

# THE GREAT FAMINE IN UKRAINE: the unknown holocaust



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IN UKRAINE:  
the unknown holocaust**

*In solemn observance of the 50th anniversary  
of the Ukrainian famine of 1932-33.*

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## Editors' note

*In 1932-33, an estimated 7 million Ukrainians died of starvation during a terrible famine that ravaged Soviet-occupied Ukraine. But, unlike other famines, those caused by drought, pestilence or other natural factors, this one was the desired by-product of a deliberate political policy. In an effort to break the will of a nationally conscious Ukrainian peasantry and to finance rapid industrialization, the Soviet regime under Stalin ordered the expropriation of all foodstuffs and grain in the hands of the rural population. The result was a holocaust of almost unthinkable dimensions — mass murder by decree.*

*This year, the 50th anniversary of this largely unknown tragedy, we, the editors of *The Ukrainian Weekly*, which ironically, was born the same year millions died in Ukraine, have compiled this commemorative book as a public service. We dedicate it to the millions of famine victims.*

*In addition to providing information about the famine, the horrific history on these pages and eyewitnesses' stories of cruelty, murder and privation also shed light on the nature of the Soviet system. In view of such recent events as the downing of the South Korean airliner, the invasion of Afghanistan and machinations in Poland, as well as the continued persecution of non-Russian nations within the USSR, the story of the Great Famine in Ukraine does much to illuminate the essential inhumanity and cynicism that has characterized Soviet rule for the last 66 years, and marks it to this day.*

— The editors:  
Roma Hadzewycz  
George B. Zarycky  
Marta Kolomayets

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## Foreword

by Dr. Omeljan Pritsak

Although 50 years have passed since an event unique in modern history, the man-made famine in Ukraine (1932-33), we still do not have sufficient documentation to enable us to evaluate all aspects of that holocaust. Soviet archives, both in Ukraine and Moscow, are still closed to Western researchers, and even the secondary materials, especially the local press, only partially available outside of the Soviet Union, are scattered in various repositories in different parts of the free world.

But in spite of this, it is possible even now to see the basic coordinates which led to the Ukrainian holocaust. The Ukrainian national revival achieved by the end of the 19th century was a remarkable success. Ukrainian literature, having produced such talents as Ivan Franko, Lesia Ukrainka, Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, Vasyl Stefanyk, had reached international standards. Now even the Russian Academy of Sciences was forced to acknowledge that Ukrainian was not a peasant patois but an independent language (1905). The Shevchenko Scientific Society of Lviv found general acceptance in the scholarly world as a Ukrainian national academy of sciences. Mykhailo Hrushevsky, in his multi-volume "History of Ukraine-Rus'," traced and detailed a distinct Ukrainian historical process. Ukrainian political parties in Galicia and during the constitutional period between 1905 and 1914 in central Ukraine began to create a power structure in the countryside.

The Revolution of 1917-20 witnessed the proclamation of Ukrainian independence and the struggle to maintain statehood. Even the Russian Bolsheviks, in order to consolidate their power in Ukraine, had to modify their views concerning Ukraine. Until 1918, they had only local organizations in Ukraine, each dependent on the Moscow center. As a result, they tried to establish several Russian-dominated Soviet republics on the eastern Ukrainian territories. But, having witnessed the emergence of a Ukrainian political power, they had to drop their original plans and to proclaim one Ukrainian Soviet Republic.

The base of the reborn Ukrainian national consciousness was the Ukrainian village. The class of more prosperous peasants was both the main barrier of Ukrainian national aspirations and the main constituency of the Ukrainian cultural process.

It became clear to the Russians that they would never be able to consolidate their control over Ukraine from their strongholds in the factories and large

cities, unless they could neutralize the Ukrainian village. In 1928 Joseph Stalin came to sole power. He needed a special achievement to prove his leadership. In this situation he constructed a twofold plan: to achieve the socialist dream of rapid industrialization and to eliminate once and for all the Ukrainian danger.

He ordered the seizure of Ukrainian grain to be used as payment for machinery necessary to his industrialization plans. Since the normal grain procurement campaign would not suffice, he ordered that all grain be taken from the Ukrainian villages. In this action Stalin's personal plans coincided with the Russian imperial interests in destroying the Ukrainian nationally conscious stratum: he, understandably, found willing executors of that design in local Russian chauvinists.

First, scholars of the independent Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, the writers, literary figures, newsmen, even the blind traditional bandura players, the "kobzari," were eliminated, since Stalin rightly regarded them as the representatives and spokesmen of an independent Ukrainian national culture based in the village. After this stratum was silenced, it was much easier to destroy the Ukrainian village.

The horrors of the Ukrainian holocaust must not be forgotten. There are destructive forces at work, and the sad Ukrainian experience should serve to remind us of it.

The oldest Ukrainian fraternal organization in this country, the Ukrainian National Association, took upon itself the task of preserving this tragic memory. It generously gives its financial support to the holocaust publication program of Harvard's Ukrainian Research Institute.

Now I can, with great pleasure, recommend to the wider readership this memorial publication, in which three noted writers, each from his own perspective, deal with aspects of the Ukrainian holocaust.

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## The man-made famine of 1932-33: what happened and why

by Dr. James E. Mace

The event which Ukrainians call "shtuchnyi holod," the man-made famine, or sometimes even the Ukrainian holocaust, claimed an estimated 5 to 7 million victims. Purely in terms of mortality, it thus was of the same order of magnitude as the Jewish Holocaust. It was, however, a very different kind of genocide in that it was not motivated by a quest for racial purity and was not an attempt to destroy a nation by means of the physical murder of all its members. For one thing, Stalin had far too many Ukrainians under his sway for him to ever take the idea of physical annihilation seriously. Nor was it necessary for his purpose, which was to destroy a nation as a political factor and social entity. A far closer parallel is offered by events which took place after the Communists seized power in Cambodia and unleashed a reign of terror on the population designed to utterly destroy the nation as it had hitherto existed so that the new regime might recreate it in its own image. In both the Ukrainian and Cambodian cases, the genocide was committed by Communist regimes operating under an ideology which portrayed the nations in question as inundated by class enemies such that the regimes came to identify the whole social structure with such enemies whom it attempted to destroy by destroying the nation as a nation so as to leave an amorphous mass which the regime then sought to restructure as it saw fit.

In order to understand the Ukrainian famine, one must first of all look to the history of Russo-Ukrainian relations. Ukrainians have traditionally seen the long history of Russian domination over their country as one long tale of oppression. They have always viewed the results of the 1654 Treaty of Pereyaslav as their subjugation rather than the reunification of fraternal peoples which Stalinist and post-Stalinist Soviet historiography has attempted to portray.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Readers familiar with only the official view might read the eloquent historical essay written by a promising Ukrainian philologist in 1966, suppressed by the censor at the last moment and later circulated in Ukrainian samvydav: M. Iu. Braichevsky, "Presoedinenie ili vossoedinenie? Kriticheskie zamechanie po povodu odnoi kontseptsii," in Roman Kupchinsky, ed., *Natsionalnyi vopros v SSSR: Sbornik dokumentov* (Munich: 1975), pp. 62-125. This representative presentation of the Ukrainian view of Ukraine's inclusion in the Russian empire is remarkably similar to that found in early Soviet historiography in, for example, M. N. Pokrovsky, *Izbrannie proizvedeniya* (Moscow: 1965-67), I, pp. 450-517.

Indeed, the Ukrainian nation can hardly be said to have prospered from Russian rule. Its autonomy was gradually abolished; its Orthodox Church was absorbed by the Muscovite; its economic growth was long stunted; its elites were assimilated. Like the Czechs after the 1620 Battle of the White Mountain, Ukrainians gradually became almost entirely a nation of priests and peasants, and they are one of the few nations on earth whose level of literacy actually declined from the 17th through the 19th centuries. From 1876 to 1905 the tsars even went so far as to ban the Ukrainian language from the printed page in an attempt to cut short the revival of national consciousness.<sup>2</sup> When industries and mines were built in Ukraine in the late 19th century, the fact that Russian peasants from the Central Black Soil Region were economically poorer than their Ukrainian counterparts guaranteed that there would always be plenty of Russians to work in the new establishments, and the belated development of their own country thus passed the Ukrainians by.<sup>3</sup> The xenophobia of the Black Hundreds found more fertile soil among Ukraine's Russians than in any other part of the empire. Even the liberal democratic Russian intelligentsia refused to support so much as a token autonomy for Ukrainians. By the time the Russian Empire disintegrated in 1917, Ukrainians possessed only a numerically small but extremely important national intelligentsia in the cities; the vast majority of them remained peasants who viewed the cities of their own land as alien entities inhabited by foreigners.

