unemployed in Volyn, a number that grew to 6,369 by March 1, 1925, with 5,192 of them registered at the Zhytomyr Labor Exchange. Builders bore the brunt of unemployment, a situation exacerbated by the seasonal nature of their work; their numbers rose from 139 on October 1, 1923, to 283 on February 1, 1925. Civil servants also experienced an increase in unemployment, with their numbers growing from 918 to 1,004 over the same period<sup>2</sup>.

Later, the unemployment rate in the Volyn province stabilized but showed a tendency to increase. This trend was the result of ongoing reductions in the industry sector compounded by the previously mentioned factors. As of April 1, 1925, there were 7,352 individuals registered as unemployed in the province, including 5,170 in Zhytomyr (comprising 3,887 men and 1,293 women).

In the Zhytomyr district, the majority of unemployed individuals were found in the Novohrad-Volynskyi (479) and Radomyshl regions. In the Korosten district, the highest numbers of unemployed were reported in the Korosten (552) and Malyn (391) regions, while the Shepetivka district had 312 registered unemployed individuals. In Zhytomyr, there were 879 job openings, but the demand

<sup>1</sup> State archive of Zhytomyr region — SAZR. F. P. 1657. D. 1. C. 434. P. 27.

<sup>2</sup> SAZR. F. P. 28. D. 1. C. 1103. P. 63–64.

was only for 207 positions. Overall, the professions most impacted by unemployment in the province included metalworkers, tailors, leather workers, builders, food industry workers, Soviet officials, and unskilled laborers<sup>1</sup>.

The trend in unemployment from 1923 to 1925 exhibited a consistent upward trajectory, with exceptions during months of seasonal and agricultural work. The largest surge in unemployment occurred among manual laborers. When examining the number of unemployed employees, there were fluctuations observed, with both increases and decreases in their numbers.

On July 1, 1926, a total of 3,145 unemployed individuals were registered in Zhytomyr, representing 71% of the total unemployed population in the Volyn district. Among the unemployed, 34.5% were manual laborers, while 37.9% were employees. Men constituted 59.2% of the total unemployed population, while women accounted for 40.2%<sup>2</sup>.

During the registration of unemployed individuals in industrial professions, their qualifications were assessed by reviewing their documents. In cases where document verification was not possible, they were directed to industrial enterprises aligned with their respective professions to undergo a practical examination. Meanwhile, the qualifications of unemployed individuals engaged in mental work were determined through an expert commission at the labor exchange during the registration process.

In the third quarter of 1926, the labor exchange provided job opportunities to different categories of unemployed individuals. Specifically, 36.3% of the positions were geared towards those engaged in mental work, 21.7% were intended for unskilled laborers, and a significant 98.8% of the offers were related to the manufacturing industry. The notable prevalence of positions in the manufacturing industry during this period can be attributed to the commencement of seasonal work.

The rise in the number of demobilized soldiers registering at the labor exchange can be attributed to related developments within the Red Army and Navy. Many of the demobilized individuals lacked specific qualifications, and thus, they were prominently represented among the unemployed population at the labor exchange. Notably, approximately 80% of those who underwent retraining to acquire new skills were former Red Army soldiers who had been demobilized. As of July 1, 1926, there was a noticeable surge in unemployment, affecting not only demobilized soldiers but also employees, administrative personnel, and technical staff, largely influenced by austerity policies<sup>3</sup>.

The unemployment situation in Volyn during 1926-1927 exhibited a notable upward trend. For instance, on October 1, 1926, the Zhytomyr Labor Exchange recorded 3,204 unemployed individuals (comprising 1,770 men and 1,434 wom-

<sup>1</sup> SAZR. F. P. 434. D. 1. C. 78. P. 49–50.

<sup>2</sup> SAZR. F. P. 272. D. 1. C. 154. P. 176–177.

<sup>3</sup> SAZR. F. P. 272. D. 1. C. 154. P. 181, 183.

en). Among them, 1,323 were skilled workers, while 421 were unskilled. By July 1, 1927, the number of unemployed had risen to 4,390 (including 2,575 men and 1,815 women). This group consisted of 939 skilled workers and 1,945 unskilled ones. In total, skilled workers accounted for 30.2% of the unemployed, while unskilled workers made up 50.5% of the total<sup>1</sup>.

