

The Role of the *Comité Ucraino de Auxílio às Vítimas da Guerra* in the Life of Ukrainian Immigrants in Brazil (Based on the Official Correspondence in 1946–1948)

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The paper analyses the role of the Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War in the life of Ukrainian immigrants in Brazil in the post-war period. The empirical material comprises official correspondence (1946–1948) between the Committee and Ukrainian immigrants in Brazil, which justifies the scientific novelty of the study, as these letters have been transcribed from handwriting into text and analysed for the first time. The research methodology is primarily based on content analysis of the letters and is supported by the methods of text typology and classification. The Committee was the only officially functioning Ukrainian-speaking organization in Brazil, initially established to support displaced Ukrainians in Europe; nevertheless, it also provided support to Ukrainians who immigrated to Brazil. The main issues that troubled Ukrainian immigrants in Brazil, prompting them to seek the Committee's assistance, included: gruelling working conditions; undue payment and unjust wages; harsh living conditions in remote areas; lack of Ukrainian newspapers, magazines, and books; a desire to relocate closer to other Ukrainians; requests for information about life and working conditions in other areas or the whereabouts of relatives or friends who lived in Latin America.

Keywords: Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War, Brazil, Ukraine, immigration

Introduction and literature review

Migration processes of individuals, tribes, and peoples are among the most fundamental and enduring phenomena that have continuously shaped the development of human civilisation. Ukrainians were no exception to these complex migratory trends, having experienced multiple waves of emigration influenced by various historical circumstances. The Ukrainian diaspora, established across several continents, has played a crucial role in preserving and promoting Ukrainian identity, culture, and traditions abroad.

As of 2020, Brazil ranked among the top four countries with the largest number of people of Ukrainian origin living outside Ukraine (MFA 2019). This substantial Ukrainian presence in Brazil is a testament to over a century of migration, beginning in the late 19th century. Scholarly research confirms the existence of a well-established Ukrainian community in Brazil, dating back to “[...] at least the final years of the 19th century, when the first immigrants settled in the southern region, especially in the states of Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul” (Vitchmichen 2023, 7). These early settlers laid the foundation for what would become a vibrant and enduring Ukrainian presence in the country, fostering a sense of community, cultural continuity, and social solidarity across generations.

Ukrainian immigration to Brazil has traditionally been categorised into three distinct waves, periods, or phases. However, no universally agreed chronology exists, for instance, scholars propose varying periods, including: 1895–1896, 1908–1914, 1947–1951 (Burko 1963, 48–50); 1895–1897, 1907–1914, 1947–1951 (Borushenko 1984); and 1891–1914, 1920–1939, 1947–1950 (Cipko 2022, 42), among others.

The first wave was precipitated by the enactment of the *Carta R gia*, a pivotal policy decision by the Brazilian government that sought to encourage large-scale immigration from Europe by portraying Brazil as a land of opportunity and prosperity – though often fostering unrealistic expectations. This initiative coincided with severe socio-economic hardship in Ukraine and was further reinforced by assurances from Brazilian agents and negotiators who promised each immigrant 25 hectares of land (Borys 1970, 68), an exceedingly attractive prospect for Ukrainians who had been deprived of land ownership for a long time. By 1895, the state of Paran  had become home to 5,500 Ukrainians (Hets 1954, 235), and in 1896, the number of new arrivals surged to approximately 13,500–14,000 individuals (Burko 1963, 49). Between 1897 and 1907, Ukrainian immigration dwindled to an average of 700–1,000 annually, a decline attributed to multiple factors (Burko 1963, 49). These included growing awareness among prospective emigrants regarding the harsh realities of life in Brazil, where challenging agricultural conditions, inadequate infrastructure, and unfulfilled promises posed significant obstacles to survival. Furthermore, shifting political and social dynamics in Eastern Europe influenced immigration rates, as governmental policies either facilitated or curtailed the movement of individuals abroad.

In contrast to the evident preconditions of the first wave, the rationale for the second wave of Ukrainian migration to Brazil is nonetheless linked to World War I. For example, Mageroski and Brumes explicitly claim that “[t]he second one [wave; added by the author], from 1908 to 1914, had the First World War as motivation” (Mageroski – Brumes 2019, 13), whereas Cipko confirms some reactivation of the migration processes in 1908 (Cipko 2022, 47), but relates it to the construction of the Southern Railway from S o Paulo to Rio Grande/Da Linha Sul da Estrada de Ferro S o Paulo – Rio Grande 1908–1910 (Espig 2012). The researcher, in his turn, correlates the span of the second wave (1920–1939) with the interwar period (Cipko 2022, 42). However, empirical data contradict this claim. The 1913–1914 census conducted by the Basilian Order of Saint Josaphat recorded a Ukrainian settler population and their descendants totalling 36,215 individuals across five Brazilian states: Paran  – 33,529; Rio Grande do Sul – 2,245; S o Paulo – 211; Santa Catarina – 160; Esp rito Santo – 70 (Pr cia 1914, 1). Alternative estimates suggest a total Ukrainian immigrant population of approximately 45,000 (Borushenko 1972, 13), while Burko reports the arrival of 20,000 individuals between 1908 and 1914 (Burko 1963, 49).

In other words, the majority of Ukrainian migrants associated with the second wave had arrived in Brazil prior to the outbreak of the First World War. The primary impetus for this migration, as this study contends, was the Russian Revolution of 1905–1907, which temporarily fostered hopes of national-cultural solidarity and socio-economic progress. The ensuing period saw renewed political repression, particularly targeting the Ukrainian population, thereby compelling many to emigrate as a means of escape. The war itself functioned merely as a secondary impetus. This argument is further corroborated by statistical data on Ukrainian migration to Brazil during the interwar years, which indicates figures ranging between 9,000 and 12,000, depending on the source. The interwar period posed further adversities for Ukrainian migrants, as Brazil’s economic climate remained volatile due to global financial downturns and shifting labour policies. Despite these challenges,

Ukrainian communities in Brazil endeavoured to establish social institutions, religious centres, and educational facilities to preserve their cultural heritage and support one another in their new environment (Szturm de Sztrem 1939, 53; Price 1950, 82).

