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A background figure in history – the case of Boris Stark

For a long time, the focus of biographical research was on “distinguished personalities”, “persons of the first plan”, that is, those who left a noticeable mark in the history of mankind, made a significant contribution to the development of human society, its material and spiritual culture (we are talking about political, state, military figures, representatives of science, culture, art, etc.). However, in the second half of the 20th – at the beginning of the 21st century historians under the influence of the “new biographical history” and, in general, in the desire for personalization, “humanization” of the historical process, began to pay attention to the so-called “little person”, “person of the second plan” and his role in history, since the historical process and the faces of time are determined not only by the “first”, well-known actors.

Interest in the personal dimension of history, inimitable and unique in the fate of a particular person, is a characteristic feature of the modern cultural and historical situation. Therefore, the study of the life of a historical personality of the “second plan” reveals wide research perspectives, because, being noticeable against the background of the day, it, much more than the figure of the “foreground”, demonstrates a combination of the individual and the mass, the person and the social environment of their time¹.

The hero of our research is, at first glance, an ordinary person, a typical person of the “second plan”, Boris Heorhiiovych Stark (1909–1996). He was born in the Russian Empire, lived in Paris for a long time, received Soviet citizenship in 1946, and returned to the USSR in 1952. He is a descendant of a noble Russian military family, a member of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in France, and later in the Soviet state.

¹ V. Andrieiev, *Istoryk „druho ho planu” v personalnii iierarkhii ukrainskoho istorychnoho spivtovarystva XIX – pochatku XX st.*, „Eidos. Almanakh teorii ta istorii istorychnoi nauky” 2009, Vol. 4, pp. 295–302 [in Ukr.].

The complex biography of B. Stark, who changed several professions and countries within conditions of social and geopolitical cataclysms of the 20th century, demonstrates an unshakable desire to live and work, spiritual and intellectual searches, making difficult decisions, loyalty to traditional values – God, Motherland, family.

Historiography of the problem. Although Boris Stark has always been quite a public figure, an active participant in church and public life, his biography and activities became the focus of public attention during the collapse of the USSR. The person of B. Stark was of interest to both journalists, scientists, and ordinary citizens, who began to look for answers to their life needs in the bosom of the church. As Archpriest Mykhail Ardov mentioned, the person of Boris Stark became the centre of attention of the press and television, but it was mostly a tribute to fashion. However, in this way the external image and way of service of B. Stark was preserved. Of great importance was the publication of the memories of Boris Heorhiiiovych himself, printed and video versions (based on interviews in 1992–1993)². The epistolary of Boris Stark and his family was partially published³. Research on the naval history of Russia continues, which does not ignore the Stark family; Father Boris is mentioned in works on the history of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Recently, the history of repatriation of various social and ethnic groups to the USSR after the Second World War has attracted the attention of researchers. The basis is the materials of the Central State Archive of the highest authorities and administration of Ukraine (Kyiv) and the State Archive of the Russian Federation) (Moscow), local archives⁴.

In the centre of our attention is one of the episodes of the rich and controversial life of father Boris Stark and his family – precisely the first years after returning to the USSR

² *Otets Boris i matushka Natalya. Protoirei Boris Stark i Natalya Dmitrievna Stark vspominayut*, publikatsiya Yu. V. Tikhonovoi, posleslovie M. Ardova, „Novii mir” 2000, No. 1, https://magazines.gorky.media/novyi_mi/2000/1/otecz-boris-i-matushka-natalya.html [in Rus.] (accessed: 1.05.2025); B. Stark, *Vsya moya zhizn – chudo... Vospominaniya i propovedi*, Moskva 2009, 880 p. [in Rus.]; *Otets Boris Stark*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsrQAp2TgMc&ab_channel=%D0%A2%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B8%D1%88%D0%B5%D0%B2 [in Rus.] (accessed: 1.05.2025).

³ Sofronii (Sakharov), arkhim., *Pisma blizkim lyudyam. Peregiska s semei protoiereya Borisa Starka*, Moskva 1997 [in Rus.].

⁴ V.N. Zemskov, „Vozvrashchentsi” i „nevozvrashchentsi”. *O sudbe sovetskikh peremeshchennikh lits v 1944–1956 gg.*, „Izvestiya Samarskogo nauchnogo tsentra Rossiiskoi akademii nauk» 2013, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 103–113 [in Rus.]; S. Tkachyov, *Istorieskie predposlki reemigratsii ukraintsev iz Frantsii posle Vtoroi mirovoi voini*, „Migratsiyske teme” 1998, No. 14(4), pp. 315–337 [in Rus.]; S.V. Shabeltsev, *Ukrainski reemihranty z Arhenty, „Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal”* 2002, No. 5, pp. 92–104 [in Ukr.]; Y.A. Kosovan, *Ukrainskaya diaspora v FRG i sovetskie organizatsii po kulturnim svyazyam s sootchestvennikami za rubezhom (1960–1980-e gg.)*, „Slavyanskii mir: obshchnost i mnogoobrazie. Nauchnii zhurnal na temu: Istorii i arheologiya, yazykoznanie i literaturovedenie” 2019, No. 1, pp. 116–120 [in Rus.]; R. Dautova, *Iz istorii radiopropagandi vozvrashcheniya „nevozvrashchenev” v godi „khrushchevskoi ottepeli”*, „Vestnik Chelyabinskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta” 2010, Vol. 42, No. 211(30), pp. 45–52, et al.

and participating in the propaganda action of the State Security Committee (Russian – *Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti*, KGB) in February–April 1956 in Kherson. This allows us to reveal the vicissitudes of this individual's uneven life path and his chosen conformist survival strategy in the conditions of the totalitarian Soviet regime, to demonstrate the propaganda arsenal and organisational capabilities of the state and its special services in the conditions of the Cold War.

