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### **Waste Recycling in the Early Soviet Union Period: the Success Story of Ukrutilzbir JSC**

**Abstract. Purpose of the article.** A significant number of studies have been devoted to waste disposal in the USSR during the Cold War period when waste transformed into a valuable resource for the demanded products in the postwar USSR. The article examines the earlier period of these activities – the 1920s. Using the example of the Ukrainian USSR, it argues that waste collection and reuse programs have already started in the early Soviet Union. The article demonstrates the activities of the non-state company Ukrutilzbir JSC, which was one of the largest waste procurers on the Republican waste market. **The methodological basis.** The research is based on the analysis of archival materials that have never been introduced into scientific circulation. **Relevance.** At the moment, this topic has not been studied at all. **Conclusions.** The article reveals the success story of this actor, the peculiarity of its activity, balancing dependence and independence from the State, competition with state companies. The article suggests that several factors contributed to the success of the company: the presence of a large quantity of waste in Ukraine, the demand of state enterprises in additional raw materials, fairly efficient management, and use of an administrative resource in the form of a monopoly right to collect waste that, however, did not protect the company from problems. The author determined problems encountered by waste pickers due to the poverty of the population, which could not «produce» needed by Soviet enterprises the quantity of waste. The author identified methods of motivating the population to hand over waste. The main actors of the waste market in Ukraine, sources of purchase and sale of waste have been identified. They are the following: enterprises of state industry, state trade, cooperatives, private persons, procurers of waste. The author also had analyzed the attempts of state authorities to regulate the relationship between the main waste producers in Ukraine, that were both partners and competitors.

**Key words:** waste, waste procurers, USSR, Ukrainian SSR, Ukrutilzbir, rags, paper, metal scrap, bone, culprit, Narkomtorg.

**Relevance of research.** The reuse and recycling of resources in different countries, historical periods, and contexts have attracted the attention of many researchers. The aggravation of the environmental situation increases interest in the positive historical experience of waste disposal.

**Analysis of sources and recent research.** Many studies have concentrated attention on the reuse of waste in the Socialist countries [Pál Viktor, Pérez, Valenzuela, 2021 : 310-334; Gille Zsuzsa, 2007 : 1-264], and the Soviet Union of the Cold War period. There is a popular opinion that recycling has become increasingly active in the USSR after World War II when the value of waste for industrial development was overestimated [Kochetkova Elena, 2020]. It is logical to assume that waste reuse in the Soviet Union did not develop in a vacuum and that certain activities were carried out in the 1920s and 1930s. One can see a research gap regarding waste reuse and recycling in the early Soviet Union.

**Purpose of research.** This paper aims to demonstrate the introduction of wide-ranging recycling programs in the USSR in the 1920s. We argue that this period can serve as an entry point for historians to uncover actors, structures, and channels of the waste activities in the early Soviet Union as the resource shortage prioritized reused strategic importance of rags, old shoes, galoshes, broken glass, bottle caps, cans, paper, etc. However, existing literature focuses mainly on the development of the paper industry in the Soviet Union [Pristed Brigitte, 2020; StudinskyVolodymyr, 2000 : 255] which is not enough to study the origination of waste recycling in the USSR, and significantly restricts the field of research.

To fill this gap, we will investigate the situation in the Ukrainian SSR. The aim of this article is to present our hypothesis taking the example of the Ukrutilzbir JSC that operated in the Ukrainian SSR in the 1920s. Of particular interest is the fact that it was a private company. Therefore, the task of this research is to analyze the success story of this company. We will answer the following questions: what led to the emergence of this private company and contributed to its activities? What waste collection

practices have Ukrutilzbir developed? What challenges did waste collectors face in a country with limited access to material resources? How did this private company interact with State-owned waste collectors and the state?

This article is the first insight into the waste collection in the Ukrainian USSR in the early Soviet Union and opens a new perspective for future research. It uses archival documents of Ukrutilzbir that have never been used and put into scientific circulation. At least, their analysis will reveal many unknown facts and allow reconstruction of main directions and aspects of waste collection in the USSR in the 1920s as well as the activities of one of the largest waste pickers.

**Presenting ideas of research.** In the early 1920s, the Soviet Union faced the formidable task of rebuilding industry. Lack of resources and raw materials stimulated different forms of rationalization and acceleration of the Soviet economy. In addition, USSR faced several social problems – homelessness, unemployment, a significant migration of Jews from shtetls to the large cities. Immediately after the Civil War, increased the number of disabled veterans. These social and economic problems influenced the development of waste collection activities in Ukraine.