The third wave of Ukrainian migration is widely acknowledged, as is its principal catalyst: the Second World War. In the aftermath of the war (1947–1951), Brazilian ports received over 7,000 Ukrainian migrants (Burko 1963, 50) – a significantly lower figure compared to the preceding waves. However, a considerably larger number of Ukrainians sought asylum in other countries, apprehensive of forced repatriation to Soviet-controlled territories and the associated risk of persecution. To assist these displaced persons (D.P.), multiple international organisations were established, including the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the International Refugee Organization (IRO), and the Council of Immigration and Colonization in Brazil (CIC), among others (Bravo 2014; 18). Concurrently, the well-established Ukrainian community in Brazil, particularly in Paraná, undertook efforts to support their compatriots who remained stranded in Europe or had newly arrived in Brazil.

A pivotal moment in the development of the Ukrainian community in Brazil occurred long before the third wave of immigration. In 1922, in União da Vitória, after three consecutive but unsuccessful attempts (1910, 1919, 1922) to unite Ukrainian immigrants under a single association, the Ukrainian Union (União Ucrainiana) was finally founded. In 1937, the Union was relocated to Curitiba and changed its name to the Instructional Agricultural Union (União Agrícola Instrutiva). In 1938, the Brazilian government initiated the nationalization policy (*política de nacionalização*) and “as a consequence of the nationalisation policy, the development of associations was suspended for a time. Nevertheless, after the end of the Second World War, educational and cultural activities resumed among the Ukrainians” (Boruszenko 1969, 433–434).

After the Union’s activities resumed, one of the most significant manifestations of Ukrainian solidarity was the establishment of the Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War (hereinafter, the Committee), originally known in Portuguese as the *Comité Ucraino de Auxílio às Vítimas da Guerra*. The Committee emerged as the sole official Ukrainian-speaking organisation in Brazil at the time, serving as a critical place of support for displaced Ukrainians in the post-war Europe:

On the ninth day of the month of October, in the year nineteen forty-five, the colony of immigrants of Ukrainian nationality gathered at the hall of the União Agrícola Instrutiva to organise a Committee for Aid to the Victims of the War in that region of European territories (Ata 1945).

The Committee was established by fifty members of the Instructional Agricultural Union, who gathered to hear the speech devoted to the topic of Ukrainian post war immigration, “[...] the terrors and tortures that the holy Ukrainian people suffered under Soviet and Nazi domination, and the misery in which thousands of families victimised by the war find themselves today” (Ata 1945). This meeting culminated in a decision to offer assistance. Their motivation was not only humanitarian but also inspired by the examples of other countries such as the United States, Canada, and Argentina, where Ukrainian immigrants lived and had already established representative organizations and were actively raising funds to support Ukrainian victims of the war.

The primary mission was to provide humanitarian assistance to Displaced Ukrainians suffering in war-torn Europe and following the appeals from the displaced Ukrainians in Europe the Committee tried and did its best (Kovbasko 2024, 407). Nevertheless, the

Committee also sought to address the needs and concerns of Ukrainians who had already immigrated to Brazil, many of whom faced economic hardship, social discrimination, and the challenge of cultural integration.

In contrast to international organisations, which received financial backing from the United Nations, governmental agencies, and other global institutions, the Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War functioned as a volunteer-based organisation. Its members, many of whom were employed full-time during the day, dedicated their evenings and nights to responding to correspondence from fellow Ukrainians:

[...], бо вони мусять ц лий день працювати, щоб заробити собі на кусок хліба, а ввечері йти до Комітету і сидіти ночами, щоб відписати на листи, що надходять від наших людей, щоб дати їм як не матеріальну, то бодай моральну допомогу¹⁾ (Comit  Ucr ino de Aux lio  s V timas da Guerra 1948a).

The constraints imposed by these circumstances severely limited the Committee's capacity to provide aid, as the Brazilian federal government was reluctant to allocate financial resources to its activities. Consequently, the Committee prioritised assisting displaced persons in Europe, particularly in Germany, while support for Ukrainians in Brazil remained a secondary concern. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian immigrant experience in Brazil was often marked by adversity. Many faced economic precarity, societal discrimination, and formidable obstacles to integration due to linguistic and cultural barriers. While some succeeded in establishing prosperous agricultural enterprises and small businesses, others grappled with persistent poverty and limited social mobility. The psychological toll of displacement, compounded by the difficulties of adaptation, underscored the indispensable role of community support networks in sustaining migrants and preserving their cultural identity. The resilience demonstrated by the Ukrainian diaspora in Brazil, despite these hardships, highlights the enduring significance of migration in shaping both individual trajectories and broader historical and cultural narratives.

The purpose of this article is, therefore, to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the lives, social issues, and challenges faced by Ukrainian immigrants in Brazil who reached out to the Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War between 1946 and 1948. By closely examining this correspondence, the study aims to illuminate the specific struggles encountered by these immigrants, including economic difficulties, cultural adaptation, and bureaucratic hurdles, while also assessing the extent to which financial constraints were the primary impediment to their well-being. A key hypothesis under investigation is that economic hardship, though significant, was not necessarily the predominant challenge preventing Ukrainian immigrants from achieving a stable and dignified life in Brazil. Instead, factors such as social isolation, language barriers, and the psychological toll of displacement may have played an equally, if not more, crucial role in shaping their experiences.

1) “[...], because they had to work all day just to earn their living and to be able to go to the Committee in the evening and spend their nights answering the letters of their fellow nationals to provide them with at least moral support, if not financial assistance”

Methodology

The research is based on the analysis of 150 letters stored in the archive of the Ukrainian Society in Brazil (Sociedade Ucrâniana do Brasil – SUBRAS), which was founded in Dorizon in 1922 as the Ukrainian Union of Brazil (União Ukraína do Brasil) and is now located in Curitiba, Paraná State, Brazil.

These letters represent communication between Ukrainian immigrants and the Ukrainian Committee in Brazil between 1946 and 1948: 122 letters were written in Ukrainian to the Committee by Ukrainian immigrants residing in Brazil, and 28 were responses from the Committee. Although the letters under analysis do not state explicitly when their authors arrived in Brazil, each letter is dated, and a thorough analysis provides numerous indirect indications that the authors arrived shortly after World War II and were undergoing the process of assimilation into a new society and unfamiliar living circumstances.