### The two revolutions in Ukraine

In 1923, when the Bolsheviks were actively seeking to "take root" in Ukrainian soil, Moisei Ravich-Cherkassky, a former Jewish Bundist-turned-Communist, published the first official history of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine. His thesis, officially condemned since 1927, was that the Soviet regime and Communist Party in Ukraine had two distinct ancestral roots, one extending from the Russian revolutionary movement and another from the Ukrainian Socialist movement. He believed that the CP(b)U was actually the child of this dual lineage produced by the 1920 merger of the Borotbisty, a Ukrainian Socialist group, with the Bolsheviks in 1920.<sup>4</sup> While such a synthesis, if it ever existed, was short-lived, there is a fundamental truth upon which the idea was based: the division between town and country in Ukraine was national as well as social, and what happened in 1917 was that two separate and

2. The standard monograph on this subject, containing the text of many official tsarist documents, is Fedir Savchenko, *Zaborona ukrainstva 1876*. (Kharkiv-Kiev: 1930). A reprint was published in Munich in 1970.

3. Mykola Porsh, leader of the Ukrainian Social-Democrats, published an interesting sociological inquiry into this question based on the 1897 census: Mykola Porsh, "Vidnosyny Ukrainy do inshykh raioniv Rossiyi na robitnychomu rynku na osnovi pershoho vseliudskoho perepysu." *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk*, 1912, Nos. 2 and 3.

4. M. Ravich-Cherkassky, *Istoriya Komunisticheskoyi Partiyi (b-ov) Ukrainy* (Kharkiv: 1923), pp. 3-5, 9-11, 165.

simultaneous revolutions — one Russian and proletarian, the other Ukrainian and agrarian — fought each other for the same territory. For Ukraine's Russian cities, factories and mines, the revolution was but a regional variation on the movement elsewhere in the empire, but for the Ukrainian peasants who made up four-fifths of the country's population, the revolution was as much a struggle for national liberation as one for social justice. And both of these revolutionary movements could trace their separate ancestries back for decades.

During the revolution and civil war, the Ukrainian revolution had to face three different enemies: the Russian counterrevolution, the Bolsheviks and the Poles. Of the three, Denikin's Volunteer Army was seen as the greatest evil because it was aimed at restoring the pre-revolutionary regime of the landlords. Denikin saw "Russia" as one, indivisible and consisting of three parts: Great, Little and White. There was no place for Ukraine or Ukrainians in such a scheme. He saw the Ukrainian movement as an artificial creation of the Germans and Ukrainian "semi-intelligentsia"; he believed that, if these "subversives" were isolated, the Ukrainian movement would disappear. When he occupied the country, Ukrainian schools and cooperatives were closed down; his administration was based on reactionary landlords who reclaimed their estates and often used their positions to settle old scores. Even Kharkiv, where the predominantly Russian population initially greeted the Whites as liberators and providers of cheap bread, was ready to welcome the Bolsheviks as liberators after a few months of the White Terror.<sup>5</sup>

As for the Bolsheviks, Lenin recognized the right to self-determination to the point of secession but reserved the right to decide on its desirability on a case-by-case basis and maintained that Social-Democrats of colonially oppressed peoples ought to advocate unity. This meant recognizing a right which nobody was supposed to exercise, a true forerunner to the right of secession in the Soviet Constitution, designed only to make Russian rule more acceptable to the colonies.<sup>6</sup> Ukrainian spokesmen found this solution far from satisfactory. On the eve of the revolution, Lev Yurkievych (Rybalka), one of the leaders of the Ukrainian Social-Democrats, denounced Lenin's formula as a smokescreen and warned that if Ukrainians did not receive the right to rule themselves, they would fight for it, even against Russian Socialists if need be.<sup>7</sup> The words were prophetic.

Within days after news of the tsar's abdication was received in Kiev in March 1917, the Ukrainian Central Rada was established, first as a clearinghouse for Ukrainian national activities and later as an organ of territorial autonomy which contained representatives of the national minorities, including the Russians. Practically every town also had a soviet of workers and/or soldiers' deputies.

5. Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919-20* (Berkeley: 1977), pp. 151-160.

6. Frantisek Silnický, *Natsionalnaya politika KPSS v period s 1917 po 1922 god* (Munich: 1978), pp. 33-41.

7. An easily available bilingual edition of Yurkievych's pamphlet is L. Rybalka, *Rosiyski sotsial-demokraty i natsionalne pytannia* (Munich: 1969).

Since the words "rada" and "soviet" are merely direct translations of each other (both mean "council"), there was initially no little confusion about which of these very different bodies stood for what. Georg Lapchynsky, a member of the first Soviet Ukrainian government and later leader of a federalist opposition within the CP(b)U, recalled that in the fall of 1917 at any given political gathering there always seemed to be a Ukrainian who would claim that he supported Soviet power and also the Rada because it was a soviet.<sup>8</sup> The Rada itself even had occasion to use this formula. In November 1917 Mykola Porsh, the Rada's secretary of labor, officially informed Stalin: "We consider the Central Rada to be by its composition a Soviet of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers' Deputies who were elected at congresses of peasants, workers and soldiers."<sup>9</sup>

The weakness of support for the Bolsheviks was shown by their poor showing in the Russian Constituent Assembly elections, where the Ukrainian Socialist parties received a substantial majority and the Bolsheviks polled only 10 percent.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, they tried to take power in December 1917 by calling an All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets to "reconstitute" the Rada as a Soviet government. When the Bolsheviks and their sympathizers arrived in Kiev, they were literally swamped by Ukrainian peasant delegates from rural organizations claiming to have the right to be considered Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. Hopelessly outnumbered, the Bolsheviks fled to Kharkiv where, under the protection of Russian Red Guards, they convoked a rump session which proclaimed the first Soviet government of Ukraine.<sup>11</sup>

Up to the end of the civil war, the various Soviet Ukrainian governments were established by the Russian Red Army and received whatever local support they had from Russians, mainly from the Donbas workers. They tended to show open hostility to everything Ukrainian. In 1917, the Kiev Bolsheviks were led by Yuriy Piatakov and Evgeniya Bosh, who before the revolution had denounced even Lenin's verbal concession to the right of nations to self-determination, taking the Luxemburgist view that national liberation was utopian under capitalism and irrelevant under socialism.<sup>12</sup> When the Red Army took Kiev in January

1918, its commander declared in his first declaration on the establishment of Soviet power there: "We took this power from the far north on the point of our bayonets."<sup>13</sup> Those found speaking Ukrainian in the streets were rounded up as suspected counterrevolutionaries and shot; Volodymyr Zatonky later recalled that he himself only narrowly escaped execution.<sup>14</sup> In 1919 the Soviet regime was headed by Piatakov and Khristian Rakovsky, the latter of whom declared that Ukrainian was a "kulak tongue" and that recognizing it as an official language in Ukraine would be a reactionary measure.<sup>15</sup>

In reality, the early occupation regimes were primarily interested in Ukraine as a source of raw materials and foodstuffs, especially bread. In 1919, Lenin sent his most efficient requisitioner, Alexander Shlikhter, to Ukraine with orders to immediately ship 50 million poods of grain to Russia, but what Shlikhter called "kulak banditism" was so fierce that only 8.5 million poods could be obtained and two-thirds of that had to stay in Ukraine to feed the Red Army and the cities. As he later wrote: "Figuratively speaking, one might say that every pood of requisitioned bread was tinged with drops of the blood of the workers."<sup>16</sup>

Of course, the person one man might call a bandit, others might call a fighter for national liberation or simply a farmer trying to protect the fruits of his own labor. Whatever one calls it, the Bolshevik historian Ravich-Cherkassky was forced to admit that the countryside formed a united front against the invaders.<sup>17</sup> Even as set-piece warfare came to an end in 1921, thousands of guerrillas continued to wage war on the invaders in the Ukrainian countryside. According to captured Soviet documents first published in Galicia in 1932 and later unintentionally confirmed by a Soviet scholar, as of April 1, 1921, at least 102 armed bands were fighting in Ukraine and the Crimea, some with as many as 800 men. Excluding the Makhno army, which had 10,000 to 15,000 men, there were at least 10,000 of these "bandits," most of whom were conscious Ukrainians.<sup>18</sup> While we do not have later figures, Soviet Ukrainian newspapers continued to report on outbreaks of "kulak banditism" until mid-1924, and it seems to have been fairly widespread until mid-1923.