On 28 August 1923, Eduard Simson sent a letter to Red Cross Ukraine. He had written the following: “There are different types of materials used for the production of paper: rags, paper clippings, paper spoilt, etc. In recent years, paper and glass manufacturers have been in dire need of these additional resources. They try different ways of getting ones most through the individual entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, we see that in the city of Kharkiv alone, the hidden treasures destroy, as it is impossible to litter yards and rooms with unnecessary garbage. By the end of the workday, almost every employee of trusts and other government agencies has under the table a basket full of all sorts of unnecessary torn paper. This paper is dumped by couriers in garbage pits or burned in kilns. If we take warehouse one can see that the broken glass together with garbage dumped in landfills, where it perishes irretrievably.” He compared the situation with the pre-revolutionary time when various charities supported orphanages and homes for the disabled with garbage money; and proposed “to all and every individual citizen collect every piece of unnecessary paper, rag, broken glass, or household bottle and give it to the representatives of Red Cross Ukraine.” Simson believed that this would allow this organization to achieve its humanitarian goals; and factories and plants – their economic goals and work without stopping due to lack of raw materials. Therefore, he proposed to establish a specialized organization under the auspices of the Red Cross in Kharkiv to deal with waste collection. In his opinion, this body should work in self-sustainment requirements, develop these activities in and outside the city and give half of the profits for Red Cross Ukraine [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.16, Ark. 9].

It seems that Ukrainian authorities were interested in this idea. On 5 December 1923, a resolution of the Presidium of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (VUTsVK) of the Ukrainian SSR; and Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR was adopted. The title of the resolution is “On the establishment of the Office of Red Cross Ukraine; Central Committee of Sick and Wounded Red Army Soldiers; and Central Commission for Assistance to Children at VUTsVK for the Collection, Purchase, and Disposal of Miscellaneous Wastes in Ukraine called «Ukrutilzbir»”.

Therefore a special Authority aimed to accumulate the funds for the activities of these organizations was established. The main idea was to overcome child homelessness and help sick and wounded Red Army men and their families. The initiator of the establishment of this body Eduard Simson was appointed Commissioner. The Office was granted the exclusive right to collect, buy, market, sell and dispose of paper, rags, bones, glass, and other waste (except metal scrap) from residential and industrial areas, institutions and enterprises. The startup capital of the Office was RUB 2500, which was provided by these stakeholders [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.16, Ark.10].

The peculiarity of Ukrutilzbir activities was the employment of unemployed persons registered at the Labor Exchange Office. In parallel with the establishment of the Kharkiv Office, the future head of the Kyiv branch of Ukrutilzbir that was opened on 20 January 1924, Abram Kanevsky, who negotiated in Moscow with potential customers of the Ukrainian waste, explored the experience of the Unemployment Compensation Bureau, established under the Regional Labor Department of Moscow. This bureau developed projects on the involvement of unemployed persons in waste disposal, hiring them on a piece-rate basis. He was interested in this idea and suggested its implementation in Ukraine [DAKO, Op.1. F.2993. F.16, Ark. 13]. As a result, in the spring of 1924, the Commission for Combating Unemployment of Kyiv became the fourth shareholder of the Office [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.16, Ark.101]. Ukrutilzbir documents show that most of its employees got a job through the Labor Exchange Office. Many of them were Jews due to the high unemployment rate among this ethnic group.

Although initially there were high expectations of free delivery of various waste to Ukrutilzbir, they had not realized. Due to the difficult economic situation, the institutions sought material compensation for the trash, which led to the commercialization of these activities and the disappearance of humanitarian ideas. Environmental consciousness was not yet developed at that time and resource scarcity contributed to the transformation of waste (paper, rags, bones, glass,

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rubber, ferrous and non-ferrous metals) into a valuable commodity that should have been made a profit.

The company's documents used the definition "procuring" (rather than collecting) waste, the same as agricultural raw materials. This indicates the importance of waste as raw material and equating it with agricultural ones. Accordingly, we will use the definition "waste procurers" for companies engaging in waste collection.