These letters constitute a unique and valuable empirical dataset, as they have not yet been digitised, published, or transcribed. They provide first-hand accounts of the personal struggles, aspirations, and experiences of Ukrainian immigrants during this critical historical period. The letters have been translated from Ukrainian (see in-text examples) into English (see the footnotes) by the author, with an emphasis on preserving their tone and style. The original texts contain specific orthographic, lexical, grammatical, and punctuation features that can be treated as inappropriate to the norms of modern Ukrainian literary language; however, these features reflect authentic mid-20th-century Ukrainian language usage. Surnames and other proper nouns remain unchanged if the authors used the Roman/Latin spelling; if written in Cyrillic, they have been transliterated into the Roman/Latin alphabet.

In this paper, the goal is to explore those everyday issues of Ukrainian immigrants in Brazil by analysing, citing, and interpreting 122 letters addressed to the Committee and 28 responses received from it.

A thorough study of the letters enabled the identification of the main themes or concepts that were most troubling for Ukrainian immigrants in Brazil, viz: (a) requests for relocation or a new job; (b) search for relatives and/or friends; (c) complaints regarding working and/or living conditions; (d) requests for books, newspapers, etc.; (e) requests concerning personal issues (information, documents, lost goods, etc.); (f) complaints about compatriots; and (g) donations. The last two categories, i.e., (f) and (g), are deliberately identified and set apart from the category of the requests concerning personal issues to highlight the psychological aspects of relationships within the Ukrainian community, rather than their social challenges.

Another set of letters consists of the responses written by the Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War and which mainly focus on “providing possible assistance to the addressees”.

It is important to note that, with the exception of the Committee’s responses, most letters do not address just one of the aforesaid issues, but rather describe a combination of problems encountered by Ukrainian immigrants in Brazil. In other words, the number of issues described in the letters exceeds the number of letters under analysis. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, the statistics on the issues is represented in percentage terms.

The article features numerous selected citations from the letters, chosen for the richness of content, clarity of expression, and according to the purposive sampling criteria. This approach ensures that the major thematic categories and concepts identified in the initial qualitative stage of content analysis are adequately represented. Thus, these examples

offer a balanced insight into the overall material. The quantitative stage of the analysis is reflected by the percentage-based distribution of the themes addressed in the letters, which is used to support or refute the hypothesis outlined in the paper.

Through this study, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of the Ukrainian migration experience in Brazil, shedding light on the resilience, adaptation, and agency of migrants in the face of adversity. It also situates this migration within broader global migration patterns and historical contexts, demonstrating the ways in which diasporic communities navigate complex socio-political environments while striving to maintain their cultural identity and support their fellow countrymen. In doing so, this research underscores the importance of examining historical migration narratives not only as a means of preserving the past but also as a lens through which to understand contemporary migration challenges and diasporic experiences worldwide.

(A) Complaints regarding working and/or living conditions

The most reliable way to get a fair impression of the living conditions of Ukrainians in Brazil is through the letters of people who were experiencing all the “delights” of a new life first-hand and whose position “does not seem to be life in pink” (Yaroslav 1948). Ukrainian immigrants felt deceived when they tasted their new lives:

Просю урядник в Комитету якщо ви маєте можливість міні описати чому ми попали в такі тяжкі умовини на цій Фасенді нас знаходить 8 українських родин ми собі на сьогоднішній день німожим дати ради коли нас брав з йвропи консул то він нам обіцяв що ми йдимо до Бразилії на посеління а ми с час працюємо на фасенді обробляем каву і за це що ми заробляем нам тяжко виживатись [...]²⁾ (Horulko 1947).

First of all, the tough life of Ukrainian immigrants can be explained by their working conditions at fazendas (a Portuguese term for large landholdings or plantations):

Я бачив контракти на каву (яких є найбільший відсоток) по 18,00 на день і хата. Це ледво вистачає на харчі. Люди пишуть листи, скаржаться, хочуть змінити посади. Багато зних і не є річчми. Коли хотят як такі подались. Другі народности так не пропадають, бо свої люди їх беруть до кращих праць. Оце власне, і болить наших укр.³⁾ (Yaroslav 1948).

Issues with wages and difficulties related to contract duration were extremely widespread, and this was often aggravated by the unscrupulous fazenda owners’ unfair treatment:

Нас туди приїхало около шістьдесять Українц в, вс  приїхали примусом за пародень ми підписали контракт на два місяці праці і це примусово. Працюємо вс  при збірці кави як

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- 2) “I would like the officials of the Committee, if they have such a possibility, to explain to me why we found ourselves in such difficult circumstances. There are eight Ukrainian families at this fazenda, and we cannot cope with our life here. When the consul took us, he promised that we would go to Brazil to settle, but we are now working on a coffee plantation at the fazenda, and the money we earn here is barely enough to live on [...]”
 - 3) “I saw the labour contracts at coffee plantations (which predominate here) valued at 18 cruzeiros [the official currency of Brazil from 1942 to 1967] per day including accommodation. It is barely enough for food. People write letters, complain, and wish to change their jobs. Many of the contracts are not annual. Other nationalities do not suffer so much, because their people hire them for better jobs. And this hurts our people the most.”

є погода а як паде дощ то нам роботи не дають для цього щоби ми завдовжилися, як вже вийде два місяці а будемо винні гроші за харч то він нас непустить і тоді треба підписати контракт на оден рік.⁴⁾ (Korach 1947).

There were cases when immigrants received lower wages despite all prior agreements:

[...] ни всі цією вилічезною мотигою можуть орати наприклад я маю родину з 5 осіб з яких можи працювати 3 особі міні кажи патрон що я мусю від його дістати за місяць 700 криз а я за 3 тижні здів з родинною на 550 кр.⁵⁾ (Horulko 1947).

Moreover, there were recorded instances where immigrants complained about the unbearable treatment by fazenda owners and authorities. Very often, their actions resembled those of slave owners during slavery, which was abolished in Brazil in 1888:

[...] ми тепер находимося в дуже тяжкім і критичнім місце, обходятся з нами гірш я зі скотиною що раз то надсилают узброєну поліцію і стережут нас як яких злочинців, документи які ми мали то позабирали від них бояться щоби вони не повтікали, [...]⁶⁾ (Pylyp 1947);

or even echoed the behaviour of the Nazis in Germany:

[...] доношу Головні Управі жи нас тепер пільнуі Поліція, в ден, і нучи так як якех Бандитів і то дла нас щос дуже страшного так само як Німчині⁷⁾ (Boiko 1947).