The Donbas Russians upon whom the Bolsheviks relied for popular support wanted nothing to do with the rest of Ukraine, and neither did the Bolshevik leaders there. As far as they were concerned, they were Russian, wanted to be part of Russia, and local Ukrainians were either kulaks or counterrevolutionaries

13. V. Sadovsky, *Natsionalna polityka Sovitiv na Ukraini* (Warsaw: 1937), p. 77.

14. *Budivnytstvo Radianskoyi Ukrainy* (Kharkiv: 1928), I, p. 11.

15. See his report in the Kiev Soviet, quoted in Pavlo Khrystiuk, *Zamitky i materialy do istoriyi ukrainskoyi revoliutsiyi, 1917-23 rr.* (Vienna: 1921-22), IV, p. 173.

16. A. Shlikhter, "Borba za khleb na Ukraini v 1919 godu," *Litopys revoliutsiyi*, 1928, No. 2, p. 135.

17. Ravich-Cherkassky, *Istoriya KP(b)U*, p. 170.

18. "Protybolshevytski povstannia na Ukraini v 1921 (Na osnovi ofitsiyalnykh bolshevytskykh zvidomlen inshykh neopublikovanykh materialiv sot. N. P-pa)." *Litopys Chervonoyi Kalyny*, IV: 6 and 9 (1932). O. O. Kucher *Rozhrom zbroinoyi vnutrishnoyi kontrrevoliutsiyi na Ukraini u 1921-1923 rr.* (Kharkiv: 1917), p. 18.

8. Georg Lapchynsky, "Z perskykh dniv vseukrainskoyi vldy," *Letopis revoliutsiyi*, 1927, No. 5-6, p. 56.

9. "Tekst razgovora po priamomu provodu predstavitelia S. N. K. I. Stalina s predstav. TsKUSDRP Porshem i oblastnoi org. RSDRP (b) Bakinskim 30 Noibria," *1917 god na Kievshchine: Khronika sobytyi* (Kiev: 1928), p. 532.

10. Oliver H. Radkey, *The Election to the Russian Constituent Assembly* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), pp. 29ff.

11. *1917 god na Kievshchine*, pp. 434-436; Ravich-Cherkassky, *Istoriya KP(b)U*, pp. 44-46. Later Soviet historiography finds the whole affair so embarrassing that it merely takes the Kharkiv rump as the first congress of soviets and completely ignores the Kiev events preceding it.

12. For the text of their declaration denouncing Lenin's recognition of the right of self-determination, see M. N. Pokrovsky, ed., *Ocherki po istoriyi Oktiabrskoyi revoliutsiyi: Raboty istoricheskogo seminaria Instituta Krasnoi professury* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1921), I, pp. 514-518.



— either way, what they wanted simply did not count. In 1918 the Donbas Bolsheviks went so far as to establish their own government separate from the rest of Ukraine, the Donets-Krivy Rih Republic. Certainly, it is always difficult for members of a “Herrenvolk” to come to terms with the emerging national aspirations of those whom they were used to seeing as uncouth peasants, and this, as Mykola Skrypnyk recognized in 1920, was the fundamental weakness of the various Soviet regimes in Ukraine:

“Our tragedy in Ukraine is the very fact that, in order to have the help of the working class, Russian by nationality or Russified, whose attitude toward the Ukrainian language and culture was insulting and sometimes even intimidating, with its help and its forces we had to subjugate the peasantry and village proletariat, and those people who were of Ukrainian nationality were, due to complex historical circumstances, suspicious and hostile to everything Russian, ‘Muscovite.’”<sup>19</sup>

Skrypnyk’s solution, which the party would officially adopt in 1923, was to actively foster the development of Ukrainian culture.<sup>20</sup>

#### Ukrainianization and its dilemmas

The path by which the Bolshevik Party came to adopt Ukrainianization was a long one which began in January 1919 when Sergei Mazlakh and Vasyl Shakhrai, two Bolsheviks from Poltava, then the center of the Ukrainian movement, published a long critique of the Bolshevik policy, the thesis of which was:

“Ukraine is just as much a country as Russia, Germany, France, Italy, Norway, England and so forth. Like them, it not only has a ‘right’ but will in fact be just as sovereign, just as independent as those other states.”

And once the Bolsheviks recognized this simple fact, they predicted, Ukrainians would be with them.<sup>21</sup> They were ignored, but in the summer of 1919 a discussion group was formed in Kiev, and out of it was to grow a credible opposition which tried to take over the CP(b)U, the so-called Federalist Opposition led by Lapchynsky. It demanded an independent party and state which would reach its own *modus vivendi* with Ukrainian revolutionary forces, but without Moscow’s support there was little hope such an opposition could succeed within the predominantly Russian CP(b)U. Lapchynsky left the Bolsheviks in disgust, joined the Ukrainian Ukapisty, and was readmitted to the party only in 1925 with the rest of the Ukapisty.<sup>22</sup>

19. Mykola Skrypnyk, *Statti i promovy z natsionalnoho pytannia* (Munich: 1974), p. 11.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

21. Serhii Mazlakh and Vasyl Shakhrai, *Do khvyli: Shcho diyetsia na Ukraini iz Ukrainoyu* (Munich, 1974), p. 222.

22. G. Lapchynsky, “Gomelskoye soveshchanie (vospominaniya),” *Letopisrevoliutsiyi*, 1926, No. 6, pp. 39-44; Ravich-Cherkassky, *Istoriya KP(b)U*, pp. 137-165.

While voices calling for rapprochement with the Ukrainians were weak inside the Bolshevik Party, there were powerful voices in the Ukrainian revolutionary movement ready to join hands in exchange for a shift in Bolshevik nationality policy. In 1920 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, who had headed the Rada’s General Secretariat and the Ukrainian Directory before breaking with Symon Petliura, went to Moscow and Kharkiv, ready to accept the positions of vice president of the Ukrainian Sovnarkom and Soviet Ukraine’s foreign minister until it became apparent that the Bolsheviks were more interested in scoring a propaganda coup than in creating a government acceptable to Ukrainians.<sup>23</sup> The Borotbisty, originally the left wing of the Ukrainian Socialist-Revolutionaries, hoped to gain concessions by showing the Bolsheviks a loyalty bordering on obsequiousness, and about 4,000 of them were actually admitted into the CP(b)U in 1920, with three of their leaders — Vasyl Ellan-Blakytny, Oleksander Shumsky and Hryhoriy Hrynko — receiving high posts.<sup>24</sup> Why did the left wing of the Ukrainian revolution wish so desperately to make an arrangement with the Bolsheviks, to join hands with them in jointly building a Soviet Ukrainian state?

Those familiar with official Soviet historiography will surely have encountered polemics against what Communist spokesmen refer to as “the anti-Leninist idea of the ‘bezburzhuaznist’ (literally, bourgeoislessness) of the Ukrainian people.” Sometimes the idea is credited to Vynnychenko and sometimes to Hrushevsky. In truth, nobody “invented” the idea of bezburzhuaznist; the fact that there was no Ukrainian national bourgeoisie was simply a matter of observation. And that is why the regime has always tried to discredit it. How can one fight “bourgeois nationalism” if the nation in question never had its own bourgeoisie?

In 1917 no Ukrainian political figure questioned the idea of Ukrainian bezburzhuaznist either explicitly or implicitly by trying to form a party of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie. At that time it was impossible to even imagine a Ukrainian politician who did not also call himself a Socialist. It could hardly have been otherwise since, with a few individual exceptions, those who belonged to the propertied classes in Ukraine were not Ukrainians. The Ukrainian people meant the Ukrainian peasants, and with what class could the peasants form an alliance if not with the workers? Besides, the arrangement Lenin described in his “State and Revolution” (completely autonomous communities of toilers free from outside interference) seemed ideal to villagers whose natural interest was to keep outsiders out. Unfortunately, any similarity between Lenin’s regime and the one described in “State and Revolution” was purely coincidental.