It should be mentioned that the activities of the company took place during the NEP. It had promoted market relations involving State-owned companies and non-State ones. However, the role of NEP in the development of Ukrutilzbir activities is a debatable issue. According to the analyzed archival materials, after the end of the NEP and the beginning of the industrialization policy, the company's activities did not change. Therefore, in the article we do not intend to pay much attention to this aspect, this issue requires a more in-depth separate examination.

The charter of the authority included the following methods of waste collection: placing special recycling boxes in organizations, institutions, factories, warehouses, etc.; bulk purchase of waste through contracting with counterparties; small purchases in markets, yards, apartments, and private individuals; the involvement of private pickers; establishing of separate associations that would work in this field [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.16, Ark. 10].

The initial stage of activity characterizes by the accumulation of material resources and the development of organizational experience. The company decided to establish only a few basic provincial departments and use them as springboards for activities; therefore, it founded regional offices in Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Donetsk in 1924.

The Board also attempted to centralize procurement activities however failed. As Kharkiv staff did not know local markets and pricing, attempts to set prices "on top" proved unprofitable for the company. For instance, the Board concluded a General Agreement for bone purchase at a higher price (17 kopeks per 16 kg) than could be acquired in the Kyiv region (10 kopeks per 16 kg) [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.16, Ark. 46].

It soon became clear that due to the lack of sufficient capital, the existing management model was ineffective, so in August 1924, the company decentralized activities. The Board invited the shareholders to establish local waste collection organizations that would work with Ukrutilzbir on mutual beneficial commission agreements. The Board took on the responsibility of general instruction and representation of local organizations' interests in the highest authorities of the republic. However, he refused to be held responsible for their activities [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.16. Ark. 174].

During the year some local organizations, such as Kyiv, strengthened, but most faced organizational and legal challenges. Therefore, a year later it was decided to return to a centralized management model, but the organization decided to change the form of ownership and become private, as it opened up broad prospects for the business. On 1 October 1925, Ukrutilzbir JSC was established. The fixed capital allocated by the same stakeholders increased significantly and amounted to RUB 300,000. This contributed to the rapid development of the company. As of 1 October 1926, Ukrutilzbir already had five branches located in Kharkiv, Kyiv, Artemivsk, Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk, and two district offices in Vinnytsia and Mykolaiv [TsDAVO of Ukraine. F.4274. Op.1. F.1. Ark.1].

The ambitious plans of the leadership were to create an all-Ukrainian company. The following targets are put to achieve them: 1) to strengthen the position of Ukrutilzbir in the major centers of Ukraine; 2) to increase the collection of waste and improve its quality; 3) to participate in the implementation of illiquid industry assets [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.43. Ark.351]. It is worth noting that Ukrutilzbir was a universal waste picker, as it has been working with a wide range of waste. It competed with the state trading agency Statetorg of the Ukrainian SSR (the Ukrainian branch of the Russian Gostorg) and the Consumer Cooperation Union Vukoopsilka. Russian-Austrian Trading Company Rusavstorg specialized mainly in the rag and bone collection; Ores and Metals Trading Corporation Rudmetaltorg in metals, Ukrainian paper trust Ukrbumtrest - in a paper, Superphosphate plant of Sugartrust (further - Supercombinat) in bones.

Although in a year after the founding of the renewed company, due to the sharp rise in prices for salvage materials, Ukrutilzbir procured less waste; its economic activities demonstrated noticeable achievements. It had prepared waste for RUB 1.5 mln. During the year, the company's authority grew, which led to the expansion of its lending by state banks. By 1 October 1925, loans accounted for half of all financing, but by 1 October 1926, they had risen to 63.9 percent. The company's balance sheet at that time increased fivefold [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1, F.60. Ark.647].

In this context, one should point out the peculiarity of waste collection in the 1920s. First, it was the seasonality of work depending on the weather conditions. Usually, the season started April-May and ended in September. Cash was necessary to buy waste from the population (financial transactions with legal entities were in non-cash form). This demanded advance payment for waste pickers who used these funds to purchase rags, bones, small iron scrap, old galoshes, and other

waste from the population. Therefore, access to financing was of great importance for the plan implementation. Since Ukrutilzbir did not have enough cash, it tried to get bank loans.

Report analysis of its activities from 1 October 1925 to 1 October 1926 provides an opportunity to identify the main actors of the mid-1920s Ukrainian waste market.

Table 1.