In some cases, the psychological pressure on the immigrants was even more insidious. Given their vulnerable position, lack of language skills, and knowledge about the country or social ties, fazenda owners often did not even sign contracts, being sure that the workers had nowhere else to go and they would not find any other job in the region:

Мені місце не тяжко змінити бо нас всі документи і навет ніхто не петав за документи ані за контракт нам сказали так як вам не подобається то приїдети назад в Кампо Лімпо. Тільки там нема чога їхати бо вони дадуть в друге таке саме місце бо ту тільки до кави [...]⁸⁾ (Pankush 1947).

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- 4) "About sixty Ukrainians arrived here, all were forcibly brought in. Within a few days, we signed the two-month contract and this was done by force as well. We all work at coffee harvesting when the weather permits, but when it rains, we are not allowed to work, which forces us into debt. When two months come to an end, we owe the owner money for food and they do not let us leave. Then we are forced to sign a one-year contract."
 - 5) "[...] not all people can handle this huge hoe, for example, my family consists of five people and only three of them can work. My master tells me that I must get 700 cruzeiros from him, but over three weeks, my family has earned only 550 cruzeiros."
 - 6) "[...] we are now in a very critical and tight situation; we are treated worse than animals; each time they send the armed police and guard us like criminals. The documents we brought with us were taken away to prevent our escape [...]."
 - 7) "[...] I am reporting to the Head Office that we are under constant police surveillance, day and night, as if we were criminals, and this terrifies us, just as it did in Germany."
 - 8) "It is not difficult for me to change my place of living because here, no one even asked us either for the documents or a contract. They just told us that if we did not like the place, we could go back to Campo Limpo. But returning there is pointless, because they would send us to a similar place again, as the only work available there is on coffee plantations [...]."

And such treatment by fazenda owners, who understood that the immigrants were defenceless in a foreign country, directly impacted their wages in addition to the general mistreatment:

Як ми приїхали то давав нам на день по, 16, крайзерів а казав що пізніше підбільшит а він типер ще зменшив і дає тилько по, 12, на день. Ще стого стягає сьвітло, каса хорих, робить знами що сам хочи, бо бачить що ми ще нічо не розумієм низнаєм як де діти, а бачить що впіпнутися нима кому, і має добру нагоду з нас користати⁹⁾ (Savchak 1947).

Under these circumstances, in an attempt to deal with the aforementioned issues, Ukrainian immigrants turned to the Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War, seeking advice and assistance. The analysis shows that complaints regarding working and/or living conditions constitute 16.6% of all appeals to the Committee.

(B) Requests for relocation or a new job.

The dishonourable behaviour of fazenda owners and harsh working conditions were predominant concerns, but they were not the sole reasons for internal migration, as people were often dissatisfied with their living conditions:

Що нас три фамілії знаходимось 150 км. від міста С o-Paulo, в лісу що нічого нема крім густого лісу. Ми живемо в одній хаті три фамілії, дев'ять душ, з яких є двоє дітей, які хочять до школи ходити а тут немає школи, так само немає ніякої церкви, а ні шпиталю, в загалі немає нічого крім лісу.¹⁰⁾ (Vovk 1947).

Miserable living conditions prompted people to consider the option of relocation and to appeal to the Committee in moving to Paran , as it was home to most Ukrainians who had settled Brazil:

Нас ту працує при каві .6. родин ми просим вас може виб могли нас забрат до Парани бо нам ту дуже прекро жити нічого нирозомсім робим аш руки нам пухнут астеї роботи¹¹⁾ (Jaroszczuk 1947).

Or people wanted to move closer to their fellow Ukrainians, regardless of which state they were in:

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- 9) "When we arrived, the owner gave us 16 cruzeiros a day and said that later he would increase it. But now, he has reduced it to 12 cruzeiros a day. From this sum, he deducts fees for electricity and medical assistance; he does whatever he pleases with us because he knows that we do not understand anything, we do not know our rights, and we have no one to protect us; and this allows him to exploit us."
 - 10) "There are three families of us 150 km from the city of S o Paulo, in the middle of the forest, where there is nothing but dense vegetation. All three families live in one house – nine souls in total; there are two children among them who wish to attend school, but there is no school here; there is neither a church nor a hospital here, there is nothing here but wilderness."
 - 11) "We work here on a coffee plantation – six families. We are beseeching you to help us to move to Paran , because we are struggling here, we do not understand anything, and our hands are swelling from this work."

Тут нас двох добрих столярів, а мебльовий столяр вчився в Дрогобичи я сам з Літині, Все чесний Отче оскільки можна там дістати працю яка би це не була. Тільки щоби межі своїми. Дуже благаю оскільки можна та найти працю то прошу напишіть і пришліть адресу щоби по двох місяцях можна туди поїхати¹²⁾ (Korach 1947).

Or simply to obtain any other job outside of the coffee plantations:

Нас тут знаходиться 20 хлопців самітних, інші родинні, працювати можемо на різних роботах. Дуже ми Вас просимо щоби Ви нам якнайскорше дали відповідь, бо по призначеному часі ми мусимо шукати собі іншої постійної праці, тут бо довше ми неможемо вижити¹³⁾ (Chmug 1947).

The desire to be relocated to the state of Paraná, to their fellow countrymen – people who spoke and understood Ukrainian and who, as they believed, would never abandon them in times of trouble – was so appealing that immigrants were willing to give up their last money:

Я прошу напишіть як можна дістатися до Парани нехай буде і своїм коштом. Куди посилати багаж на котру місцевість. Взагалі як можна стрінутися з Вами. Так прошу не забувайте за нас бо Ви тільки надія і ратунок в далекій країні¹⁴⁾ (Pankush 1947).

Moreover, people were willing to go into debt to seize an opportunity to improve their lives in Brazil:

Прошу Вас дайте мені якусь раду, а як зможете так зробити щоб я переїхав там bliще своїх людей, а заробивши я сплачу через Ваші руки довг і Ваш труд що буде коштувати. Дуже Вас прошу порадьте мене що маю зробити і відпишіть¹⁵⁾ (Semera 1947).

The Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War, as well as individual activists from the “old immigration”, were regarded as the last hope for Ukrainian immigrants to change and improve their working and living conditions in Brazil, both privately:

Де которому і мені вдалось дати працю в Ріо та в С. Павльо. Пишу в тій справі й до деяких приватних осіб. Хотяй моя родина не приїхала, я беру 4-ву сімю до нас до Малету¹⁶⁾ (Yaroslav 1948);

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- 12) “We are two skilled carpenters – a furniture carpenter studied in Drohobych, and I am from Litiniia. Holy Father, could you help us find any kind of job? Preferably among our own people. I beg you, if there is any work available, please write to us and send us the address so we could travel there in two months.”
 - 13) “There are 20 single men here; others have families, and we can undertake any work. We are begging you to answer us as soon as possible because, in due time, we will have to search for another permanent job, as we cannot survive here.”
 - 14) “I am asking you to inform me about how I can get to Paraná, even at my own expense. Where can I send the baggage, to which locality? And at all, how can I meet you? And I am begging you not to forget about us because you are the only hope and salvation for us in this remote country.”
 - 15) “Please, give me some advice on how to do this or if you can give me a helping hand in moving closer to our people, and when I earn some money, I will pay you back and compensate you for your assistance. I am begging you to advise me on my further actions and write back to me.”
 - 16) “I managed to provide some people with work in Rio and São Paulo. In this regard, I am contacting some private persons. Although my family could not come here, I am taking the fourth family to stay with me in Mallot.”

and at the federal level, when the government acknowledged the immigrants' needs:

На велики щастя, сьогодні, з тої нагоди і мету листа, вдалось досягнути дозвіл, щоб від завтра, імїграція могла переїжджати з Кампо Лїмпо до Парани. Це значить що коли Паранська фірма, вдається до Кампо Лїмпо, жадаючи особу або ремїсника. А, уряд цю особу їй лишає до диспозиції. Розумїється дорого з С. Лїмпо до Парани платить інтересована фірма, на чїю відповідальність також паде пїзнійша висилка листа з режїстрованою фірмою, і контракт або щось подїбне¹⁷⁾ (Yaroslav 1948).

Therefore, alongside complaints regarding working and/or living conditions the desire to be relocated to Paran  or to secure a new job outside the coffee plantations constitutes one of the most frequent requests to the Committee – 17.6%. These two appeals to the Committee are driven by financial reasons and, of course, are interwoven as the harsh living/working conditions predetermined the desire to change a place of living or a job.

(C) Requests for books, newspapers, etc.

Along with the issues regarding living and working conditions, Ukrainian immigrants felt detached from the outside world, being unable to read or communicate in Portuguese:

Маю до Вас особисте прохання, чи не можете якось допомогти через Вас дїстати яку небудь лїтературу на нашїй мовї. А саме може маєте газети та книжки якї б можна було-б придбати. Живучї на вїддаленї від мїста дуже охоче почитав-би на рїднїй мовї.¹⁸⁾ (Jaroschenko 1947).

The desire to find a window to the world through the newspapers and magazines was so strong that Ukrainians were ready to pay for a newspaper subscription despite their low wages and difficult living conditions:

Мовити по бразильській нивмїємо читати нїчого нїмаємо і так собї натемну й проживаємо. Я вам буду дужи вдячнїй а також вся група украинцїв за ваш труд і скїльки буди коштувати ми вам оплатим вїшлїть нам хоч один словник і часопис. часопис скїльки буде коштув в мїсяць ми вам будим пириплачувати.¹⁹⁾ (Horulko 1947).

Another way to stay in touch with their homeland was by reading books, which, of course, were difficult to find in Ukrainian families or on fazendas in Brazil but which could be bought in bookstores:

В числї 35 *Працї* вимїщено Вашої об'яви, що книгарня має на складї *Велику ілюстровану історїю України* видану в 1947 р. в Буенос Аїрес. Нажаль в об'яві не зазначено цїни

17) "Fortunately, nowadays – and in this regard, I am writing the letter – we managed to get permission so that, starting from tomorrow, immigrants can move from Campo Limpo to Paran . It means that if a company from Paran  comes to Campa Limpo in search of a person or a worker, the government places this person at their disposal. Of course, the way from Campo Limpo to Paran  must be paid by the interested party, which will later be responsible for sending the letter, contract, etc."

18) "I have a personal request for you. Could you help me in some way to obtain any literature in Ukrainian? Maybe you have newspapers or books that I could buy. Living remotely from the city, I am eager to read something in our native language."

19) "We do not read or understand Brazilian, and so we live in ignorance. I will be very grateful, as will the whole group of Ukrainians here be, for your efforts. Please write to us about how much it will cost, and we will pay. Send us at least one dictionary and a newspaper, and let us know how much a subscription costs monthly so we can subscribe to it."

і тому я позбавлений можливості вислати гроші за *Історію*. Тому прошу, коли це взагалі можливо, вислати цю книжку післяплатою. Одночасно прошу вислати мені листу видань, які крамниця має на складі, а також листу кружків з українськими піснями²⁰⁾ (Masuchenko-Gayfyer 1947).

The aforementioned extract from the letter perfectly illustrates the role which the Ukrainian newspapers and magazines played at that time – not only providing people with the news about world or domestic affairs but also giving them useful information about everyday life.

Following the responses from the Committee, it is fair to say that the Committee was doing its best to satisfy the immigrants' needs in their pursuit of information:

Ви просите газету, наразі висилаю Вам українську канадійську газету, яка до нас приходить з дуже великим запізненням. Але в найблищому часі в Куритибі буде виходити українська газета «Хлібороб». Як тільки вийдуть перші числа з друку, зараз надішлемо Вам пробні числа. Як будете мати охоту занумерувати собі, то просимо ласкаво повідомити нас. Передплата на рік коштуватиме приблизно 50 cruz²¹⁾ (Comité Ucraino de Auxílio às Vítimas da Guerra 1948d).

Analysing the quantitative correlation between the requests for books, newspapers, etc., and other key disturbing issues mentioned in the letters, it is worth mentioning that the pursuit of some food for the soul accounts for a noteworthy 15.7%.

(D) Search for relatives and/or friends

In addition to this, the Committee served as an information centre for immigrants, where they sought necessary information about their relatives, friends, or other Ukrainians who might reside in Brazil or other Latin American countries:

Все чесний Отче я маю рідню в Аргентині і не маю можливості її віднайти бо не маю їхньої адреси. Я напишу їхню адресу з дому як не буде велика трудність для Вас то прошу написати розшук до Аргентини²²⁾ (Korach 1947).

Шановні Панови попрошу вас Адресів знаних мені осіб, Кузьмовича Юрія і Пасьюка Олекси, котрі працюють у Куритибі, і Кавецького Михайла котрий працює у Сау Павльо²³⁾ (Kuten 1947).