The basis of the source base was the materials of the Branch State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (Kyiv). It should be noted that fund formation and document circulation in the KGB structures were regulated and especially secret, and the archive underwent a phased removal and destruction of documents most compromising the KGB's activities. During the independence of Ukraine, the materials were declassified and partially transferred to other archives⁵.

Boris Stark came from a family of the naval elite of the Russian Empire. The Starks belonged to the Robertson clan, an ancient noble family of Scotland. Subsequently, part of its representatives settled in Sweden, and at the beginning of the 18th century the ancestors of the future Russian branch of the Starks moved to Russia. In 1818, they received Russian nobility. Many of them served as naval officers. It is known that in 1917 five Starks served in the Russian fleet at once. The most famous among them were two admirals – O. Stark⁶ and H. Stark⁷ (father of Boris). His mother, E. Razvozova (1881–1924),

⁵ *Haluzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv Sluzhby bezpeky Ukrainy*. Putivnyk, eds. V.M. Danylenko, et al., Kharkiv 2009, 136 p. [in Ukr.].

⁶ Oskar Viktorovich Stark (1846–1928) was born in Helsingfors (Helsinki, Finland). In 1861–1864 he studied at the St. Petersburg Marine Cadet Corps. He repeatedly participated in long-distance sailings. He served in the Baltic, in the Siberian flotilla, in the seas of Japan and Okhotsk, visited Japan, China and Korea. Served in Kronstadt, on the Pacific Ocean. In 1904, he served as commander of the Pacific Fleet. At the beginning of the Russian-Japanese war, he participated in the defensive battles for Port Arthur. He was forced to give up command due to illness. Since 1905 – senior flagship of the Baltic Sea. In 1908, he retired and was promoted to admiral. O. Stark had a negative attitude to the Bolshevik coup. He died in 1928 in Helsinki. See: *Starck Oskar Ludvig, Suomalaiset kenraalit ja amiraalit Venäjän sotavoimissa 1809–1917*, „Studia Biographica” 2006, No. 7, <http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:sk:ken-000409> [in Fin.] (accessed: 1.05.2025).

⁷ Georgy Karlovich Stark (1878–1950) was born in St. Petersburg in the family of a lawyer. In 1880, the family left Russia and moved to the USA, later to Germany, and returned to Russia. In 1891–1898, George studied in the Marine Cadet Corps. His uncle O. Stark played a role in choosing a profession. At first, George served in the Baltic Fleet. He participated in the campaign around Africa, in the Battle of Tsushima during the Russo-Japanese War, and was wounded. In 1905, after the end of the war, he returned to the Baltic Fleet. During the First World War, he commanded the destroyer Strashny, and in 1917 he was appointed chief of the mine division. He participated in the Battle of Moonzund, during which he was wounded. He was awarded the rank of rear admiral for his courage and bravery. G. Stark categorically did not accept the Bolshevik coup and joined the army of A. Kolchak. In 1918, he was appointed the commander of the Volga-Kama White Flotilla, after its defeat – the chief of the marine rifle brigade in Krasnoyarsk. After the defeat of A. Kolchak, together with the retreating army, he ended up in Harbin. In 1921, in the city of Vladivostok, the Provisional Amur Government appointed H. Stark as commander of the Siberian military flotilla. In the summer, the government gave him dictatorial powers and appointed him commander of all armed forces. However, he soon gave up his position and powers. The admiral directed the urgent evacuation of the White Army from Vladivostok. In October 1922, he took his squadron of thirty ships, on which there were more than nine thousand people, abroad. In January 1923, G. Stark brought the flotilla to Manila, where he sold the ships, and divided the money received and a small

also came from a family of naval officers. Her father V. Razvozov and brother O. Razvozov were admirals⁸.

The early biography of Boris can be traced on the basis of his memories⁹. Boris Herhiiiovych Stark (1909–1996) was born in Kronstadt when his father served as a senior officer on the cruiser Aurora. In 1917, in Petrograd, he entered the prestigious Karl May Gymnasium, which was attended by children of the Russian elite. So, for example, the future academician D. Likhachiov, *benoit nep, benua mpahc* all Benoits, Roerichs, Dobuzhynskis, Uspenskis and others graduated from this institution. Against the background of revolutionary events, his father joined the army of Admiral A. Kolchak, and then found himself in exile in France. When Boris was nine years old, his mother was forced to leave the service at the Naval Academy and the family was left without means of subsistence. However, thanks to his father's acquaintances, Boris was taken to the academy to work as a messenger.

After the death of their mother, Boris and his sister Tatyana faced the question of emigration and reunification with their father. All the time, the father tried to secretly maintain contact with the family, sending anonymous letters and parcels with food. But it was not easy for the children of the odious admiral, a principled enemy of the Soviet government, to leave. So the Starks invented a legend that some distant relative found out that her nephews were orphans and decided to take them in to raise them. Thus, in 1925, the younger Starks received permission to leave the USSR. First, they reached Finland, and from there they went to Berlin, where they met their father and went to Paris.