**Results of Ukrutilzbir activities (sources of purchase and sale of waste, 1925-1925 operational year) [TsDAVO of Ukraine, f.4274, op.1, spr.1, ark.10-11]**

Amount of waste purchased from / through interested actors				
Own network of collectors	State industry	State trade	Cooperative enterprises	Private persons
31,7%	31,7%	10,8%	6,9%	8,9%
Amount of waste sold to interested actors				
	63,3%	14,7%	6,5%	15,5%

Table 2 shows the range and amount of waste collected for the year after the establishment of the joint-stock company Ukrutilzbir.

Table 2.

**Results of Ukrutilzbir activities (nomenclature of waste, 1925-1925 operational year) [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1, F.60. Ark.647-650].**

Waste group	Amount of waste, t
Ferrous metal scrap	20858
Waste paper	3117
Rags	1700
Bones	1114
Non-ferrous metal scrap	698
Broken glass	687
Rubber	60

Looking for markets outside Ukraine, the company attempted to expand its activities to the territory of other republics. At the meeting of the Board of Shareholders of Ukrutilzbir on 16 March 1927, Board member Miron Kolchinsky noted that the company "faced the task of using those unlimited resources in the USSR that lie without any movement" [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1 F.43. Ark.351]. As early as 1924, the company established the Moscow representative office; four warehouses were in the city. Ukrutilzbir also worked in Kazan and Samara [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.43. Ark.351]. When the Donetsk branch faced the fact of overstocking and the impossibility of selling goods on the Kyiv market, the Board allowed the establishment of a representative office in Rostov and the sale of goods on the local market. By the way, it did not last long, and in June 1927, it was closed [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.43. Ark. 97].

There was a paradox: although Ukrutilzbir was a private (joint-stock) company, it had to work primarily on the requests of the regulatory bodies - the People's Commissariat of Trade of the Ukrainian SSR (further - Narkomtorg), the Ukrainian Economic Council (UEC), which set the tasks in the procuring of the waste following the plans of development of the Ukrainian economy. In fact, Ukrutilzbir was an intermediary who bought and sold waste on the market, although its main counterparties were state-owned enterprises.

In 1925, Ukrutilzbir started buying state property from auctions. The main subject of interest was sugar refineries subordinated to the Sugartrest. The construction of new enterprises or the technical re-equipment of existing ones caused the turning of many old sugar mills and other enterprises into illiquid property. Interest in such assets determined the search for scrap iron and non-ferrous metals (cast iron, aluminum, copper, etc.) demanded by the Soviet enterprisers. The main buyers of metal were enterprises of Metaltrest and Rudmetaltorg.

For example, according to the general agreement with Rudmetaltorg, the Podolsk branch of Ukrutilzbir was to develop 15 enterprises of the Uman branch of Sugartrust in late 1925 - early 1926 [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.20. Ark. 84]. At the request of the Supreme Board of the National Economy of the USSR and the personal request of its Chairman Felix Dzerzhinsky, Ukrutilzbir was to develop the property of 19 plants and hand over 830 t of scrap iron to state-owned enterprises in the first half of 1926 [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.20. Ark. 99].

However, there were other ways of collecting scrap metal, such as contracting with industrial enterprises. Ukrutilzbir signed agreements with many companies, such as the Southern Engineering Trust that bought monthly 491-655 t of scrap metal from the company in 1927 [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.64. Ark.228]. Another source was picking metal on landfills. In addition to rags and bones, many

non-ferrous metals were found there, such as lead. This led to attempts by Ukrutilzbir to conclude the landfill lease agreements with municipal authorities responsible for communal services in Kyiv and Odesa. Another source of non-ferrous metals was military training grounds, where metal waste remained after military exercises. Therefore, Ukrutilzbir entered into several agreements with the Kyiv Artpolygon and received the monopoly right to the disposal of waste military metal [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.31. Ark.130-131]. According to the letter sent by the head of the Kyiv branch to the Board, it collected 32 t of shell scrap metal from March to April [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. D.40. Ark.145].

One of the biggest consumers of the bones was the Superphosphate Plant of Sugartrust. Ukrutilzbir entered into annual general agreements with the enterprise and additional ones. One obligated the Kyiv branch to procure 155 t of bones in the first quarter of 1926 [DAKO, F.2993, op.1, d.40].

Table 3.