23. Hryhory Kostiuk, *Volodymyr Vynnychenko ta yoho doba* (New York, 1980), pp. 210-225.

24. Iwan Majstrenko, *Borotbism: A Chapter in the History of Ukrainian Communism* (New York, 1954), p. 206.

In 1921 the 10th RCP Congress adopted the New Economic Policy (NEP), which meant the end of compulsory requisitions of agricultural produce and basically leaving the peasants alone. At the same time, the formal equality of all languages spoken in any Soviet republic was proclaimed. The NEP did much to assuage the purely social grievances of the peasantry, but formal equality of the local language with Russian did not satisfy Ukrainians. So-called "banditism" was still widespread in the Ukrainian countryside, and the Bolsheviks came to realize that the only way to ever create a really stable Soviet regime was to somehow convince Ukrainians that the Soviet government was somehow theirs. It was for this reason that the 12th RCP Congress officially adopted the policy of indigenization (korenizatsiya) which directed Soviet regimes outside ethnic Russia to "take root" in local soil by fostering the development of the local language and culture, encourage local Communists and state servants to learn the local language and way of life, recruit non-Russians into the party and state, and, in short, to reverse the old policy of Russification and replace it with an active policy of de-Russification. Byelorussianization, Tatarization, Yiddishization and so forth were proclaimed and carried out, but none of them went so far or created so many problems for Moscow as did Ukrainianization.

The reason Ukrainianization gave Moscow cause for concern was due to its very success. Ukrainians, including Ukrainian Communists, took it seriously and actually began to act like Ukraine was in fact an independent country. Ravich-Cherkassky was speaking for the regime when he criticized Russian Communists who refused to take the policy seriously:

"Up to the present, not only among the Russian bourgeois intelligentsia but also among some Communists, views have been bandied about which are not much different from those who thought Ukraine was thought up by Germans. Many RCP members, bound too much by bourgeois assimilationist prejudices, think the UkrSSR and CPU are a masquerade, a fiction, or playing at independence. At best they concede that during the struggle for power in Ukraine against the nationalistic Central Rada and Directory, the Communist Party and Soviet power in Ukraine had to adopt the colors of defenders of national independence. Now power in Ukraine has been consolidated and the need for a CPU and UkrSSR has fallen away.

"We think that only those who live solely in the present could think that way. They do not see the 20 million Ukrainian peasants who will fill the ranks of the urban proletariat in proportion with the development of industry. Today Ukraine's cities have a Russified majority, but the countryside is the reserve from which Ukraine's cities will be filled. The masses of the Ukrainian people, who are being raised to cultural life, to mass creativity in the sphere of economic construction will Ukrainianize Ukraine at a more urgent tempo."<sup>25</sup>

25. Ravich-Cherkassky, *Istoriya KP(b)U*, pp. 5-6.

For a time the center encouraged such views. Even Stalin declared in 1923 that:

"The Ukrainian nationality exists and the Communists are obliged to develop its culture. One cannot go against history. It is clear that if Russian elements have hitherto been predominant in the cities, with the passage of time these cities will inevitably be Ukrainianized."<sup>26</sup>

No one could as yet foresee that within a decade the author of these very words would prove that, given sufficient force, one could indeed go against history.

Implicit in Ukrainianization was a high-stakes gamble: Would the eventual loss of the Russified proletariat, hitherto the regime's main supporter, be outweighed by Ukrainian support gained by the policy? Initially, the gamble seemed to pay off handsomely. With ample opportunities for national cultural work in Soviet Ukraine, many Ukrainian Socialists who had emigrated to escape the Bolsheviks now returned, led by the former Petliurist military commander, Yurko Tiutiunyk, and the former president of the Central Rada, Mykhailo Hrushevsky. The Soviet press dubbed the movement Ukrainian "smenovekhovstvo" and represented it as a Ukrainian counterpart to Ustrialov's movement.

The high point of this honeymoon between the regime and the national intelligentsia came in May 1924 when 66 prominent intellectuals, including several former ministers in Ukrainian governments, presented a declaration of loyalty to the Seventh CP(b)U Congress. This Declaration of the Sixty-Six stated that since Ukrainians were a nation of toilers, the proletariat was their natural ally, and that only the Russifying proclivities of early Soviet regimes had prevented such an alliance from taking shape. Now that the Bolsheviks had overcome their past errors by adopting Ukrainianization, Ukrainians were ready and willing to join them in building a Ukrainian worker-peasant state.<sup>27</sup> Those who signed the declaration clearly understood it as a national covenant between the Ukrainian nation as represented by its natural leaders and those who ruled Soviet Ukraine.

Although conditions were less than ideal — there were authors who could not get their writing through the censorship, and attacks upon Ukrainian scholars by self-proclaimed guardians of revolutionary orthodoxy boded ill for the future — they seem almost a golden age when compared to conditions under the autocracy and to the Stalinist deluge which was yet to come. The 1920s produced a flowering of Ukrainian cultural and intellectual life later called the "rozstriliane vidrodzhennia" (the executed rebirth) because of its abrupt and violent suppression by Stalin.<sup>28</sup> To an extent, Ukrainianization even legitimized Ukrainian national aspirations within the party itself, with Communists like

26. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

27. *Visti VUTsVK*, May 18, 1924, p. 3.

28. See Yuriy Lawrynenko, *Rozstriliane vidrodzhennia: Antolohiya, 1917-1933* (Paris: 1959).

Oleksander Shumsky, Mykola Khvylioviy, and Mykhailo Volobuyev demanding far more independence than Moscow would allow, thereby provoking a deep political crisis for the regime. In 1925 the former Borotbist Shumsky, then Soviet Ukraine's commissar of education, led a delegation of Western Ukrainian Communist leaders to see Stalin and demand that Lazar Kaganovich, who had only recently been appointed CP(b)U first secretary and was pursuing Ukrainianization vigorously, be replaced by a Ukrainian. At the time, Stalin said only that such a move was not yet expedient.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the writer Khvylioviy had electrified Ukrainian literary life with his messianic call to free Ukrainian culture from Russian domination, turn to Europe for models, and for Ukrainians to lead an Asiatic renaissance of rising colonial peoples by transmitting to them Europe's cultural attainments which Ukraine, due to its colonial past and status as a European nation, was uniquely qualified to do.<sup>30</sup>

Stalin intervened in the Shumsky and Khvylioviy controversies in April 1926 with a letter addressed to Kaganovich and the other members of the CP(b)U Central Committee: It was at this precise moment that Zinoviev and Trotsky were joining hands to form a United Opposition to Stalin, and the latter was probably motivated by what he saw as a need to strengthen his support in the predominantly Russian CP(b)U. In any case, Stalin accused Shumsky of failing to see the dark side of Ukrainianization which Khvylioviy represented and stated that if such anti-Russian chauvinistic sentiments were not opposed, they threatened to tear Ukraine away from Russia, Russian culture and its highest attainment, Leninism. Stalin added that Shumsky wanted to force Ukrainianization so rapidly that it threatened to violate the rights of Russian workers in Ukraine and alienate them from the regime.<sup>31</sup>

The weight of Stalin's condemnation assured that Shumsky would be completely isolated in the CP(b)U leadership. But a majority of the Western Ukrainian Communist Central Committee (the Communist Party of Western Ukraine was at that time an autonomous section of the Polish Communist Party) supported him, and the split became public when they attempted to take their case to the Comintern. They were expelled for their pains, and Shumsky was transferred to Russia. Khvylioviy, on the other hand, showed himself to be a master of the art of ostensible surrender by confessing his sins, promising never to do it again, then doing the same thing in a more subtle fashion. By 1930, however, the increasing rigidity of permissible intellectual life succeeded in clipping his wings, and in 1933 he committed suicide as an act of protest against the Great Famine created by the regime in the countryside.<sup>32</sup>

The third "national deviationist" to be condemned in the 1920s was not nearly

29. Janusz Radziejowski, "Kwestiya narodowa w partii komunistycznej na Ukrainie radzieckiej," *Przegląd historyczny*, LXII: 2(1971), p. 492.