Since childhood, Boris dreamed of becoming a priest, however, according to his father, it was not serious, because one must somehow survive in the difficult conditions of emigration and support the family. At the insistence of his father, Boris graduated from the private Electromechanical Institute. In 1929, he married Natalia Abashova, with whom he lived the rest of his life. In their marriage, four children were born, one of the sons – Serhii – died in childhood. Boris worked part-time at the zoo (feeding animals), as a turner, etc. However, he finally got a job in his specialty and worked as an electrical engineer until 1939, and later he was a travelling salesman and a tax collector.

However, the desire to become a priest did not leave him – he often visited the church, communicated with church leaders, was a member of the “Russian Student Christian Movement”, attended public lectures by well-known representatives of Russian phil-

stock of gold, which was taken out during the evacuation, equally among the lower ranks and officers. In 1924, upon learning of his wife's death, G. Stark left the Philippines and moved to Paris. In 1925, he took his children from the USSR and got a job as a taxi driver. During the Second World War, during the occupation of Paris, the German authorities tried to persuade him to cooperate, but he refused. Buried at the Russian cemetery of Sainte-Genevieve-des-Bois. See: T.N. Yasko, *Admiral Stark*, „Rossiya i Aziatsko-Tikhookeanskii region” 2004, No. 4, pp. 18–22 [in Rus.].

⁸ *Otets Boris i matushka Natalya...*; T.N. Yasko, op. cit.

⁹ *Otets Boris i matushka Natalya...*

osophical and religious thought (S. Bulgakov, M. Berdiaev, I. Ilyin, B. Vysheslavtsev, H. Florovsky).

Metropolitans Evlohiy and Serhii Bulgakovs, who were his first clergymen, played a decisive role in the spiritual formation of B. Stark as a priest. In 1937, Metropolitan Evlohiy (1868–1946) (the head of the Russian Orthodox parishes in Western Europe, from September 1945 – the Western European Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church) ordained him a deacon, and later a presbyter. In the future, B. Stark served in several churches, but a year later he was appointed to the St. Nicholas Church at the Russian House in Sainte-Genevieve-des-Bois. Near the church was the largest foreign Russian cemetery, where father Boris had to mourn many famous representatives of the Russian emigration for fifteen years – actor I. Mozzhukhin, artist K. Korovin, philosophers S. Bulgakov and P. Struve and others.

At the last stage of the Second World War in Europe, the Russian emigration in France, which was significantly replenished with members of the Resistance Movement, was imbued with respect for the USSR's contribution to the joint victory of the Anti-Hitler coalition. In emigrant circles, patriotism and hopes for the weakening of the Stalinist regime in the USSR increased. The intense activity of the Soviet agents, Stalin's restoration of the Patriarchate and his demonstrative desire for reconciliation with the Russian Orthodox Church in Western Europe should be added to this. Also of great importance was the personal position of Metropolitan Eulogius who was inclined to join the Moscow Patriarchate¹⁰. By order of June 14, 1946, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR restored the citizenship of the Russian Empire to subjects of the Russian Empire living on the territory of France¹¹. At that time, about ten thousand people received Soviet passports¹².

After some consideration, B. Stark also received Soviet citizenship, but he was in no hurry to return to his homeland. The meeting in August 1946 with the head of the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Hryhorii of Leningrad and Novgorod (1870–1955), which was sent to Paris in connection with the death of Metropolitan Evlohiy, to establish the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate in the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, was important for the further fate of Father Boris in Western Europe¹³. This mission was not successful, but the idea of returning emigrants to Rus-

¹⁰ P.E. Kovalevskii, *Iz dnevnikov: sentyabr 1944 goda – avgust 1946 goda*, „Tserkov i vremya” 2007, No. 38(1), pp. 149–207 [in Rus.]; N.G. Ross, *Vstupitelnoe slovo k dnevnikom P.E. Kovalevskogo*, „Tserkov i vremya” 2007, No. 38(1), pp. 144–146 [in Rus.].

¹¹ *O vosstanovlenii v grazhdanstve SSSR poddannikh bivshei Rossiiskoi imperii, a takzhe lits, utrativshikh sovetskoe grazhdanstvo, prozhivayushchikh na territorii Frantsii*, „Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR” 1946, No. 21 [in Rus.].

¹² V.V. Kostikov, *Ne budem proklinat izgnane... (Puti i sudbi russkoi emigratsii)*, Moskva 1990, p. 312 [in Rus.].

¹³ M. Kail, „Pravoslavnyi factor” v sovetskoi diplomatii: *mezhdunarodnie kommunikatsii Moskovskogo patriarkhata seredini 1940-kh gg.*, „Hosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov v Rossii i za rubezhom” 2017, No. 1, pp. 19–40 [in Rus.].

sia gained popularity among some of the clergy, mostly young people. B. Stark shared his doubts with Hryhorii, because he knew about Soviet terror and repressed remigrant priests. For this, Hryhorii advised him to rely on God's will¹⁴.

Thus, Boris made an existential and civilizational choice¹⁵. However, the journey to his homeland turned out to be long, his father was against it. Only after his death in 1950 did Father Boris and his family start preparing to move. Olha Alekseevna Ihnatieva from Kostroma¹⁶ (daughter of the diplomat and statesman Count A.N. Ihnatiev, whose family the Starks were familiar with from France) wrote a letter of invitation directly to him.