**Plans of Ukrainian procurers of bones in 1926**  
[TsDAVO of Ukraine. F.423. Op.2, F.318. Ark.330].

Actor	Plan, t
Total, Ukrainian SSR	24600
Supercombinat	9000
Statetorg	7500
Ukrutilzbir	5000
Rusavstorg	2000
Other	1100

The main customers of rags in the 1920s were the paper enterprises of Ukrbumtrest, as it was the popular raw material for paper production. Under one contract, the commitment of Ukrutilzbir was to collect 2,457 t of paper waste. Many rags were collected for export, which started from Ukraine in 1925. The Kyiv branch of Ukrutilzbir had handed over 278 t of rags to Statetorg in June 1930 [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. D.40. Ark. 275]. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the list of industries that started using rags as raw materials increased. Thus, its customers were the chemical, haberdashery, glass, and construction industries. This increased pressure on the rag market. As for the light industry, we found only one reference in Ukrutilzbir records regarding this issue. This can be attributed to the priority development of heavy industry during the industrialization period.

However, the paper industry also demanded not only rags but also waste paper. In 1926, Ukrutilzbir handed over 2949 t of paper [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.43. Ark.151]. Ukrutilzbir supplied paper to the largest customer - Ukrbumtrest and to other enterprises - Shostka Paper Plant, Paper Syndicate, Bilpaytorg (Belorussian SSR), Donpolygraphbum.

The procurement of glass cullet was not as large as metal, paper, and rags. This can be explained by the oversupply of the Ukrainian cullet market compared to the demand of the glass industry. Ukrutilzbir collected - 41 t in 1926 [TsDAVO of Ukraine. F.4274. Op.1. F.1. Ark.6] and 525 t in the first quarter of 1930 [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.93. Ark.771].

Developing the activities, Ukrutilzbir had found various ways of waste collecting in cities and rural areas. In cities, humanitarian organizations, friends of the society, schoolchildren, Red Cross Ukraine committees, and Mutual Aid Committees were involved. Their remuneration was on average 10% of the price list. The company used to purchase secondary raw materials and waste products from industrial enterprises and cooperatives and develop landfills and waste dumps. It also organized teams (artels) of collectors who worked part-time and received remuneration (5-20% of the price list). Concerning the organization of various actions that mobilize the population to hand over waste, the first mention in the documents of Ukrutilzbir dates back to 1930. This happened on the eve of its closure and had no impact on the development of its activities, so we will not address this aspect in this article.

In rural areas, the above-mentioned humanitarian organizations, local grassroots cooperatives, and private rag and bone pickers were engaged in rag picking. To enable the population to sell waste, Ukrutilzbir opened special points that located one within 50 mi. [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. D.48. Ark.10]. Like other large waste procurers, Ukrutilzbir began to earn on cooperation with consumer cooperatives united by Vukoopspilka since 1926. They worked on counterparty terms, receiving commissions. The network of private collectors was quite extensive; they received commissions of 5-7 percent.

Given that in the 1920s, peasants were the main suppliers of rags and bones, waste pickers tried to encourage them in any way. Despite this, the procurers faced great difficulties in harvesting rags. According to official data, it was the poorest group of the Soviet population. There were 0.15 pairs of leather footwear and 1.47 g of fabric per capita in rural areas in 1923-1924, and 0.38 pairs of

footwear and 5.68 g of fabric in 1928-1929 [Statistical table of the Central Statistical Bureau, 2003 : 122]. It was also a large gap between the purchase price of rags from the population (average 90 kopek– RUB 1,20 per 16 kg) [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.43. Ark. 98] and the price for fabrics in the shops (RUB 2,75 – 7,50 per meter) [Transcript of the meeting of the Politburo, 1927]. It should also be taken into account the shortage of consumer goods in the USSR and widespread repair practices. Ekaterina Gerasimova and Sofia Chuikina characterize Soviet society as a repair society [Gerasimova Ekaterina, Chuikina Sof'ia, 2014 : 62]. Despite the high level of the ideologization of attitudes towards things in the USSR (the Soviet citizen should be free from fetishism), we consider that in the 1920s in the Ukrainian USSR, poverty, restricted access to many goods, and high prices played a more important role in the spread of repair practices than guidelines of the Soviet authorities.