30. See George Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934* (New York, 1956).

31. I. Stalin, *Sochineniya* (Moscow, 1946-1952), VIII, pp. 149-154.

32. Arkadii Liubchenko, "Yoho tayemnytsia," *Nashi dni*, II: 5 (May 1943), pp. 4-5, 10-12.

so prominent as Shumsky and Khvylioviy. In fact, Volobuyev was a complete unknown, probably an obscure teacher in a party school with only a brief article in a newspaper literary supplement to his credit when he published the work which was to provoke such controversy. In 1928 he published a two-part article in *Bilshovyk Ukrainy*, "On the Problem of the Ukrainian Economy," in which he drew upon a wide array of sources to show that Ukraine's economic needs were being neglected by union organs and that the country still was being exploited by Russia no less than it had been under the autocracy. According to Volobuyev, the USSR would best be served by policies that strengthened its component parts as relatively autarchic entities. These views were condemned as an economic platform of nationalism.<sup>33</sup>

### Soviet Ukraine under Mykola Skrypnyk

Only a handful of old Bolsheviks were Ukrainians: Hryhoriy Petrovsky, Dmytro Manuilsky, Vlas Chubar, Volodymyr Zatonsky and Skrypnyk. Skrypnyk joined Russian Social-Democracy at the turn of the century, before it split into Bolshevik and Menshevik, and once the rift occurred he joined Lenin's faction, never to waver thereafter. His was the typical career of a "professional revolutionary" — missions to various parts of the empire on Lenin's behalf, arrests, escapes from Siberia and even a brief taste of emigre life in Europe.<sup>34</sup> After helping Lenin to seize power as a member of the Petrograd Soviet's Revolutionary-Military Committee, Lenin sent him to Ukraine as his personal representative. For a brief period on the eve of the German occupation of 1918, he even headed the Soviet Ukrainian government, and he was architect of the decisions adopted at the Tahanrih Party Conference which founded the CP(b)U. In 1920 he became an advocate of the changes in nationality policy later to be adopted as Ukrainianization, and in the discussions preceding the formation of the USSR, and afterwards he was one of the chief defenders of the prerogatives of the Soviet republics. When Kaganovich was attacked by Shumsky, Skrypnyk was tapped as the leading defender of official policies in Soviet Ukraine, and in 1927 his loyalty was rewarded with the post of education commissar. While Moscow's appointees came and went, Skrypnyk remained in Ukraine to become first among equals in the country's political hierarchy. When Kaganovich was withdrawn in 1928, Stanislav Kossior succeeded him as first secretary, but there was no doubt that Skrypnyk was the real man in charge. He was by far the most powerful of the various party satraps who ruled the various administrative

33. M. Volobuyev, "Do problemy ukrainskoyi ekonomiky," in *Dokumenty ukrainskoho komunizmu* (New York, 1962), pp. 132-230. Vsevolod Holubnychy, "M. Volobuyev, V. Dobrohayev ta ihk oponenty," *Ukrainskyi zbirnyk*, No. 5 (1956), pp. 7-18.

34. Basic biographical works on Skrypnyk are: Iwan Koszeliwec, *Mykola Skrypnyk* (Munich, 1972); Iu. Babko and I. Bilokobylsky, *Mykola Oleksiiowych Skrypnyk* (Kiev, 1967); M. Rubach, ed., *Shliakhamy zaslan ta borotby (Dokumenty do zhyttypysu t. Skrypnyka)* (Kharkiv, 1932).

subdivisions of the Soviet Union in the 1920s, the undisputed political strongman of Soviet Ukraine.

Just as the formation of the United Opposition in 1926 had led Stalin to seek support in Ukraine by intervening on the side of Russian Communists there, the 1928 rift between him and Bukharin motivated him to intervene on the side of the Ukrainian Communists. By 1928 the Ukrainianization policy had succeeded in strengthening the Ukrainian component in the party to such an extent that instead of offering up a "national deviationist," he "bought" Skrypnyk by withdrawing Kaganovich.<sup>35</sup> Skrypnyk had already laid claim to eminence as a theoretician by creating a chair of the nationality question in the Ukrainian Institute of Marxism-Leninism, claiming all-union authority for it by arguing that Ukraine was the "best laboratory" for studying the nationality question because it had been itself a colony and now was a Soviet republic with its own minorities whose rights had to be protected, and by occupying the chair himself. One may be certain that Stalin was less than pleased with Skrypnyk's claim to pre-eminence in a theoretical field to which Stalin had made his own contributions, and Skrypnyk's 1927 appointment to the Education Commissariat further strengthened his position by placing him in charge of the Ukrainianization program as well as all educational, cultural and scholarly work. With Kaganovich withdrawn, Skrypnyk was in a position to be as independent as, say, Gomulka in the late 1950s, and he did not hesitate to use his position to the utmost.

Skrypnyk pursued policies bound to win him popularity with the Ukrainians. He lobbied for union investment with such zeal that he gained a reputation of being the man who brought all things to Ukraine. He defended the right of Ukrainian culture to develop separately, condemning those who wanted to attack Khvylioviy for his old sins and those who refused to assign the old Rus' epic "The Tale of Ihor's Armament" to Ukrainian literature. He pushed Ukrainianization far more rapidly than it had ever been pushed before, forcing hundreds of factory gazettes and major dailies (including the main state organ in Odessa, which had never been a Ukrainian city) to switch from Russian to Ukrainian. Officials who had not yet learned Ukrainian now had to do so or be dismissed. Those university courses which had hitherto been taught in Russian now switched to Ukrainian, and it became impossible to gain a post-secondary education in Russian without going to Russia. But to those who complained that the rights of Ukraine's Russians were violated by the new state of affairs, he could point out that they were still considerably better off than Russia's Ukrainians: at the same time that the more than 3 million Ukrainians of the North Caucasus were served by only 240 Ukrainian-language schools, Ukraine's 2 million Russians had 1,771 Russian-language schools.<sup>36</sup> And there was certainly no Ukrainian-language higher education in Russia. In fact, Skrypnyk

35. Edward Hallett Carr, *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929* (New York, 1969-71), II p. 66.

36. Iwan Koszeliwec, *Mykola Skrypnyk*, p. 161.

complained quite loudly about how inept Russia was in satisfying the cultural needs of its Ukrainians and strived to establish a cultural protectorate over them, all the while denying that he was doing anything beyond aiding them by sending textbooks and schoolteachers.<sup>37</sup> At one point he went so far as to argue that Russia's record was so abysmal that the "fascist" nationalists in Western Ukraine were taking advantage of it in order to discredit Soviet power in the eyes of the masses and that the only solution was for Russia to cede heavily Ukrainian border areas to Ukraine.<sup>38</sup> It is hardly likely that Stalin was overjoyed to receive what amounted to a territorial demand from one whom he considered his subordinate.

In any case, a Byzantine campaign to bring Skrypnyk low can be discerned from the end of 1928 when his client Matviy Yavorsky, the "ideological watchdog" of Soviet Ukrainian historians, was attacked by Pavel Gorin, secretary of the Russian Society of Marxist Historians, at the All-Union Conference of Marxist Historians.<sup>39</sup> A few weeks later, Pravda carried a brutal review of Yavorsky's brief textbook history of Ukraine which concluded that it was "strange" the Ukrainian Commissariat of Education had ever sanctioned so pernicious a book.<sup>40</sup> Soon the pages of Russian and Ukrainian historical journals were filled with denunciations of "Yavorskyism," sometimes finding fault with the very fact that he dealt with Ukrainian history as a national history separate from that of Russia. As one critic wrote: "The basic error of Comrade Yavorsky's book is that it portrays the history of Ukraine as a distinct process."<sup>41</sup> The political implication was obvious and ominous: if Ukraine did not possess its own distinct history, then it was not a country in its own right and ought not be treated as such. This, in turn, implied an attack on Skrypnyk's whole policy. As for Yavorsky, he was accused of having once been a gendarme in the Austrian army, was accordingly expelled from the CP(b)U in 1930, arrested during the Postyshev terror of 1933, and ended his days in the gulag. He was last reported seen in the Solovky Islands, where he was described as having bitterly regretted his Bolshevik past.<sup>42</sup>

Attacks upon distinctively Ukrainian cultural currents, regardless of whether they were Communist, became an inherent part of Stalin's so-called cultural revolution (1928-32). In Russia, however, it was primarily the so-called bourgeois intelligentsia which suffered, while in Ukraine attacks on Ukrainian Communists actually took precedence over those on non-Marxists. Yavorsky was the first victim of the cultural revolution in Ukraine, while Hrushevsky, the

37. Mykola Skrypnyk, *Statti i promovy* (Kharkiv, 1930-31), II, part 2, p. 247.

38. Mykola Skrypnyk, *Statti i promovy z natsionalnoho pytannia* (Munich, 1974), pp. 101-107.

39. The Yavorsky affair is discussed more fully in my forthcoming "Politics and History in Soviet Ukraine, 1921-1933," *Nationalities Papers*, fall 1982.