Let us analyze the measures implemented by the Soviet authorities to combat unemployment in Volyn. Upon the introduction of the NEP in its early years, the government confronted the challenge of regulating the labor market. To accomplish this objective, efforts were made to enhance the management of labor exchanges and their personnel. Control and conflict resolution commissions were established to address unemployment issues, and numerous circulars, resolutions, and orders were issued to regulate the labor market. The government's efforts to combat unemployment were reported in the local press, and trade union representatives were continuously informed about these measures.

As the unemployed required practical employment opportunities, the labor exchange had to extend its role beyond merely regulating labor market dynamics. It needed to establish public works, workshops, cooperatives, housing facilities for the unemployed, and other initiatives. The establishment of production teams proved to be a successful endeavor. For instance, in 1922, the Zhytomyr Labor Exchange initiated a self-sustaining workshop for leather manufacturing, engaging 50 unemployed individuals skilled in this profession to address the issue of unemployment.

Significant emphasis was placed on the organization of public works, overseen by a designated engineer. As an illustrative example, in 1922 in Zhytomyr, a range of public works were planned, including tasks such as dismantling dilapidated buildings (employing 60 to 70 workers daily), relocating pavements, constructing a bridge and a dam on the Kamyanets River, repairing the Teterev embankment walls, city boulevards, and fencing, erecting a pavilion on Rosa Luxemburg Square, as well as engaging in cleaning and ditch digging activities. Collectively, these projects provided employment for approximately 100 to 125 unemployed individuals per day<sup>2</sup>.

Nonetheless, the organization of public works experienced a decline as economic authorities showed reluctance to participate in such activities. For instance, in 1927, the funds allocated by the central authorities for this purpose remained unutilized<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that during the NEP period in the USSR, the compensation for public work was relatively low compared to other republics. Consequently, many unemployed individuals tended to avoid participation in such

---

<sup>1</sup> SAZR. F. P. 280. D. 1. C. 41. P. 27–28.

<sup>2</sup> SAZR. F. P. 1657. D. 1. C. 434. P. 28.

<sup>3</sup> SAZR. F. P. 280. D. 1. C. 41. P. 29.

employment, leading to the loss of certain types of state assistance. In cases of repeated evasion, individuals could be removed from the labor exchange registry and subjected to a three-month ban before the next registration (Кульчицький, С. & Мовчан, О. 2015, с. 210).

A dedicated commission was established to address the issue of unemployment among women and teenagers. Their plan involved organizing several small groups, with each group consisting of up to five individuals. These groups would be equipped with sewing materials and sent to nearby villages to provide services for the local peasantry. In 1922, a facility for the unemployed underwent renovations. This facility included a dining area, serving 60–70 meals daily for the unemployed, as well as a dormitory and a club<sup>1</sup>.

The mandatory resolution № 251, titled «On Measures to Combat Unemployment», was issued on November 27, 1922, by the provincial executive committee of the provincial labor department. According to this resolution, all economic entities in Zhytomyr and its counties were obligated to report to the committees responsible for addressing unemployment and to the labor exchanges about any work that could be carried out as public work within a three-day timeframe. It was explicitly prohibited for private individuals to undertake such work through contractual agreements. Those found guilty of violating this law were subject to prosecution<sup>2</sup>.

Based on the report on the unemployment problem presented during the meeting held on August 18, 1924, by the Volyn Provincial Executive Committee Presidium, several pressing issues were identified, including 1) the reorganization of the labor exchange; 2) the augmentation of support for the unemployed, which included providing them with meals in canteens; 3) the establishment of cooperatives (artels) and workshops for the unemployed; 4) the enhancement of political and educational efforts aimed at the unemployed<sup>3</sup>.

State regulation of the labor market did not yield the desired results due to its inability to respond flexibly and promptly to supply and demand. Furthermore, political and ideological principles within the government hindered these processes. Nevertheless, authorities eventually acknowledged the necessity of moving away from the compulsory employment principle through labor exchanges and transitioning to a system of intermediary offices. These bureaus operated with greater flexibility, free from unnecessary formalism, and their effectiveness hinged on the availability of skilled workers and their placement with employers. Therefore, a permanent expert commission was tasked with addressing this matter.