In April 1952, B. Stark returned to the USSR with his family and was immediately appointed as an assistant rector of the Ioann-Zlatoust (John Chrysostom) Cathedral in Kostroma. Patriarch Aleksii I (1945–1970) – Patriarch of Moscow and All-Russian Orthodox Church) justified B. Stark's sending to Kostroma by the fact that in the province he would not become the object of close attention of the Soviet special services. In addition, there was an archbishop in Kostroma who "knew how to protect his clergy". However, B. Stark's wife began to fall seriously ill and, by order of the patriarch, he was transferred to Kherson.

In Kherson, B. Stark served as the rector of the cathedral – the Holy Spirit Church (1953–1956), performed the duties of deacon of all city churches. Since 1956, he became the secretary of the Office of the Odesa Diocese in the Kherson Region. There were eighty-seven churches and one hundred and twenty priests in his denomination. Here he proved himself not only as a priest, but also as an effective administrator. In Kherson, he met Father Leonid (1868–1963), a representative of the prominent Ukrainian priestly family of the Hoshkevych family¹⁷.

The main reasons for the purposeful activity of the USSR regarding the return to the homeland of various categories of emigrants and even the invitation to move foreigners were the need for demographic recovery after the war, the attraction of additional labour for the reconstruction of the country, and ideological – to show the world the advantages of the Soviet way of life in the conditions of the Cold War. All re-emigrants and repatriates with members of their families underwent an operational check, especially citizens of other countries (first of all, in the 2nd Department of the KGB – counter-intelligence). Of course, this also applied to the Starks.

¹⁴ *Otets Boris i matushka Natalya...*

¹⁵ T.A. Medvedeva, S.V. Bushueva, *Rossiiskoe Zarubezhe XX veka: osobennosti formirovaniya, adaptatsii i sokhraneniya natsionalnoi identichnosti rossiiskoi emigratsii*, „Vestnik Nizhegorodskogo universiteta im. N.I. Lobachevskogo” 2016, No. 2, p. 35 [in Rus.]; N.G. Ross, op. cit.

¹⁶ Haluzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv Suzhby bezpeky Ukrainy (Kyiv) (HDA SBU), 1.1.618.314 [in Ukr.].

¹⁷ A. Shevchenko, *Leonid Hoshkevych: zhyttievyi shliakh sviashchennyka*, „Knowledge, Education, Law, Management” 2021, No. 37(1), pp. 250–258 [in Ukr.]; I.I. Yurevich, *Protoierei Boris Stark v „chudnom selskom khrame”*, <https://omiliya.org/content/protoierei-boris-stark-v-chudnom-selskom-khrame> [in Rus.] (accessed: 1.05.2025).

During Stalinism, the process of repatriation and re-emigration was mostly violent (kidnapping, accusing repatriates of collaboration with the Nazis or disagreement with the Soviet government, and, accordingly, repression). After Stalin's death, repatriation work stopped for a while. Analysis of the activity of the KGB under the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the KGB under the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, including the change in the methods and priorities of the penal body during the Khrushchev "thaw" years, has repeatedly attracted the attention of modern researchers¹⁸. The Communist Party and the government again began to concern themselves with the return of citizens to their homeland. This time, the mistakes of the past were taken into account and the bet was placed on propaganda of the Soviet way of life and agitation for the return to the USSR. It was decided that public organizations, the special press, relatives and friends from the USSR would persuade the citizens. This in no way removed the KGB from the process.

Thus, already in April 1955, under the control of the KGB, the Committee of Return to the Motherland was created (formally, on the initiative of former prisoners of fascist camps), whose headquarters were based in East Berlin. The Committee was headed by Major General of the Soviet Army, former prisoner of war N. Mykhailov. The legal basis of the Committee's activity was the resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dated July 17, 1955 *On amnesty for Soviet citizens who collaborated with the occupiers during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945*. A major role was played in the ideological and organizational aspects of repatriation by the liberalization that started with the 20th Congress of the CPSU (February 14–27, 1956).

In 1959, the name of the Committee was changed, from 1960 it began to be called the Committee of Return to the Motherland and the Development of Cultural Relations with Compatriots, and from 1963 – the Soviet Committee for Cultural Relations with Compatriots Abroad (Moscow). The committee in Berlin was transformed into the Representation of the Soviet Committee in the German Democratic Republic.

Repatriates were promised a heavenly life after their return – housing, work, financial assistance for settling in places.

Since 1955, the Committee published the newspaper "For the return to the Motherland" (since 1960 – "Voice of the Motherland"), which was published in both Russian and Ukrainian languages (including by the publishing house Radianska Ukraina [Soviet Ukraine], Kyiv)¹⁹.

Radio broadcasts and film magazines were also produced, which visualized propaganda materials. Telecasts had a limited impact – only on the territory of the USSR. Thus,

¹⁸ V.T. Okipniuk, *Komitet derzhavnoi bezpeky SRSR ta Komitet derzhavnoi bezpeky URSR*, [in:] *Entsyklopediia istorii Ukrainy*, Vol. 4, eds. V.A. Smolii, et al., Kyiv 2007, p. 479 [in Ukr.].

¹⁹ HDA SBU, 1.1.619.317; 1.1.626.427.

in 1956, ten issues of the film magazine about the arrangement of the lives of repatriates and hopes for a better future “Znovu na Batkivshchini” [Again in the Motherland] were created at the Ukrainian Film Studio of Documentary Films²⁰.

Radio broadcasts were of the greatest importance, especially in conditions when printed products were difficult to distribute in capitalist countries. Broadcasting to Western Europe took place from the Committee’s central office in Berlin. Therefore, the Cold War can be called “radio war”.