20) “In Issue 35 of the *Précia* newspaper, there is an advertisement stating that the bookstore has in stock *The Great Illustrated History of Ukraine* published in 1947 in Buenos Aires. Unfortunately, the price is not indicated in the advertisement, and, thus, I cannot send you money for the *History*. That is why I am asking you to send me the book with post-payment, if possible. Moreover, I am asking you to send me the list of available book editions and a list of Ukrainian songs.”

21) “You are asking for the newspaper, so now I am sending you the Canadian newspaper, which arrives to us very late. But shortly, a Ukrainian newspaper *Khliborob* will be published in Curitiba. When the first issues are released, we will immediately send you trial copies. If you wish to subscribe, please let us know. The annual subscription will cost 50 cruzeiros.”

22) “Holy Father, I have got relatives in Argentina, but I cannot find them, because I do not have their address. I will write their Ukrainian home address, and if it is not very difficult for you, I kindly ask you to announce in Argentina that I am searching for them.”

23) “Dear Sirs, I am asking you for the addresses of the people whom I know: Kuzmovych Yurii and Pasiuk Oleksa who work in Curitiba, and Kavetskyi Mykhailo who works in São Paulo.”

The issue search for relatives and/or friends does not require much description, as all the requests are identical; however, their details, names, and countries differ. The importance of restoring ties with people whom they know and who could help them to assimilate cannot be overstated, as these requests are present in every fifth letter.

(E) Requests concerning personal issues (information, documents, lost goods, etc.)

The Committee actively functioned as an intermediary who could forward their letters to different institutions or provide official information:

Подаю Вам до відома що я Гнатюк Михайло живу на Лінії В. в Олекси Лемішки Хаті живу з рук праці і надалі як буде то незнаю деякі харчі беру на книшку на кредит і таке життя вбога надія що пізніше буде лекши отже я прошу як що будуть наділювати ту обіцяну землю то я вас дуже прошу повідомить мене²⁴⁾ (Hnatiuk 1947).

Or operated as an institution that could provide aid in miscellaneous situations in Brazil:

Прошу вас сердечно допоможіть мені дістати папері поліційні. Я працював на Агріколи фазенді від 15.9.47 до 22.1.48 Нас було 48 осіб І всі папері дістали а я недістав бо нас було двох задорожних І прийшли помилкові І я відіслав назад до Кампо Лімпо тепер я переїхав на друге місце коло Accic. Rio Gradense²⁵⁾ (Zadorozhnyi 1948).

Бувши в розмові з придставником Укр. Допом. Комітету, [...], котрий єму порадив, як рівнож і мені, звернутись до Укр. Комітету в Куритибі, о вяснення якнайлучше, в який спосіб і чого потрібно до сего щоб можна виробити афідавід, [...]²⁶⁾ (Kolibaba 1947).

In the vast majority of the letters, Ukrainian immigrants, in one way or another, expressed their gratitude to the Committee, its work, dedication, compassion, and involvement in the immigrants' affairs, e.g.:

Леста від Вас отремав, рівнож лест моего брата, котрий був песаний на мій давней адрес, за що Вам сердечно дякую, за Ваше чесне та прятне діло, тремаючи цей лест такий довгей час, за що є Вам ще раз утячний²⁷⁾ (Strutynskyi 1947).

24) "I inform you that I, Hnatiuk Mykhailo, live on Line B at Oleksa Lemishka's. I earn my living through my work and I do not know how it will be in the future. I take some products on credit, and the only hope I have is that it will be easier in the future. I am asking you to inform me when the promised land will be allotted, please I beg you."

25) "I am cordially asking you to help me obtain my documents from the police. I worked at Agricola from 15.9.47 to 22.1.48. There were 48 people, and all of them received their documents, but I did not, as there were two of us left out. And the wrong documents came, and I sent them back to Campo Limpo and now I have moved to another place near Assis, Rio Gradense."

26) "Talking to the representative of the Ukrainian Aid Committee, [...], who advised him as well as me to contact the Ukrainian Aid Committee in Curitiba to get information on the best way to receive an affidavit, [...]."

27) "I have received your letter, as well as my brother's letter which was sent to my previous address, and I am deeply grateful to you for that and for your honourable and commendable work in keeping this letter for so long. Please, once again, accept my gratitude."

Ми українці й повідомляємо Український Комітет, що Вашого листа, а так же й газетки, які Ви посилали, одержали і дуже Вам дякуємо, що Ви все ж таки не забуваєте нас українців²⁸⁾ (Hrinko 1947).

Nevertheless, due to harsh working and living conditions, and the dishonourable treatment by fazenda owners and the inability of the Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War to help each and everyone, especially in financial terms, the Committee was sometimes under unfair and harsh criticism by the immigrants:

Але бачю мої дорогі нужни ми ва позаростали жиром очі ваші і через те ви нічого не бачіте Бодай во славу істерзаної матері України. Ви що не будь зробили для нас до всіх чужинців їдуть їхні приставники до поляків естонців латишів югослав но до нас бідних українців хоть би хто нароком. Пробачте мене що я так гостро пишу але це є правда²⁹⁾ (Belebekha 1948).

This reproachful letter, at the same time, included requests to send a priest to baptise their children and to search for other Ukrainians who worked in Rio Grande do Sul. It is likely that the letter insulted the Committee's representatives, who sacrificed their personal time to provide assistance to the immigrants. However, the Committee, to its credit, fulfilled the requests:

Духовну опіку дамо Вам, вишлемо священика, якій є в Сао Пауло, ми вже написали туди листа і він приїде, щоб похрестити Ваших дітей. [...]. Просимо Вас також вибачити нам за тон такого листа, але ми мусили відповісти Вам так, через те, що Ви безпідставно ображаєте людей, які жертвують своєю працею для того, щоб бодай чим нібудь допомогти своїм людям³⁰⁾ (Comité Ucraino de Auxílio às Vítimas da Guerra 1948a).

It is worth mentioning that such critical letters were rather exceptions than the rule, and Ukrainian immigrants were aware of the difficulties and the attempts of the Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War to provide all possible help to them.