Insufficient funding from the state budget to combat unemployment led to the allocation of these funds from the local budget<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> SAZR. F. P. 1657. D. 1. C. 434. P. 54.

<sup>2</sup> SAZR. F. P. 1657. D. 1. C. 434. P. 75.

<sup>3</sup> SAZR. F. P. 865. D. 1. C. 7. P. 447.

<sup>4</sup> SAZR. F. P. 865. D. 1. C. 7. P. 645–645 flip.



During that time, a significant challenge was the limited demand for the labor of women, teenagers, and disabled individuals. This issue required appropriate state support, the engagement of these groups in public works, and the provision of privileges. Women's unemployment became so dire that it led some women to engage in prostitution. L. Babiuk conducted an analysis of prostitution in Ukraine during the NEP period, identifying various reasons that drove women to this profession. Among the primary factors cited by half of the prostitutes were poverty and difficult social circumstances. Additionally, the low qualifications of women played a significant role in the issue of prostitution (Бабюк, Л. 2017, с. 58). In Volyn, the Zhytomyr district venereology dispensary established ongoing communication with the Committee for the Struggle against Unemployment to provide employment opportunities for women registered as prostitutes. The lack of qualifications among these women and the limited demand for their work were noted in this context<sup>1</sup>.

The primary method employed to combat unemployment was the establishment and reinforcement of production teams for the unemployed. As of January 1, 1925, Volyn had 40 of these teams, and their activities were contingent on the availability of work and seasonal demands<sup>2</sup>.

The assistance provided to the unemployed encompassed various forms, such as labor support (placement in cooperatives for the unemployed), material aid (provision of lodging in homes for the unemployed, travel privileges on railways), utilities relief (access to baths, water, electricity), and financial assistance.

According to O. Melnychuk, supporting the unemployed during this period held not only economic significance but also political importance for the government. The unemployment rate revealed that, in 1925, Ukraine ranked second among other USSR republics, with 61 unemployed workers per 100 insured individuals (Мельничук, О. 2009, с. 161).

The monthly unemployment benefits in Volyn, as per the social insurance system, amounted to 5 rubles for lower categories of the unemployed and 7.5 rubles for higher categories. The total sum of financial aid distributed by the social insurance authorities to the unemployed in this region reached 96,785 rubles for the year, up to February 1, 1925. There was a noticeable trend in the increasing number of unemployed individuals receiving financial aid from the social insurance agencies. In 1923, they constituted 34.4% of the total unemployed population, and by January 1925, this number had risen to 43%. Overall, the number of unemployed individuals benefiting from social insurance assistance in Volyn doubled, going from 1,862 in October 1923 to 2,683 in February 1925<sup>3</sup>.

Certain scholars have highlighted the ideological underpinnings of Soviet government actions when it came to providing state social protection for the

---

<sup>1</sup> SAZR. F. P. 280. D. 1. C. 40. P. 5.

<sup>2</sup> SAZR. F. P. 280. D. 1. C. 1103. P. 66.

<sup>3</sup> SAZR. F. P. 280. D. 1. C. 1103. P. 66.

unemployed. R. Prilipko has pointed out that individuals who were political adversaries of the regime were excluded from receiving this protection (Prylypko, R. 2020, p. 63).

In the review period of 1926, a total of 148 unemployed individuals were referred to the Zhytomyr Labor Exchange for practical examinations within professional production groups. Among these, 71 individuals were from clerical, accounting, and trade backgrounds, and they underwent assessment by the expert commission<sup>1</sup>.

Retraining for the unemployed was conducted systematically by the labor exchange in response to the demand. During the second and third quarters of 1926, the number of individuals seeking retraining increased from 44 to 75, with 160 training positions available. Consequently, the associated expenses also rose. The Labor Exchange Committee provided a monthly payment of 20 rubles to each person undergoing retraining. For those individuals whose retraining was funded by social insurance bodies, the funds were transferred to the company to cover the costs of retraining, tool depreciation, and materials.