Special broadcasts of the radio propaganda of the Committee together with the radio committees of the Union and autonomous republics, various regions of the USSR were of a confidential nature, strictly regulated and controlled by the relevant bodies. Much attention was paid to both the content and the form of presentation of the material, as well as musical design. The goal was not only to interest potential re-emigrants and repatriates in the new facts of the USSR’s successes, but also to reach the depths of the soul. Therefore, folk and popular melodies were included in the scripts of radio broadcasts, relatives and friends were invited to the microphone, who addressed them individually. The means of radio caused emotional stress, a feeling of longing and a desire to return to the homeland. This power turned out to be much more effective than repeated slogans. Usually, the broadcasts contained several thematic blocks – cultural and educational, achievements of the national economy, life in the homeland of those who returned, etc. Initially, the Committee limited itself to its editorials. This required professionalism and accuracy from the local agents – to meet a certain time limit, not to deviate from the script, because there was no technical possibility to edit²¹.

The successful activity of the Committee led to an increase in the re-emigration flow. The KGB controlled the work of local authorities, which were supposed to arrange for those who returned. However, the results were not always desirable and positive. Thus, the issue of accommodation in Kyiv for the Romaniuk-Kresten mixed family, which moved to Soviet Ukraine from France, but was dissatisfied with the lack of separate housing and work for a French man by profession, was resolved at the Union level in early February 1956 the Ukrainian KGB informed the Cabinet of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, the deficiencies were corrected. The Romaniuk-Kresten family abandoned plans to return to France²².

Probably, this example led to the activation of the Soviet propaganda system on the territory of Ukraine to provide new positive materials about the life of re-emigrants from France. The focus of their attention was the Stark family, which, probably due to its special status, really had good opportunities in the Soviet state.

²⁰ Ibidem, 1.1.619.300.

²¹ R. Dautova, op. cit.

²² HDA SBU, 1.1.618.256–257.

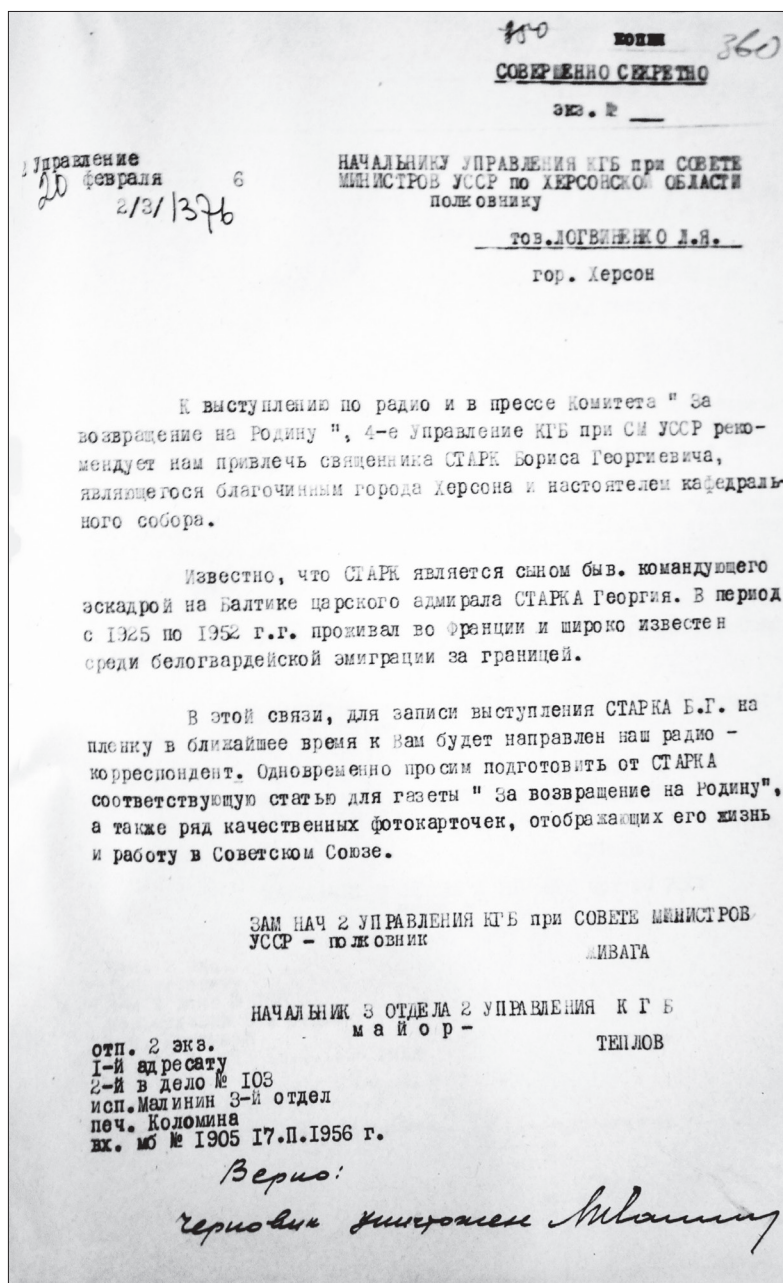


Photo 1. The State Security Committee USSR, Committee of Return to the Motherland, letter,
17 II 1956 (copy)

Source: Haluzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv Sluzhby bezpeky Ukrainy (Kyiv) (HDA SBU), 1.1.618.360.

Organizes an interview with the Starks of the 2nd Management (3rd Department) of the KGB under the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, on February 17 sends specialists from the 4th Management to the place²³.