40. *Pravda*, February 10, 1929, p. 3.

41. *Istoriik-marksist*, XII (1929), p. 285.

42. S. Pidhainy, *Ukrainska intelihentsiya na Solovkakh* (n. p., 1947), pp. 58-61.

dean of traditional Ukrainian historians, was left unmolested until 1931. The fall of another Skrypnyk client, the philosopher Volodymyr Yurinetz, closely followed Yavorsky's, but the Ukrainian "bourgeois" intelligentsia was not neglected for long, and the manner in which it was attacked also boded ill for Skrypnyk.

It would have been extremely difficult for Skrypnyk to have attempted to defend either the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, founded in 1918 and including a number of members once quite prominent in the Ukrainian National Republic, or the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, which had split off from Russian Orthodoxy during the revolution. They were, thus, easy targets for those who wished to weaken Skrypnyk by attacking Ukrainian national institutions. Moreover, Skrypnyk had been intimately involved in the linguistic discussions which led to the adoption of a standardized orthography in 1928, had gone on record in favor of linguistic purism, and at one point even suggested supplementing the Ukrainian Cyrillic by adding the Latin letters "s" and "z" to designate sounds represented by the double consonants "dz" and "dzh."<sup>43</sup>

In November 1929 the GPU "discovered" an alleged conspiracy called the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine and arrested a number of prominent scholars and academicians.<sup>44</sup> On December 22, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was tied into the affair and was forced to proclaim itself liquidated the following January. The resolutions forced upon the so-called liquidation Sobor repudiated not only religious principles but also the principles upon which Ukraine's political distinctiveness had been based. Autocephaly was denounced as "a symbol of Petliurist independence," clerical Ukrainianization as "a means of inciting national animosity."<sup>45</sup> It did not take much imagination to translate these principles from the secular to the temporal realm.

As the GPU presented it, the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (SVU) had supposedly been led by Serhiy Yefremov, former leader of the Ukrainian Party of Socialist-Federalists and a vocal critic of the regime, who was also an academician in the history of Ukrainian literature, and Volodymyr Chekhivsky, former leader of the Autocephalous Church. The conspiracy was supposed to have begun in 1926, and it strains credulity to think that such a widespread conspiracy as the SVU was supposed to have been could have escaped the notice of the GPU and their secret collaborators for over three years. The SVU was accused of plotting the assassination of Soviet leaders (including Skrypnyk), the restoration of capitalism in a fascist independent Ukrainian state by means of an armed uprising supported by foreign capitalist states, attempting to organize the kulaks and bourgeois survivals — particularly the so-called "kulak intelligentsia"

43. Mykola Skrypnyk, "Pidsumky pravopysnoyi diskusiyi," *Visti VUTsVK*, June 19, 1927, p. 3.

44. Hryhory Kostyuk, "M. Zerov, P. Fylypovych, M. Drai-Khmara," *Ukrainska literaturna hazeta*. IV: 1 (January 1960), p. 8.

45. Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, "Ukrainization Movements within the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, III/IV:1 (1979-1980), p. 111.

of the villages and high schools. Cells had allegedly been established in both the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences and the Autocephalous Church hierarchy. Politically, the most significant charge was that it had engaged in cultural sabotage which consisted in trying to make Ukrainian culture as different from Russian as possible. So many academicians were arrested that whole institutes had to be closed, particularly the linguistic institutes which were accused of having engaged in nationalistic wrecking by trying to make the Ukrainian language as different from the Russian as possible. In short, the flower of the national intelligentsia was brought low, and cultural nationalism was identified with sabotage by class enemies. It would not be too long before the implication was drawn that Skrypnyk himself had been in league with these "saboteurs," for he had, of course, although what they had done hardly qualifies as sabotage.<sup>46</sup>

Skrypnyk was able to defend himself from the political fallout from the SVU affair by viciously attacking the accused in public, while judiciously ignoring the substance of their alleged wrecking when it struck too close to home, particularly in linguistics.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, Stalin sounded a temporary retreat. Just as he signaled a brief respite for the peasantry in his famous "Dizziness from Success" speech, he made a similar move regarding the nationalities at the 16th Party Congress by criticizing those who expected the "coming together and merging of nations" to take place in the near future. In the non-Russian republics this meant a renewed effort on the purely quantitative side of indigenization, but any respite for Skrypnyk was temporary indeed. While the witch hunts for nationalistic "deviationists" within the CP(b)U temporarily ceased, witch hunts among writers continued. More subtly, Skrypnyk's bureaucratic power base was being chipped away through the creeping centralization of the education system in union hands and the destruction of the Ukrainian Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

Hryhoriy Hrynko had, during his brief tenure as Ukrainian commissar of education, established an education system radically different from that which Lunacharsky set up in Russia. The so-called Hrynko system was retained until the end of the 1920s, when an all-union system was adopted. Skrypnyk went along with this, at least in public, but simultaneously insisted that there must be no talk of placing the administration of education in union hands.<sup>48</sup> Yet this is precisely what happened by degrees. On September 5, 1931, the USSR Central Committee issued a detailed order on how education was to be run, and a union

46. On the SVU trial, see Geliy Snegirev, "Mama moia, mama..." *Kontinent*, Nos. 11-15 (1977-1978). The indictment was published in *Visti VUTsVK*, February 28-March 9, 1930. Testimony on "wrecking in linguistics" appeared in *Visti VUTsVK*, March 11, 1930, p. 3.

47. See Mykola Skrypnyk, "Kontr-revoliutsiynne shkidnytstvo na kulturnomu fronti," *Chervonyi shliakh*, 1930, No. 4, pp. 141-142.

48. "Za yedynu systemu narodnoyi osvity: Narkomos — shtab tsilnoho kultosvitnoho protsesu (Vseukrainska narada okrinpektora Narodsvity)," *Visti VUTsVK*, May 10, 1930, p. 3.

government decree of September 9, 1932, placed all higher education under direct union supervision.<sup>49</sup> The Ukrainian Institute of Marxism-Leninism was in 1931 found guilty of all sorts of national deviations and broken up into an association of autonomous institutes headed by Shlikhter.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, Skrypnyk's supporters seem to have been removed from leadership positions on the raion (district) level. From the beginning of 1931 to mid-1932 fully 80 percent of the district party secretaries in Ukraine were replaced.<sup>51</sup> We know almost nothing about these new men or, indeed, about those they replaced. In all likelihood, many of those who lost their posts were being punished for failure to carry out central dictates regarding the collectivization of agriculture and procurement of agricultural produce, and those who got the jobs did so because of their zeal — or at least willingness — to carry out the center's dictates no matter what they might be. Such new men were far more likely to be loyal to Stalin than to a local satrap who did much to soften the most brutal aspects of collectivization.

The collectivization of agriculture, the man-made famine of 1933, and their role in Skrypnyk's fall will be dealt with below. Suffice it to state at this point that Moscow did not find the work of the Ukrainian Communist Party organization adequate in either agricultural collectivization or procurements, and in January 1933 Pavel Postyshev, the former head of the Kharkiv oblast party organization who had been called to Moscow a few years earlier for political seasoning, was returned to his old post and given a new one of second CP(b)U secretary. Officially subordinate to Kossior, Postyshev actually had dictatorial powers and began a campaign against an initially unnamed "national deviation" quite similar to the campaign against the Right deviation which had preceded Bukharin's fall in Russia.