A special case within the group of requests concerning personal issues, which I would like to focus on, is the issue concerning complaints about compatriots in which Ukrainian immigrants complained about deceitful, insincere Ukrainians who resided in Brazil, obtained official positions, and harmed the interests of genuine Ukrainian immigrants:

Але ж з такими українцями то ми б не хотіли більше спиткатися. Бо вони не є тими українцями що добиваються правди. А слухають совітсно – комуністичних брехунів.

28) "We are Ukrainians and we wish to inform the Ukrainian Committee that we have received your letter and the newspapers you sent; we are truly grateful to you for remembering us – Ukrainians."

29) "But I see, my dear, that your eyes swell out with fatness and because of that you do not see anything, even for the glory of our tormented mother Ukraine. Have you done anything for us? All the foreigners are attended to by their representatives – Poles, Estonians, Latvians, and Yugoslavians – but no one ever comes to check on us – poor Ukrainians. I apologise for writing so sharply, but this is true."

30) "We will provide you with spiritual care and send the priest who is in São Paulo now; we have already contacted him and he will come to baptise your children. [...]. We sincerely regret the tone of our writing, but we were compelled to respond you this way because your words were unreasonably rude to people who have dedicated their efforts to aiding their fellow people in any way possible."

І готовляться виїждати назад на україну котара знаходиться в дуже тяжким і критичним положені. Вони не вірять, того що скільки наших братив погинуло з руки совітів. [...]. Бо від таких я утікав, й таки мене видали і через таких я страдаю³¹⁾ (Maslenchuk 1947).

Нас тут на силу запхали в сю діру і тут дуже бідуєм бо ми від одної біди втекли з свої Рідної землі а тут знайшли бо нисміємо говорити що Рускі недобрі мусимо говорити що комусти добрі і добре у них бо інакше ся знутчають над нами бо котрий щось говорить що недобрі то зіли би его³²⁾ (Yohaniuk 1947).

Unfortunately, following the letters under analysis, it is not possible to state objectively, whether such reproaches were politically biased or tended to have some personal animosity. However, the Ukrainian community in Brazil has not been homogeneous. Since the 1910s, “there were already signs of division within the Ukrainian community – a small group of radical liberals (led by members of the Prosvita in Curitiba) and a larger group of conservatives under the guidance of the Basilian priests in Prudentópolis” (Boruszenko 1969, 433). These two groups were using their periodicals *Khliborob* and *Prácia*, correspondingly, to fight their ideological opponent, so it is no surprise that such animosity could penetrate the personal level.

All in all, following the statistics, less than 2% of all the calls to the Committee contains complaints about compatriots. So, it is reasonable to assume that this was the exception rather than the rule.

Another special case within the requests concerning personal issues is fundraising or donations. Ukrainian immigrants demonstrated a high level of compassion towards their countrymen, who just arrived and found themselves in a bit of predicament, and responded to the calls for financial assistance even surviving under harsh circumstances themselves: “Рівночасно з цим листом висилаю на Ваше імя поміч нашим українським збігцям в такім порядку: [...]. Разом 455.00”³³⁾ (Onyscenko 1946).

Indeed, such financial support could not be very significant and could not last for many years, as the immigrants who had come earlier managed to settle into their new Motherland but their life conditions were far from ideal:

Бльонка небуду висилати, але разом вислю лісту жертводавців. Збірку буду дальше провадити я, але чи ще багато назбираєся, то незнати, бо люде дуже зимні до тих річей³⁴⁾ (Horodiuk 1946).

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- 31) “But I have encountered the Ukrainians whom I would not like to meet ever again. Because they are not the kind of Ukrainians who are striving for the truth. But they diligently listen to the communist liars. They are getting ready to leave for Ukraine, which is in a harsh and severe state right now. They do not believe in the number of our brothers who were killed by the Soviets. [...]. I ran from them, yet such people handed me over to them, and because of them I am suffering now.”
- 32) “We were sent into this hole by force, and we are suffering here because one evil forced us to flee from our country; and here we have encountered another because we cannot say that Russians are evil; we must praise the communists and say that life under them is good. If anyone says the opposite, they can be devoured alive.”
- 33) “Together with this letter, I’m sending to your name assistance for our Ukrainian refugees in the following order. [...]. Total 455.00.”
- 34) “I will not send the form, but along with that I will send you the list of contributors. I will carry on fundraising, though no one knows how much money will be donated, because people give it the cold shoulder.”

Such fundraising activities were usually carried out by churches and their representatives, while the funds were often sent to the Committee as the public authority that enjoyed trust and respect of society. Such trust in the Committee's actions is supported by about 4% of all the calls to this body. That is an acceptable number taking into account the psychological axiom that "[n]egative experiences tend to influence behaviour more strongly than equally intense positive ones" (Baumeister et al. 2001, 325).

Despite the diversity of the issues described in the immigrants' letters to the Committee, the responses provided by the latter lacked that variety. First of all, it is predetermined by the insufficient funds, which means that all requests for financial aid received an identical answer, though the formulation may differ:

Ми Вашого листа дістали і дуже прикро нам, що в даній хвилині ми не можемо Вам дати належної допомоги. Комітет немає зараз жадних матеріальних засобів, щоб допомогти Вам. Якщо в Комітеті буде така змога, ми не лишимо Вас поза увагою³⁵⁾ (Comité Ucraino de Auxílio às Vítimas da Guerra 1947).

The analysis shows that there is not a single positive response for the immigrants' financial requests. Nevertheless, in case of non-financial issues the Committee made their best to help immigrants in their needs:

Ви просите газету і календар на 48 рік, але нажаль ми того не маємо, бо такими справами розпоряджає редакція газети *Праця* яка міститься в Прудентополісі. Отже, Ви мусите туди звернутися і вони безпосередньо будуть надсилати газету і календарі. В цьому листі подаю Вам адресу газети *Праця*³⁶⁾ (Comité Ucraino de Auxílio às Vítimas da Guerra 1948c).