To inform the economic authorities about the unemployed population, the Labor Exchange regularly disseminated relevant information through the local press on the 1st and 15<sup>th</sup> day of each month<sup>2</sup>.

The Committee for the Struggle against Unemployment directed unemployed individuals to participate in mining activities in Volyn, responding to the high demand for minerals such as quartz and spar, among others<sup>3</sup>.

The problem of unemployment persisted towards the end of the NEP period, and efforts were made to address it, as evidenced by the minutes of a Zhytomyr City Council meeting in February 1927. These efforts included:

1. Concentrating the regulation and oversight of labor demand within the National Labor Commissariat (NLC; Ukrainian: HKII) and ensuring control through trade unions.
2. Recognizing the significant increase in unskilled and low-skilled labor, which raised the need for increased funding for retraining and skill development of the unemployed.
3. Implementing a maximum period of stay for the unemployed within enterprise and labor communities, with a limit of 6 months in enterprise communities and up to 3 months in labor communities.
4. Developing specific procedures for the organization of new communities for women by the Committee for the Struggle against Unemployment.
5. Introducing registration of reserved job positions at enterprises for teenagers.

<sup>1</sup> SAZR. F. P. 326. D. 1. C. 64. P. 186.

<sup>2</sup> SAZR. F. P. 326. D. 1. C. 64. P. 187.

<sup>3</sup> Unemployed to develop mines. *Soviet Volyn*. August 1, 1925. Part 173 (298). P. 4.

These measures reflected the ongoing efforts to address unemployment challenges during this period<sup>1</sup>.

Cultural and ideological activities were conducted among the unemployed as well. For instance, in 1926, the House of the Unemployed in Zhytomyr offered various amenities, including a Lenin corner, a library with 250 books, 4% of which were dedicated to popular political pamphlets. The facility also had one chess set and three sets of draughts. Lectures on health topics, including issues related to sexually transmitted diseases, were provided, along with the publication of a wall newspaper. The House of the Unemployed also formed drama and singing societies and established a school for literacy education, although it faced challenges and eventually disbanded due to inadequate management. Additionally, subscriptions to newspapers such as «Trud», «Pravda», «Komsomolskaya Pravda», the magazine «Ogonyok», and others were provided, enhancing the cultural and informational resources available to the unemployed<sup>2</sup>.

In response to instances of hooliganism among certain unemployed individuals at the labor exchange, there was a growing need to intensify cultural and educational efforts within this group. Additionally, for those engaging in severe acts of hooliganism that posed a threat to the labor exchange staff, it was suggested that they be removed from the registration and subjected to public trials as a deterrent measure<sup>3</sup>.

In 1927, the Labor Exchange Committee focused on several key strategies to combat unemployment, including overseeing the management of work teams comprised of unemployed individuals and the recruitment of new staff, establishing new teams for the unemployed, transferring experienced and skilled teams to work within various economic enterprises, and providing financial support to the unemployed through their associations and other means<sup>4</sup>.

In 1927, a city commission conducted an inspection of the Zhytomyr Labor Exchange and found several issues that indicated shortcomings in the performance of public authorities responsible for ensuring employment. Some of the identified problems included section heads of various groups of the unemployed failing to announce all job requirements and not adequately conveying the demand for labor at various enterprises and institutions, instances of protectionism by certain enterprises and institutions within the labor exchange, and a lack of effective communication between the labor exchange and the works or factory committees and trade unions regarding proper employment practices. The premises of the labor exchange were described as being in a «terrible unsanitary condition», lacking basic amenities such as a tank with boiled water, and suffering from structural issues such as a collapsed floor, broken doors and windows, and a general

<sup>1</sup> SAZR. F. P. 280. D. 1. C. 34. P. 9.

<sup>2</sup> SAZR. F. P. 326. D. 1. C. 64. P. 189.

<sup>3</sup> SAZR. F. P. 272. D. 1. C. 154. P. 331.

<sup>4</sup> SAZR. F. P. 326. D. 1. C. 64. P. 189–190.

lack of maintenance. Additionally, there were concerns about inadequate storage facilities for all the registration cards, and incidents involving unruly behavior by unemployed individuals who sometimes became intoxicated and caused disruptions during working hours. These findings underscored the need for improvements in the functioning and conditions of the labor exchange to better address unemployment issues<sup>1</sup>.