Mentioned above factors limited the capacity of the Ukrainian market. With regard to rags, Ukrainian rags were of poor quality, as poor people mostly used inexpensive fabrics that had been in use for a long time. Thus, in 1928, only 40 percent of canvas rags, which were most valuable for paper production and export existed on the Ukrainian market. Rag pickers could not fulfill increased plans for its acquisition from the population, as the proposition was absent [TsDAVO of Ukraine. F.423. Op.2. F.318. Ark.80]. How did waste procurers decide this problem? One can see some correlation between the early years of industrialization and the introduction of incentives that encouraged people to give waste pickers rags. This mechanism was introduced in 1928. The rag-pickers, like pickers of other waste and agricultural raw materials, used the impossibility of the countryside inhabitants to acquire the needed commodities - matches, needles, threads, notebooks, envelopes, brushes, writing paper, shoelaces, cheap candy for the kids, etc. These commodities were used for the motivation of the population to sell rags in exchange for these and other things.

What was the scale of the encouragement of the population? Some figures are indicative. At the meeting held in Narkomtorg on July 4, 1930, it was decided to allocate for the fourth quarter a special bonus fund of not less than RUB 300000 except for handkerchiefs cost 50,000 rubles [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.102. Ark. 163].

Despite the significant difficulties in waste procurement and primarily financial ones by 1930, Ukrutilzbir had become one of the largest waste procurers. Its network consisted of 10 regional offices (formed due to the reorganization of 25 ones) and 133 warehouses. Most warehouses were in Kyiv - 62, Odesa - 17, Artemivsk - 16. Dnipropetrovsk - 9, Mykolaiv – 8, Kharkiv – 4 [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.93. Ark.73-76]. It competed on equal terms with mentioned above state companies. Its market share was 20-40%, depending on the region and sort of waste. For example, in the rag market, the share of Gostorg, Rusavstorg, and Ukrutilzbor was 60%, 24%, and 16%, respectively [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.79. Ark. 419-420].

The Ukrainian regulatory authorities obliged Ukrutilzbir to fulfill high plans of waste picking in 1930-1931.

Table 4.

#### Waste collection plan of Ukrutilzbir for 1930-1931

[DAKO. F,2993. Op.1. F.102. Ark.475]

Wase group	Plan, t
Iron	33000
Cast iron	15000
Non-ferrous metals	1000
Waste paper	1000
Rags	18000
Bones	6500
Broken glass	4000
Rubber	800

Industrialization policy stimulated the increase of competition between the main waste procurers in the second half of the 1920s. The demand of the Soviet enterprises in raw materials has rapidly grown and increased the request for waste.

From the modern perspective, the mechanism of waste picking looks somewhat chaotic. There was no definite subordination of the main procurers. They all had their network of waste pickers but often used subcontractors and traded each other. At the same time, all of them worked on the orders of the state regulatory bodies. The peculiarity of the situation in the 1920s was that on the one hand, Ukrutilzbir collaborated with other waste procurers and on the other hand, all procurers competed. This was due to the limited Ukrainian market, which could not "produce" needed by the Soviet industry quantity of waste. Indeed, plans for the development of the Ukrainian economy grew faster than the possibility of the Ukrainian industrial and population generating waste. Thus, demand for raw materials for the production of paper in Ukraine was following: in 1927-1928, 11200 t of rags

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and 1800 t of waste paper, and 1931-1932 - 24200 t of rags and 5800 t of paper [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.43. Ark.151]. Brigitte Pristed states that Soiuzutil's waste collecting system by the early 1930s was the reverse side of Stalinist industrialization [Pristed Brigitte, 2020 :310].

Compared to state-owned companies Ukrutilzbir was in a less advantageous position. It received access to commodities for the stimulation of population and waste pickers later than the state procurers did. This also applies to horse feed, as in the 1920s, waste pickers traveled around the countryside on horseback. We have mentioned at the beginning of the article that the company had to self-finance procurement. Ukrutilzbir had difficulties with obtaining loans and a chronic shortage of cash. Besides, lending had led to additional financial outlays due to paying interest. Staff shortage was an acute problem, as the labor exchange provided mostly low-skilled and unskilled workers. Meanwhile, waste picking required highly skilled workers. This applied primarily to specialists in collecting, sorting, storing, and packaging rags. Due to low salaries, Ukrutilzbir was unable to compete with the state companies, so there was a drain of high-skilled workers.

Competition among state and non-state actors, including Ukrutilzbir was strong. Quite often, they resorted to unfair business practices: collected waste on the territory of competitors; raised waste prices against the agreed price list; gave higher advances to private pickers; intercept the most profitable contracts; and imposed excessive waste quality requirements that caused financial losses. Each of the main procurers intended to take over the entire market.