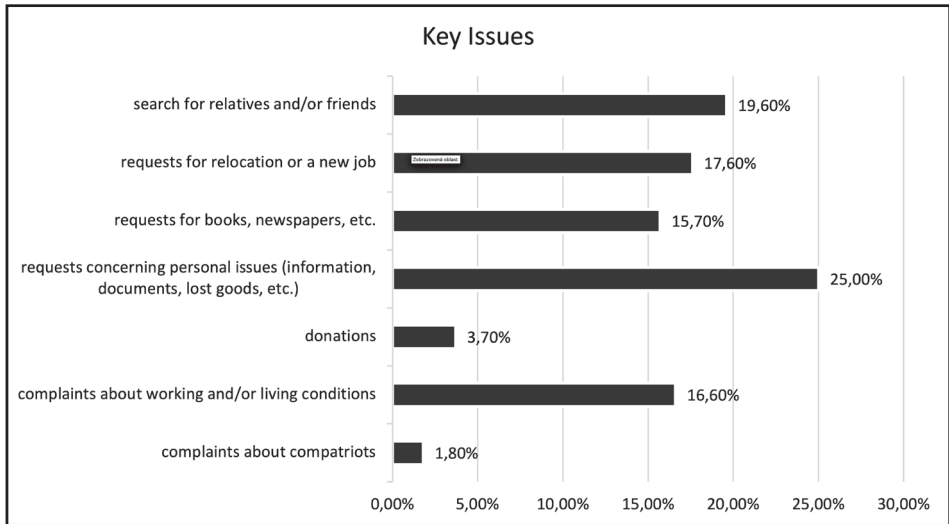
Треба тільки трохи терпіння зачекати, бо зараз бразилійський уряд вирішує справу наших емігрантів і є надія, що все зміниться в ліпшу сторону. Адрес всіх тих людей, що Ви просите, ми не маємо, але деякі я Вам надішлю³⁷⁾ (Comité Ucraino de Auxílio às Vítimas da Guerra 1948b).

Therefore, the assistance provided by the Committee to its appellants solely covered their requests for information, advice, and search for relatives and friends, which was not always enough to satisfy the needs of the immigrants, whose issues were much more diversified. In order to present the key findings and to summarise the immigrants' issues in quantitative terms, the following diagram has been compiled.

35) "We have received your letter, and we deeply regret that at this moment we are unable to provide you with the assistance you deserve. The Committee currently has no material resources to support you. However, should such an opportunity arise in the future, we will not fail to take your case into consideration."

36) "You are requesting a newspaper and a calendar for the year 1948, but unfortunately, we do not have them, as such matters are handled by the editorial office of the newspaper *Prácia*, which is located in Prudentópolis. So, you need to contact them directly, and they will send you the newspaper and calendars themselves. In this letter, I am providing you with the address of the newspaper *Prácia*."

37) "It only takes a little patience to wait, as the Brazilian government is currently addressing the situation of our emigrants, and there is hope that everything will change for the better. We do not have the addresses of all the people you requested, but I will send you some of them."



Key Issues Addressed to the Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War

The diagram illustrates the percentage distribution of the most disturbing issues described in the Ukrainian immigrants' letters to the Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War. The data reveal that the requests concerning personal issues (information, documents, lost goods, etc.) appear in every fourth letter, making this the most common appeal to the Committee. Close in frequency are four other categories: search for relatives and/or friends – 19.6%; requests for relocation or a new job – 17.6%; complaints regarding working and/or living conditions – 16.6%; requests for books, newspapers, etc. – 15.7%. The least frequent issues concern complaints about compatriots – 1.8% and donations – 3.7%.

In line with the hypothesis proposed in the paper, it is pertinent to group these issues based on the presence or absence of the economic or financial component and its influence on the immigrants' lives. Thus, the following concerns may be categorised as either fully or partially non-economic: search for relatives and/or friends, requests for books, newspapers, and requests concerning personal issues, including complaints about compatriots and donations. Conversely, requests for relocation or a new job and complaints regarding working and/or living conditions are associated with economic hardship.

Under this classification, the “non-economic group” accounts for 65.8% of the issues raised, while the “economic group” comprises 34.2%. Although a statistical margin of error must be acknowledged, the obtained data support the conclusion that non-economic concerns predominated in the lives of Ukrainian immigrants in Brazil during the studied period. Nevertheless, the letters vividly convey the acute suffering associated with poor living and working conditions, which remained a deeply distressing aspect of their experience.

Conclusion

The Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War was the sole official body in Brazil that could support Ukrainian immigrants, whether newly arrived or already residing in the country. A crucial asset of the Committee was its proficiency in the Ukrainian language, which enabled it to offer support and guidance in a manner comprehensible to the im-

migrants, the vast majority of whom lacked proficiency in Portuguese. The spectrum of issues brought before the Committee was extensive, yet financial constraints often rendered the resolution of these problems unfeasible. Among the most pressing concerns were the arduous working conditions endured by Ukrainian immigrants. Despite their expertise in agriculture, they found the gruelling labour on coffee plantations intolerable. This hardship was compounded by two additional challenges: wage exploitation and substandard living conditions. Concerning the former, Ukrainian labourers were typically remunerated with meagre wages, scarcely sufficient to sustain a basic standard of living. These wages were frequently subject to arbitrary reductions or complete withholding, with fazenda owners often refusing to compensate workers for days lost due to rain, a common occurrence in Brazil. With regard to the latter, Ukrainian immigrants faced considerable difficulties in adjusting to an unfamiliar and frequently inhospitable environment, exacerbated by their lack of linguistic proficiency. Moreover, the absence of Ukrainian churches and educational institutions, coupled with the geographical isolation of fazendas from urban centres and broader society, further deepened their sense of alienation.

Another common request directed at the Committee pertained to cultural support, as immigrants struggled with feelings of detachment from the outside world and their homeland. To mitigate this, they sought access to newspapers, magazines, calendars, and books to maintain a connection with their native language and cultural heritage. These challenges ultimately led many to petition the Committee for relocation to Paraná, home to Brazil's largest Ukrainian community. Facilitated by the Committee, Ukrainian immigrants endeavoured to re-establish contact with relatives and acquaintances who had previously emigrated to South America but with whom communication had been lost. Additionally, the Committee received numerous individual appeals, including reports of fraudulent activities among Ukrainian immigrants in Brazil, requests for assistance in drafting affidavits, and searches for lost personal documents and belongings.

In conclusion, Ukrainian immigrants in Brazil regarded the Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War as the only authoritative institution capable of addressing their grievances or, at the very least, offering some degree of relief. However, the Committee's very name suggests a primary focus on aiding displaced Ukrainians in Europe, rather than those residing in Brazil. Furthermore, its severely limited resources further constrained its capacity to provide adequate assistance. Consequently, further research should examine the nature of communication and relations between the Ukrainian Committee for Aid to Victims of the War and displaced Ukrainians in Europe, for whom the Committee often represented their last hope to grasp.

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