Furthermore, all the sections catering to different professions were consolidated into a single hall, resulting in overcrowding when unemployed individuals visited the labor exchange. Adequate heating of the premises during winter was unattainable, and the absence of proper ventilation and the presence of dampness had adverse effects on both the work environment and the health of the labor exchange employees<sup>2</sup>.

Researchers have also documented instances of bribery and nepotism within the labor exchange system in the USSR. Additionally, there were reports of preferential treatment in employment being given to members of the Bolshevik Party (Кульчицький, С. & Мовчан, О. 2015, с. 212).

The experience of implementing monthly unemployment benefits in Volyn is worth highlighting. Local authorities undertook significant efforts to assist the unemployed by collecting taxes from sources like rent, shop tenants, trams, electricity, and others. Concurrently, they conducted checks on the property status of the unemployed. It was crucial for the labor exchanges to exclude individuals considered the «non-labor element» — those who exploited their unemployed status for personal and familial gain. The labor exchanges aimed to retain only skilled workers and employees with relevant work experience who were members of trade unions. The monthly campaign to aid the unemployed generated substantial funds. For example, in 1925, Kyiv raised more than 250,000 rubles, while Zhytomyr expected to collect 40,000 rubles. Simultaneously, the establishment of public work opportunities, housing, canteens, and regular financial assistance played a significant role in supporting the unemployed. However, all these initiatives required financial resources. Notably, the financial aid provided to the unemployed by the Social Insurance Fund was limited and did not cover all those in need (Кульчицький, С. & Мовчан, О. 2015, с. 212)<sup>3</sup>.

In conclusion, the experience of combating unemployment in Volyn during the NEP period underscores that this issue arose as a consequence of the post-civil war societal situation. Unemployment displayed an upward trend, and the problem persisted without a definitive resolution. Several factors contributed to this situation, including reduced industrial production and workforce in various institutions during the NEP era, demobilization from the Red Army, and more.

---

<sup>1</sup> SAZR. F. P. 280. D. 1. C. 41. P. 29.

<sup>2</sup> SAZR. F. P. 326. D. 1. C. 64. P. 184–185.

<sup>3</sup> Unemployment and the fight against it. *Soviet Volyn*. August 31, 1924. Part 25 (197). P. 1.

Additionally, the introduction of market mechanisms by force, initiated by the Bolshevik government, introduced contradictions. Analyzing the state's efforts to address unemployment in the Volyn region, several key points emerge. Seizing power and establishing effective control over labor market indicators proved challenging. Administrative-command methods took precedence in addressing unemployment. Inadequate attention was given to the organization and functioning of labor exchanges by the authorities. The experience of providing monthly financial aid to the unemployed yielded positive results by generating significant funds to address various challenges. Public work played a crucial role in providing employment opportunities for the unemployed. Furthermore, it is essential to note that the issue of women's and teenagers' unemployment in Volyn during the NEP period warrants further research. The multifaceted nature of the unemployment problem during this time underscores its complexity and the need for comprehensive strategies to address it effectively.

Бабюк, Л. 2017. Проституція в радянській Україні як соціальне явище (1921–1927 рр.). *Східноєвропейський історичний вісник*. Вип. 4. С. 56–62. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24919/2519-058x.4.111462>

Бухаренкова, О. 2013. *Советская политика ликвидации безработицы в 1921–1927 годах*: монографія. Орехово-Зуево: Изд-во МГОГИ.

Кифяк, В. & Лесько, Н. 2019. Соціально-економічний аналіз безробіття в Україні. *Економіка та держава*. № 1. С. 100–103. DOI: 10.32702/2306-6806.2019.1.100

Кульчицький, С. & Мовчан, О. 2015. *Держава і робітничий клас. Суспільство і влада в радянській Україні років непу (1921–1928)*. Колективна монографія. Т. 1. Відп. ред. С. Кульчицький. Київ: Інститут історії України НАН України. С. 195–280.

Мельничук, О. 2009. *Соціальне страхування в Радянській Україні (20–30-ті рр. XX ст.)*. Вінниця: Едельвейс і К.