On March 1, 1933, Visti announced a major government reshuffle in which Skrypnyk was transferred from education to Derzhplan (the Ukrainian counterpart to Gosplan), and on June 10 Postyshev denounced him by name, accusing him of having committed a host of national deviations. Interestingly, the only specific charge which Postyshev made at this time was that Skrypnyk's advocacy of the use of the letter "r" in Ukrainian objectively aided the annexationist designs of the Polish landlords by bringing the Ukrainian language closer to Polish and pushing it farther away from Russian.<sup>52</sup> Soon thereafter, Andriy Khvyliia, a former Borotbist who owed his prominence to having denounced Shumsky to Kaganovich in 1925, delivered a lecture on the Skrypnykite deviation in linguistics. Khvyliia portrayed any manifestation of Ukrainian linguistic purism as sabotage, condemned Skrypnyk's role in the

adoption of the 1928 orthography, and even disinterred Skrypnyk's old proposal to supplement the Ukrainian Cyrillic alphabet with two Latin letters, saying: "Comrade Skrypnyk could not have failed to know that he had entered upon the path of isolating the Ukrainian language from Russian and bringing it closer to Polish." He announced that henceforth the party and Commissariat of Education would fight "to purge the new orthography of the counterrevolutionary rubbish put into it" and pledged to have a new orthography ready within a month.<sup>53</sup> Soon the periodical press was carrying articles in which Khvyliia denounced Skrypnyk for linguistic separatism "in a kulak-Petliurist spirit" and explicitly identified him with the type of wrecking portrayed during the SVU trial.<sup>54</sup>

Other members of the CP(b)U leadership vied with each other to expose further deviations which Skrypnyk had committed. Panas Liubchenko, for example, not only connected Skrypnyk with the "kulak Ukrainian nationalist" sabotage of SVU vintage, but also with the historian Yavorsky.<sup>55</sup> Skrypnyk must have had few illusions regarding what fate awaited him, and on July 6, 1933, he committed suicide.

#### Collectivization of agriculture and the famine

Despite the progress achieved by Ukrainianization, the vast majority of Ukrainians remained peasants. For most Ukrainians, NEP and Ukrainianization were but two sides of the same coin, and we have seen that both policies were necessary in Ukraine to placate the same social force, the Ukrainian peasantry. Conversely, abandonment of one implied abandonment of the other. Without NEP, Ukrainianization lost its political justification, for nothing could possibly placate peasants if the state was taking their farms away.

During the 1920s, official statements in the Soviet press defined the party's main task in Ukraine as winning over the "rural masses" in general and the village intelligentsia in particular.<sup>56</sup> There is ample evidence to suggest that this approach enjoyed only limited success at best. Those connected to the regime, even in the most innocuous way as village correspondents, were shunned by their neighbors, as Zatonsky frankly admitted in a speech delivered to a 1926 selkor conference.<sup>57</sup>

Evidence of the regime's feeling of insecurity in the Ukrainian countryside is the fact that, while it abolished the kombedy in Russia in 1920, it felt the need to

53. *Visti VUTsVK*, June 30, 1933, pp. 3.

54. A Khvyliia, "Vykorenyty, znyshchyty natsionalistychne korinnia na movnomu fronti," *Bilshovyk Ukrainy*, 1933, No. 7-8, pp. 42-56; A. Khvyliia, "Na borotbu z natsionalizmom na movnomu fronti," *Za markso-leninsku krytyku*, 1933, No. 7, pp. 3-26.

55. *Visti VUTsVK*, July 6, 1933, pp. 2, 4.

56. See, for example, *Visti VUTsVK*, April 16, 1924, p. 1 (lead editorial).

57. V. Zatonsky, *Leninovým shliakhom (Promova na poshyreniy naradi selkoriv "Radianske selo")*, (Kharkiv, 1926), p. 21.

49. *Kulturne budivnytstvo v Ukrainiskiy RSR: Vazhlyvishi rishennia Komunistychnoyi partiyi i Radianskoho uriadu, 1917-1959* (Kiev, 1959), I, pp. 411, 559-567, 593, 604.

50. *Ibid.*, I, 54-544.

51. Myroslav Prokop, *Ukraina i ukrainska polityka Moskvy* (Suchasnist, 1981), I, p. 32.

52. *Visti VUTsVK*, June 22, 1933, pp. 1-2.

retain them in only a slightly altered form in the Ukrainian countryside as the *komnezamy* until 1933. The only difference between the *kombedy* and Ukrainian *komnezamy* was that the latter organizations were supposed to also include the poorest middle peasants, but never so many of them that they would make up over 15 to 29 percent of the membership of any given village *komnezam*. They retained all the powers of the old *kombedy*, exercised state power, and in many places ruled without any village soviet until 1925 when they were "reorganized" into "voluntary social organizations" without state power.<sup>58</sup>

The regime also took care to penetrate the countryside by a system of secret police agents and collaborators (*seksoty*).<sup>59</sup> As one account described it, the secret police established a system of OGPU residents on the district level who:

"disguised as instructors, statisticians, insurance agents, agronomists and so on worked incessantly to create a dense network of secret collaborators known as *seksoty*. The secret district residents of the OGPU did not directly involve the *seksoty* in subversion. When visiting villages they merely observed, noted and selected possible candidates as possible candidates for the OGPU, and notified the authorities. A man who was earmarked for work as a future *seksot* or agent was called to the *okrug* department of the OGPU. There the chief of the *okrug* department had a 'talk' with him, while a revolver lay on the table between them, and required him to sign an obligation. From that moment on the *seksot* was in touch with the district agent of the OGPU in the locality where he lived. Numbers varied from place to place depending on the size of the population, but everywhere the number of people thus recruited constituted a considerable part of the population."<sup>60</sup>

The *seksoty* enabled the regime to identify real and potential enemies, and this placed the regime in a far stronger position vis-a-vis the peasantry than it had been in the early 1920s, when the Bolsheviks confronted the village as strangers and without any idea of who was who. Whenever the party might decide the time was right to settle the unfinished business left over from the civil war, it would be ready.

The policy of "liquidation of the kulaks as a class" and forced total collectivization of agriculture was announced by Stalin on December 27, 1929, and was legalized by Central Committee resolutions of January 5 and 30, 1930.<sup>61</sup>

58: See P. S. Zahorsky, P. K. Stoian, *Narysy istoriyi komitetiv nezamozhnykh selian* (Kiev, 1960).

59. *Sekretni sotrudnyky* (secret collaborators).

60. P. Lutarewytch, "A Resistance Group of the Ukrainian Underground, 1920-1926," *Ukrainian Review*, No. 2 (1956), p. 90.

61. A treasure trove of eyewitness accounts of dekulakization, collectivization and the famine of 1933 is found in the files of the Harvard University Refugee Interview Project which was conducted in the early 1950s. The material broadly confirms collections of eyewitness accounts published by the Democratic Association of Ukrainians Formerly Repressed by the Soviets (DOBRUS) as *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book* (Toronto and Detroit: 1953-55).

How were these decisions carried out in Ukraine? An outsider or group of outsiders — usually either a plenipotentiary of the regime or a Russian worker recruited as a "twenty-five-thousander" — would be sent into the village with the power to veto any action of the local authorities or simply remove them. A village meeting would be called at which the new authority would try — often unsuccessfully — to browbeat the peasants into approving the collective farm and the expropriation of the kulaks. The outsider would lead the local *komnezam* to the farms of those who were to be expropriated and either carry off everything of value or throw the whole family — men, women and children — into the snow. Those who were dekulakized were often shunned by their neighbors who had been threatened with being themselves dekulakized if they ever helped a kulak.<sup>62</sup> Simultaneously, the local church was usually closed, the village priest and — if he were considered suspect — the local schoolteacher would either be arrested or run off.<sup>63</sup> Dekulakization thus meant the decapitation of the village, the elimination of the best farmers and leaders — of anyone who might lead the village in fighting back.