The selection of correspondents for the corps of propaganda specialists for the return to the homeland was regulated and improved, the requirements for personnel were high (as evidenced by cases 623 and 626, dedicated to the accounting of personnel and finances for 1956–1957). Serious checks were carried out, the issuance of official documents and the peculiarities of work were subject to “non-disclosure”. The personnel file as a standard contained personal data, a pseudonym (subsequently, in service documentation, except for personnel, only a pseudonym was used), home address, marital status, experience of working with relatives of “non-returnees”, job characteristics, a self-written autobiography, and personnel records with photos. Recommendations required applicants to combine work with local or central mass media (as journalists, photo and radio correspondents), and priority was given to representatives of the teaching and engineering professions. Requirement: not only to be able to work well the materials are literary, and it is also desirable that they themselves be expatriates or re-emigrants, understood the position of emigrants abroad. The transfer of agents to work along the lines of the Committee to other regions of Ukraine was welcomed.

Certificate (dated September 11, 1956) for the agent “Yuzhni” (Russian) (Ukrainian – “Southern”, English – “Southern”), issued by the 2nd Directorate of the KGB in the Kherson region (under the signature of the head of the Directorate) an employee of Atsekhovskiy Ivan Mitrofanovych, born in 1905. Place of birth – Mykolayiv region, Russian, military scout, fought, was convicted in 1943 for exceeding official powers for 7 years by the Military Tribunal. He has a military education, non-partisan. He works as a literary employee of the editorial office of the regional newspaper “Naddnipyanska Pravda” in the department of agriculture – this allows him to make business trips throughout the region. The agent received a good description: versatile, cultured, disciplined, can find a common language with anyone²⁴.

It can be assumed that it was the agent I. Atsekhovskiy who prepared the radio broadcast and publication of materials about the Stark family from Kherson in 1956 (at least we do not have information about other agents of this level who were active in Kherson at that time).

Already on March 12, they reported to Moscow about the implementation. A script was prepared (12 sheets) and a radio broadcast was recorded, as well as the text of the article *4 goda na rodnoy zemle* [4 years on the homeland] (7 sheets), 4 photographs were

²³ Ibidem, 1.1.618.360.

²⁴ Ibidem, 1.1.626.51–52.

added²⁵. The script and text of the article were in the form of a typescript – a reprint of a draft. At the same time, the accompanying document was marked “top secret” and “do not print”, as well as “draft destroyed” was added in handwriting²⁶.

The approved script is untitled. Formally, it was the “26th radio broadcast”²⁷. In the future, we will operate specifically with the script of the radio broadcast, because it has the form of an interview, was released earlier, had more publicity abroad and reflects human, emotional and social contexts as best as possible.

The article was intended for the newspaper “For a Return to the Homeland” and actually duplicated the radio broadcast without changes in content, but was adapted for printing in the form of a complete text on behalf of the author – B. Stark himself²⁸.

Photo materials recorded visits by the Stark family to the construction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant and the town of Nova Kakhovka²⁹. The radio broadcast and the article were published by the end of March.

The interview can be divided into several thematic blocks: preservation by B. Stark and his family of their religious and ethnic identity, intellectual base; non-interference of the Soviet state in church affairs; demonstration of the advantages of the Soviet way of life and the successes of the USSR in industrialization; details of the organization of everyday life, emphasizing the human dimension and emotional contact with the audience; campaign for return to the homeland, appeal to the Russian community in France and relatives.

The broadcast begins with a musical composition, which will continue to serve as a background. This is the Kherson waltz, which reflects the local flavour³⁰. The meeting begins at Father Boris’ home with an inspection of his nice apartment. However, the correspondent did not emphasize that it was given to the family by the Diocese, and not by the state³¹.

Both at the beginning and at the end of the interview, B. Stark emphasizes that everything is fine with him and his family is satisfied in order to refute the information that was spread in France (“a lot of different nonsense”): “secular authorities have never interfered in my spiritual work (...). In all 4 years, I never once had to cover my soul and enter into a conflict with my flock, my Christian conscience (...), no one cut my hair, I walked and still walk in a cassock, children are not taken away”³², “from the first day

²⁵ Ibidem, 1.1.618.361.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Ibidem, 1.1.618.302-317.

²⁸ Ibidem, 1.1.618.362-368.

²⁹ Ibidem, 1.1.618.891-892.

³⁰ Ibidem, 1.1.626.51-52, 302.

³¹ *Otets Boris i matushka Natalya...*

³² HDA SBU, 1.1.618.304-305.

we immediately entered in the big family of our people, as if there had never been many years spent abroad, the people met us with love, joy, with complete trust, and for this love we responded with the same trust and devotion to this whole big, native family »I am of which: the Soviet Union«³³, and also demonstrates his pride – the library that he took from France”³⁴.

Starks and the correspondent emphasize the advantages of the Soviet system of medical care and social security. So, the son Mykhail, who received a ticket to a sanatorium after a serious illness, was absent from the interview³⁵.

Some features of the Soviet reality attracted many in deed. This, of course, is access to social security and health care and what B. Stark called “flight to the future”. He compared the Soviet man’s perception of the world (“an intense rapid flight to the future”) with how emigrants in Paris perceived the past and even today – from the perspective of “yesterday”.

The radio broadcast is interrupted in the house of a priest’s family and takes listeners to the construction of the Nova Kakhovka HPP. The Starks are delighted with the scale of construction, and they also like the city of Nova Kakhovka. They consider it rational that the hydroelectric power plant is built first, and then the city infrastructure.