Narkomtorg tried to introduce a mechanism of conventions - agreeing on prices by the main procurers of waste. Conventions concluded each year at the beginning of the season set both the price of waste and the number of additional collection points. Convention aimed to regulate the waste market, prevent unfair competition, particularly voluntary increasing of prices. However, they were often violated.

From time to time, Narkomtorg established zoning of territories determining the number of waste pickers in different areas. It sought to exclude representatives from more than two companies in districts to prevent competition while ensuring the implementation of plans [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.54. Ark. 117]. For example, according to the decree of the Narkomtorg dated 11 October 1928, the scrap metal collection was separated between Rudmetaltorg and Ukrutilzbir. Picking up in the local industry was delegated to Ukrutilzbir, at the republican and all-Union enterprises - to Rudmetaltorg. However, the idea of redistributing rags determined for export to Statetorg and at the Ukrainian enterprises – to Ukrutilzbir has not been realized [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.60. Ark. 269]. The economic efficiency of this idea raises certain doubts, as its implementation could lead to additional logistics costs. In our view, in the 1920s, regulators could not decide whether zoning was an effective incentive for waste collection plans. Given the uneven distribution of potential waste in Ukraine, zoning may have led to low activity in some regions. On the one hand, the lack of zoning has encouraged the establishment of high waste collection plans and encouraged their collectors to work more intensively throughout the country. On the other hand, multiple collectors in one area caused unnecessary competition, resulting in higher waste prices, damaging companies, and the State. Moreover, waste collectors periodically violated the boundaries of their territories, which caused constant complaints and complaints to the Narkomtorg of the Ukrainian SSR.

Decentralization of the procurement business and sharp competition damaged waste collection activities and the economic development of Ukraine. Due to these problems and the unfavorable market situation, in the first half of 1930, Ukrutilzbir fulfilled its plan by only 81.5 percent [DAKO. F.2993. Op.1. F.93. Ark.771-772]. The regulatory bodies and the press began discussing its liquidation in the spring of 1930. It was decided to transfer one part of the infrastructure and staff to Statetorg, the other to the newly established institution called Ukrutil, which was the regional branch of All-union company Centrutil.

The above-mentioned data allows us to develop some conclusions. First of all, we can state starting the large-scale waste collection in the USSR back in the 1920s. We have provided information on the activities of only one company; however, there is no doubt that the total amount of waste collected by all waste procurers was much higher. These issues demand further research.

The major conclusion of this article is that the activities of Ukrutilzbir demonstrate an unusual success story as the private company has been able to turn into one of the largest waste procurers in the Ukrainian SSR and compete with state-owned companies. Of course, this has happened under the New Economic Policy of the USSR, that as a blended economy, contained elements of both socialism and capitalism. It can be assumed that the development of market relations during this period contributed to the establishment of broad contacts with customers and consumers of waste and the conduct of various intermediary operations between different actors, which occurred only in the 1920s. However, this requires more in-depth research.

We highlight several factors that have contributed to the development of the success story of Ukrutilzbir. On the one hand, this is the availability of abundant waste resources in Ukraine and the demand for them by the Soviet enterprises. That facilitated waste collection activities. On the other

hand, the company has managed to build a vast network of pickers and infrastructure and developed quite effective methods of waste collecting for the rural and urban population. The peculiarity of its activities was both dependence and independence from the state. On the one hand, Ukrutilzbir did not have the financial support of the Soviet institutions, and on the other hand, it used the administrative resources provided by the Soviet decision-making bodies and performed their tasks, which shows the feature of market relations in the USSR during the 1920s - the use of different types of business ownership under state control. In this context, Ukrutilzbir can be considered not a purely private, but a semi-state company. Perhaps this peculiarity is the key to its success.

Another conclusion of this article is to identify the main problem that collectors had to solve in the 1920s. It was the imbalance between the increasing need for waste for the development of the Soviet economy and the limited opportunity of the population and industry to produce it. As we can see, waste influenced the forming of social relations in the early Soviet Union. The waste shortage led to sharp competition between the companies for its procurement. The challenges posed by this competition demonstrated the shortcoming of the decentralization model of waste collection in the 1920s. The battle for waste caused problems with the fulfillment of plans that influenced the transition to centralized waste management activities in the early 1930s.

The prospect of further research could be the study of the interaction between state and non-state actors, the influence of NEP on their activities, and the preconditions for the creation of the Alliance of Soiuutil in 1932.