Прилипка, Р. 2020. Матеріальне забезпечення безробітних в УСРР у 1920-х рр. *Історичні і політологічні дослідження*. № 1 (66). С. 53–67. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31558/2079-1828.2020.1.5>

Babyuk, L. 2017. Prostytutsiya v radyans'kyi Ukraini yak sotsial'ne yavyshe (1921–1927 rr.) [Prostitution in Soviet Ukraine as a Social Phenomenon (1921–1927)]. *Skhidnoyevropeys'kyi istorychnyy visnyk*. Vyp. 4. S. 56–62. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24919/2519-058x.4.111462> [In Ukrainian].

Bukharenkova, O. 2013. Sovetskaya politika likvidatsii bezrabotitsy v 1921–1927 godakh [Soviet Policy of Eliminating Unemployment in 1921–1927]: monografiya. Orekhovo-Zuevo: Izd-vo MGOGI. [In Russian].

Kyfyak, V. & Les'ko, N. 2019. Sotsial'no-ekonomichnyy analiz bezrobittya v Ukraini [Socio-Economic Analysis of Unemployment in Ukraine]. *Ekonomika ta derzhava*. № 1. S. 100–103. DOI: 10.32702/2306-6806.2019.1.100 [In Ukrainian].

Kul'chyts'kyi, S. & Movchan, O. 2015. *Derzhava i robitynychyy klas [State and working class]. Suspil'stvo i vlada v radyans'kyi Ukraini rokiv nepu (1921–1928)*. Kolektyvna monografiya. T. 1. Vidp. red. S. Kul'chyts'kyi. Kyiv: Instytut istoriyi Ukrainy NAN Ukrainy. S. 195–280. [In Ukrainian].

Mel'nychuk, O. 2009. *Sotsial'ne strakhuvannya v Radyans'kij Ukraini (20–30-ti rr. XX st.) [Social Insurance in Soviet Ukraine (20's — 30's of the Twentieth Century)]*. Vinnytsya: Edel'veys i K. [In Ukrainian].

Prylypko, R. 2020. Material'ne zabezpechennya bezrobotnykh v USRR u 1920-kh rr. [Material Support for the Unemployed in the Ukrainian SSR in the 1920's.]. *Istorychni i politolohichni doslidzhennya*. № 1 (66). S. 53–67. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31558/2079-1828.2020.1.5> [In Ukrainian].

УДК 355.257.7:94(477.52)«1914/1918»

DOI: 10.20535/2307-5244.56.2023.288770

**Л. І. Рожкова**

ORCID: 0000-0002-9994-0961

*Сумський національний аграрний університет*

**Н. М. Кузьменко**

ORCID: 0000-0001-6728-240X

*Сумський національний аграрний університет*

*L. Rozhkova*

*Sumy National Agrarian University, Ukraine*

*N. Kuzmenko*

*Sumy National Agrarian University, Ukraine*

## **ВІЙСЬКОВОПОЛОНЕНІ НА СУМЩИНІ У РОКИ ПЕРШОЇ СВІТОВОЇ ВІЙНИ**

### *Prisoners of War in Sumy Region during the First World War*

*У статті досліджується становище військовополонених армій Центральної держав, які в роки Першої світової війни перебували на Сумщині. Термін «Сумщина» щодо зазначеного періоду умовний — фактично йдеться про території, які перебували в складі чотирьох губерній: Харківської (Сумський, Лебединський повіти), Полтавської (Роменський, частково Гадяцький, Придубуцький, Лохвицький і Зіньківський повіти), Чернігівської (Котопський, Кролевецький, Глухівський повіти, частина Новгород-Сіверського повіту) і Курської (Путівльський, частково, Суджанський повіти). Ці губернії в період воєнних дій були тилловими, тож тут розміщувалися контингенти військовополонених армій Центральної держав. Проаналізовано кількісний склад військовополонених, висвітлено правове та соціально-побутове становище полонених німецької та австро-угорської армій, а також відмінності у ставленні до полонених залежно від етнічного походження. Розкривається їх залучення до праці в сільському господарстві та на промислових підприємствах. Досліджено ставлення до полонених з боку військової адміністрації, місцевої влади, власників підприємств, маєтків.*