Together with her parents, there was a daughter, Vera, married to a worker at the Kharkiv plant “Hammer and Sickle”, who is raising a daughter, also son Kolya (Russian – Kolya, Nikolay). Kolya showed interest in how the dam blocks the river. What prompted the correspondent’s question was whether he changed his mind about becoming a sailor like his grandfather and great-grandfather, and now wants to become a builder. But Kolia confirmed that he wanted to be a sailor³⁶.

The wife, Natalia Dmitrievna, casually conveyed her greetings to her husband’s sister, Tetiana Heorhiivna Stark³⁷.

Tatiana herself did not show a desire to return to the USSR, but people in the West were interested in this interview.

So, a certain Mykola Ivanovych Gulida from Berlin wrote on April 2, 1956 in the name of his niece (to give to his mother – A.P. Gulida, who lives in Kyiv and recently wrote him two letters). He himself has been in Germany for 15 years, misses his homeland, but hesitates to return. By B. Stark, he clarifies the government’s attitude, asks for advice and patronage. He has children 4 years and a few months old, he asks what things to take with him, how to pack, instructions on crossing the border, etc.³⁸ It was

³³ Ibidem, 1.1.618.368.

³⁴ Ibidem, 1.1.618.305.

³⁵ Ibidem, 1.1.618.308.

³⁶ Ibidem, 1.1.618.313.

³⁷ Ibidem, 1.1.618.315.

³⁸ Ibidem, 1.1.622.306-307.



Photo 2. Boris Starks and his family (Nova Kakhovka, 1956)

Source: HDA SBU, 1.1.618.891).



Photo 3. Kakhovka hydroelectric power plants (Nova Kakhovka, 1956)

Source: HDA SBU, 1.1.618.892.

recommended to give an answer on the radio with a call to return to M.I. Gulida to his homeland³⁹.

In 1960, B. Stark was transferred to the Yaroslavl Diocese as the abbot of the Ascension-Heorhiievskiy Church in the city of Rybinsk and deacon of the Rybinsk district. Later, it was assigned to the Yaroslavl Cathedral in honour of the Fedoriv Icon of the Mother of God. Both of his sons also became priests.

In the 1960s, a thin layer of intellectuals appeared in the circles of the clergy, around whom gathered the intelligentsia that needed spiritual guidance. Archpriests Vsevolod Shpiller, Alexander Menia, Boris Stark, Mikhail Turukhanov, Viktor Gavrilov, Nikolai Vinogradov, Ioann Evdokymov are named among the iconic figures. Some of them, including B. Stark, were emigrants, people of pre-revolutionary culture⁴⁰. B. Stark's circle of communication was extremely wide. He corresponded with many famous people in the USSR, including academician S. Kapitsa, academician D. Likhachiov, writer V. Pikul, singer I. Kozlovskiy, and others.

Boris Stark died in Yaroslavl at a respectable age. He was awarded all possible church awards during his lifetime.

At the end of his life, after the collapse of the USSR, B. Stark mentioned that the Soviet authorities exerted severe pressure on the Russian Orthodox Church and the "forced" cooperation of clergymen with the KGB. He spoke about many priests who were repressed, including his acquaintances who returned with him from France. He also did not deny the existence of whistleblowers and "sexots" ("sexot" from the Russian "secret employee" of the Soviet special services), violators of the secret of confession, in the ranks of the Church. He admitted that every priest necessarily had contact with KGB agents.

However, in Father Boris's rhetoric, one feels an attempt to justify himself and the Church itself for cooperating with the authorities. There were also such clerics, including Boris Stark, who, in difficult times for the Russian Orthodox Church, used these contacts for the benefit of a good cause. He himself did not deny his contacts with the KGB, but pointed out that he did not do any immoral act that could somehow "stain his robes"⁴¹.

It should be noted that during the years of B. Stark's tenure in administrative positions in Kherson, not a single priest was deregistered⁴².

However, in our opinion, Father Boris was always loyal to the official secular and church authorities, both in France and in the USSR. He always supported Metropolitan Evlohii, Patriarch Aleksii I, as it was in the attempt to join the Moscow Patriarchate of

³⁹ Ibidem, 1.1.622.307.

⁴⁰ D.I. Sazonov, *K vrprosu ob avtoritete svyashchennika na primere predstavitelei dukhovenstva 1960–1970-kh godov*, „Ipatevskii vestnik” 2022, No. 20(4), p. 87 [in Rus.].

⁴¹ *Otets Boris i matushka Natalya...*

⁴² I.I. Yurevich, op. cit...

Russian churches of the Western European Exarchate in France and the return of emigrants to the USSR⁴³, as well as in the case of condemning the “Open Letter” of priests Hleb Yakunin and Nikolai Eshliman with the exposure of the violation of religious human rights in the USSR (from November 5, 1965)⁴⁴.

The fate of the Stark family and one of its famous representatives – Boris Stark unfolded against the background of global historical processes and population movements of the first half of the 20th century. He demonstrated the life strategy of a talented and original person who, despite all obstacles, fulfilled his dream - became a priest and went on the path of missionary service. “My whole life is a miracle...” – that’s how he called his memoirs, detailing the vicissitudes of life, facts and personal judgments. Indeed, it can be considered a miracle that Boris Stark survived two world wars, emigrated and then returned to the USSR, regardless of his origin and church rank, and avoided Soviet repression. But, in our opinion, the components of this miracle should be considered conformism as a trait of personal character and the life principle chosen by him. Father Boris believed that he lived his life honestly, he considered his conscience clear. However, free or not free cooperation with the Soviet punitive bodies, specifically with the KGB, participation in the propaganda actions of the Soviet special services automatically involve a specific person in the machine of repression and violation of human rights, and does not leave the clergyman with a clear conscience.