**Gratitude.** I express my sincere gratitude to all members of the editorial board of the journal for the advice provided during the preparation of the article for publication.

**Financing.** The author has not received financial support for the research, authorship and / or publication of this article.

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#### Вторинне використання відходів у ранньому Радянському Союзі: історія успіху АТ «Укрутілзбір»

**Анотація. Мета статті.** Багато досліджень присвячено утилізації відходів в СРСР у період холодної війни, коли відходи перетворились на цінний ресурс для виробництва товарів широкого вжитку в післявоєнному Радянському Союзі. У статті розглядається більш ранній період цієї діяльності – 1920-ті роки. На прикладі Українського СРСР автор стверджує, що програми збору та повторного використання відходів почалися ще у перші роки існування Радянського Союзу. У статті показано діяльність недержавної компанії АТ «Укрутілзбір», яка була одним із найбільших заготівельників на республіканському ринку відходів. **Методологія дослідження.** Дослідження ґрунтується на аналізі архівних матеріалів, які ніколи не вводилися в науковий обіг. **Наукова новизна.** На даний момент ця тема не є дослідженою. **Висновки.** У статті розкривається історія успіху цього актора, особливості його діяльності, балансування між залежністю та незалежністю від держави, конкуренція з



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державними компаніями. У статті припускається, що успіхам компанії сприяли декілька факторів: наявність великої кількості відходів в Україні, потреба державних підприємств у додатковій сировині, досить ефективне управління, використання адміністративного ресурсу у вигляді монопольного права на збір відходів, що, однак, не захистило компанію від проблем. Автором визначено проблеми, з якими стикалися збирачі відходів через бідність населення, яке не могло «продувати» необхідну радянським підприємствам кількість відходів. Автором визначено методи мотивації населення до здачі відходів. Визначено основних суб'єктів ринку відходів в Україні, джерела купівлі-продажу відходів. Це: підприємства державної промисловості, держторгівлі, кооперативи, приватні особи, заготівельники відходів. Автором також проаналізовано спроби державних органів врегулювати відносини між основними виробниками відходів в Україні, які були як партнерами, так і конкурентами.

**Ключові слова:** відходи, заготівельники відходів, СРСР, Українська РСР, Укрутилзбір, ганчір'я, папір, металобрухт, кістки, Наркомторг.

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#### Вторичное использование отходов в раннем Советском Союзе: история успеха АО «Укрутилсбор».

**Аннотация. Цель статьи.** Многие исследования посвящены утилизации отходов в СССР в период холодной войны, когда отходы превратились в ценный ресурс для производства товаров широкого потребления в послевоенном Советском Союзе. В статье рассматривается более ранний период этой деятельности – 1920-е годы. На примере Украинского СССР автор утверждает, что программы сбора и повторного использования отходов начались в первые годы существования Советского Союза. В статье показана деятельность негосударственной компании АО «Укрутилсбор», которая являлась одним из крупнейших заготовителей на республиканском рынке отходов. **Методология исследования.** Исследование основывается на анализе архивных материалов, никогда не вводимых в научное обращение. **Научная новизна.** На данный момент эта тема не исследована. **Выводы.** В статье раскрывается история успеха этого актера, особенности его деятельности, балансировка между зависимостью и независимостью от государства, конкуренция с государственными компаниями. В статье предполагается, что успехам компании способствовали несколько факторов: наличие большого количества отходов в Украине, потребность государственных предприятий в дополнительном сырье, достаточно эффективное управление, использование административного ресурса посредством монопольного права на сбор отходов, что, однако, не защитило компанию от проблем.

Автором определены проблемы, с которыми сталкивались сборщики отходов из-за бедности населения, которое не могло «производить» необходимое советским предприятиям количество отходов. Автором определены методы мотивации населения к сдаче отходов. Определены основные субъекты рынка отходов в Украине, источники купли-продажи отходов. Это предприятия государственной промышленности, госторговли, кооперативы, частные лица, заготовители отходов. Автором также проанализированы попытки государственных органов урегулировать отношения между основными производителями отходов в Украине, которые были как партнерами, так и конкурентами.

**Ключевые слова:** отходы, заготовители отходов, СССР, Украинская ССР, Укруптилсбор, ветошь, бумага, металлолом, кости, Наркомторг.

Статтю надіслано до редколегії 18.01.2022 р.

Статтю рекомендовано до друку 25.02.2022 р.