In our opinion, updating the materials of the KGB archives is very important in discovering the “human dimension” of the totalitarian era of national history, they provide various examples of the relationship between man and power, add new features to the biographies of famous personalities, and reveal interesting and tragic episodes of the biography of a “little” person.

The activities of the KGB and the Committee of Return to the Motherland, the specific methods of operational work with regard to re-emigrants and repatriates demonstrate the inhuman face of the Soviet regime, the bureaucratization and involvement of the entire vertical of power, for the maintenance of which inadequately large public funds were spent.

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⁴³ A.A. Kostryukova, *Po voprosu o yurisdiksii Moskovskoi Patriarkhii (neutverzhdenii proekt ukaza 1950 goda)*, „Vestnik Svyatofilaretevskogo instituta” 2022, Vol. 4, p. 158 [in Rus.].

⁴⁴ A.A. Fedotov, *Russkaya Pravoslavnaya Tserkov i religioznie dissidenti v 60–80-e godi XX veka*, <https://bogoslav.ru/article/3946671> [in Rus.] (accessed: 1.05.2025).

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A background figure in history – the case of Boris Stark

Summary: This study reconstructs the biography of B.H. Stark (1909–1996), a descendant of a military elite family in the Russian Empire. Born in the Russian Empire, Stark lived in Paris for a long time, received Soviet citizenship in 1946, and returned to the USSR with his family in 1952 to continue his career as an Orthodox priest. The article analyzes the materials deposited in the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (Kyiv, Ukraine) for references to Stark's participation in Soviet propaganda operations, cooperation with the State Security Committee (KGB), and the activities of the Committee for Return to the Motherland, specifically the 1956 episode during his service in Kherson. During the social and political upheavals of the 20th century, Stark adhered to a conformist life strategy but relied on his contacts with the KGB for the benefit of the Church. The case study of Boris Stark opens new perspectives for examining background historical figures and drawing parallels between individuals and the masses as well as the social environment of their time.

Keywords: archpriest Boris Stark, repatriation, State Security Committee, background figure in history

Eine Persönlichkeit des „zweiten Plans” in der Geschichte – Der Fall Boris Starks

Zusammenfassung: Die vorliegende Studie rekonstruiert die Biografie eines Nachkommen der berühmten Familie der Militärelite des Russischen Reiches, B. H. Starks (1909–1996). Der gebürtige Russe lebte lange Zeit in Paris, erhielt 1946 die sowjetische Staatsbürgerschaft und kehrte 1952 mit seiner Familie in die UdSSR zurück, wo er seine Karriere als orthodoxer Geistlicher fortsetzte. Auf der Grundlage von Materialien aus dem Archiv der Staatssicherheit der Ukraine (Kiew, Ukraine) wurde auf seine Beteiligung an sowjetischen Propagandaaktivitäten, seine Zusammenarbeit mit dem Komitee für Staats-

sicherheit (russ. KGB) und die Aktivitäten des „Komitees für die Rückkehr in die Heimat“ hingewiesen, insbesondere auf eine Episode aus dem Jahr 1956 während seiner Dienstzeit in Cherson. Inmitten der sozialen und geopolitischen Umwälzungen des 20. Jahrhunderts vertrat Boris Stark eine konformistische Lebenseinstellung, versuchte jedoch, seine Kontakte zum KGB zum Wohle der Kirche zu nutzen. Der Fall Boris Stark zeigt die vielfältigen Forschungsmöglichkeiten im Bereich der Untersuchung von Persönlichkeiten des „zweiten Plans“ in der Geschichte und der Verbindung des Individuums mit den Massen, aber auch des Menschen mit dem sozialen Umfeld seiner Zeit.

Schlüsselwörter: Hohepriester Boris Stark, Repatriierung, Staatssicherheitskomitee, eine Persönlichkeit des „zweiten Plans“ in der Geschichte.

Postać historyczna – przypadek Borisa Starka

Streszczenie: Niniejsze opracowanie rekonstruuje biografię B.H. Starka (1909–1996), potomka elitarnej rodziny wojskowej w Imperium Rosyjskim. Stark urodzony w Imperium Rosyjskim przez długi czas mieszkał w Paryżu, otrzymał obywatelstwo sowieckie w 1946 r. i powrócił do ZSRR z rodziną w 1952 r., aby kontynuować karierę duchownego prawosławnego. W artykule przeanalizowano materiały z Archiwum Państwowego Służby Bezpieczeństwa Ukrainy w Kijowie pod kątem udziału Starka w sowieckich operacjach propagandowych, odniesień do współpracy z KGB oraz działalności Komitetu Powrotu do Ojczyzny, a w szczególności epizodu z 1956 r., gdy służył w Chersoniu. W okresie społecznych i politycznych przemian XX w. Stark wyznawał konformistyczną strategię życiową, ale dla dobra Kościoła wykorzystywał kontakty z KGB. Studium przypadku Borisa Starka otwiera nowe perspektywy w badaniu postaci historycznych i znajdowaniu paraleli między jednostkami a masami, a także ówczesnym środowiskiem społecznym.

Słowa kluczowe: arcykapłan Boris Stark, repatriacja, KGB, postać historyczna