When it came to collectivization, the policy was carried out more vigorously than in Russia. At first the difference seems slight, but it was to grow into a significant one as the following figures on the level of collectivization in Ukraine and Russia show:

|            | Ukraine                | Russia                 |
|------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Late 1929  | 8.6 % of peasant farms | 7.4% of peasant farms  |
| Early 1930 | 65% of peasant farms   | 59% of peasant farms   |
| Mid-1932   | 70% of peasant farms   | 59.3% of peasant farms |

And the trend continued until collectivization was completed: by 1935, 91.3 percent of all peasant farms in Ukraine were collectivized, while Russia did not reach the 90 percent mark until late in 1937.<sup>63</sup> The higher level of collectivization in Ukraine is only partially explained by the fact that collectivization of the most important grain-producing areas were given priority; collectivization in Ukraine had a special task which the newspaper *Proletarska Pravda* summed up on January 22, 1930: "to destroy the social basis of Ukrainian nationalism — individual peasant agriculture."<sup>64</sup>

The peasants responded by fighting back. Even the Soviet sources make this clear. According to A. F. Chmyga, the number of "registered kulak terrorist acts" in Ukraine (and the regime tended to dub any peasant it did not care for a

62. Vasyl Hryshko, *Moskva slyozam ne viryt: Trahediya Ukrainy 1933 roku z perspektyvy 30-richchia* (1933-1963), (New York, 1963), p. 22.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

64. Quoted in Fedir Pigido, *Ukraina pid bolshevytskoyu okupatsiyeyu* (Munich: 1956), p. 107.

kulak) grew fourfold from 1927 to 1929, with 1,262 such acts reported in 1929.<sup>65</sup> During the first half of 1930, there were more reports of "terrorism" than for the whole previous year — over 1,500.<sup>66</sup> Later figures are unavailable, perhaps because they became so numerous that officials could no longer keep count. Defectors who had worked in the village as representatives of the regime speak of Communists being found with their bellies cut open and stuffed with ears of wheat.<sup>67</sup> There are numerous cases in which the women of the village, perhaps feeling they were less likely to be arrested, took it upon themselves to expel the local administration, abolish the collective farm and take what had been taken from them. Such cases were so widespread as to become proverbial as the "babski bunty."<sup>68</sup>

Whatever expectations the regime might have had at the beginning of the collectivization campaign, the transition from individual farms to large kolkhozy was not productive but extractive; simply taking everyone's animals and implements to the center of the village and proclaiming them socialized did nothing to raise output. The point was to give the regime greater control over the farmers and their produce; after all, it was much easier for the state to take all it wanted from a single threshing room floor than it was to search each individual farmstead. And this is why, while productivity declined, the amount taken by the state ("marketed") rose: although the total Soviet grain harvest of 1932 was significantly below that of 1927, grain "marketings" from that harvest were two and one half times those of 1927-28.<sup>69</sup>

As economic depression deepened in the West, agricultural prices dropped steeply in relation to those of manufactured goods. The Soviet Union, whose entire plan of development was predicated on paying for imported capital goods with the proceeds from agricultural sales, found that a given machine cost far more grain than had previously been the case. This provided a motive for intensifying the exploitation of the peasantry.<sup>70</sup>

Events in Kazakhstan in 1930 seem to have given Stalin the answer to the dilemma of how to obtain more produce and simultaneously deal with

troublesome peasants. The Kazakhs, primarily herdsmen, had responded to collectivization with the wholesale slaughter of their livestock. So many starved subsequently that the 1939 Soviet census shows 21.9 percent fewer Kazakhs in the Soviet Union than there had been in 1926.<sup>71</sup> But resistance among the Kazakhs had ceased. The lesson that famine could be used as a weapon was applied to the Ukrainians in 1933.

This was done by the imposition of grain procurement quotas on Ukraine for out of proportion to the country's share of the total harvest for the Soviet Union. Although Moscow was aware that Ukraine's agriculture was disorganized due to collectivization, the republic was obliged to deliver 2.3 times the amount of grain marketed during the best year before collectivization. In 1930, 7.7 million tons of grain were taken out of Ukraine, 33 percent of the harvest of 23 million tons. Although Ukraine produced only 27 percent of all the grain harvested in the USSR, it supplied 38 percent of the Soviet Union's grain procurements. In 1931, despite a decline in sown area, Moscow kept the same quota of 7.7 million tons and insisted upon its being met even after it became apparent that the harvest was only 18.3 million tons, according to official figures, and almost 30 percent of that was lost during the harvest. Already at this time a conscious policy of leading the Ukrainian countryside to catastrophe can be discerned.<sup>72</sup>

The 1932 Ukrainian wheat crop was less than two-thirds that of 1930, but still larger than the worst year of the NEP when there had been no famine.<sup>73</sup> At the beginning of the year, the Russian press had published editorials insisting that Ukraine could and would have to meet its "backwardness" in procuring grain, and local officials seemed willing to do so.<sup>74</sup> In any case, frequent attacks on "opportunists" on the local level who "did not want to see the kulaks in their midst" and were not fulfilling their quotas left little to the imagination regarding the fate of those who did not meet the quotas.<sup>75</sup>

Still, the quotas were not met, in spite of the fact that they were lowered three times.<sup>76</sup> The most draconian measures imaginable were taken against the farmers. On the union level, the law on inviolability of socialist property, adopted on August 7, 1932, declared all collective farm property "sacred and inviolate." Anyone who so much as gleaned an ear of grain or bit the root off a sugar beet was to be considered an "enemy of the people" subject to execution or, in extenuating circumstances, imprisonment for not less than 10 years and confiscation of all property. A second part of the decree provided for five to 10

65. A.F. Chmyga, "XV siezd VKP(b) o kollektivizatsiyi selskogo khoziaystva i nachalo osushchestvleniya ego resheniyi na Ukraine," *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta*, 1967, No. 6, p. 33. A.F. Chmyga, *Kolkhoznoye dvizheniye na Ukrayine* (Moscow, 1974), p. 302.

66. O. M. Krykunenko, *Borotba Komunistychnoy partiyi Ukrainy za zdiysnennia leninskoho kooperatyvnoho planu* (Lviv, 1970), p. 55.

67. Victor Kravchenko, *I Chose Freedom: The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official* (New York, 1946), p. 87.

68. See, for example, F. Pravoberezhnyi, *8,000,000: 1933-tyrik na Ukraini* (Winnipeg, 1951), p. 42.

69. Naum Jasny, *The Socialized Agriculture of the USSR: Plans and Performance* (Stanford, 1949), p. 81.

70. This point was made by V. Holub, "Prychyny holodu 1932-1933 rr.," *Vpered: Ukrainskiy robotnychiy chasopys*, 1958, No. 10, p. 6.

71. V. I. Kozlov, *Natsionalnosti SSSR (Etno-demograficheskiy obzor)*, (Moscow, 1975), p. 249.

72. V. Holub, "Prychyny holodu 1932-1933 rr.," *Vpered*, 1958, No. 10, p. 6.

73. I. F. Ganzha, I. I. Slinko, P. V. Shostak, "Ukrainskoye selo na puti k sotsializmu," in V. P. Danilov, ed., *Ocherki istoriyi kollektivizatsiyi selskogo-khoziaystva v soyuznykh respublikakh* (Moscow, 1963), p. 199.

74. See, for example, the lead editorial in *Pravda*, January 8, 1932.

75. See, for example, *Visti VUTs VK*, August 16, 1932, p. 1. One could cite examples of such articles almost indefinitely.

76. I. F. Ganzha, et. al., "Ukrainskoye selo na puti k sotsializmu," p. 203.



years in a concentration camp for collective farmers who attempted to force others to leave the kolkhoz. During 1932, 20 percent of all persons convicted in Soviet legal courts were sentenced under this decree, and Stalin himself called it "the basis of revolutionary legality at the present moment."<sup>77</sup>

In Ukraine, a decree of December 6, 1932, singled out six villages which had allegedly sabotaged the grain deliveries. The "blacklist" established by this decree was soon extended in wholesale fashion. It meant the complete economic blockade of villages which had not delivered the required quantity of grain. It specifically provided for the immediate closing of state and cooperative stores and the removal of their goods from the village; a complete ban on all trade in the village concerned, including trade in essential consumer goods and foodstuffs, by kolkhozy, kolkhoznyky and individual farmers; halting and immediately calling in all credits and advances; a thoroughgoing purge of the local cooperative and state apparatuses; the purge of all "foreign elements" and "wreckers" of the grain procurements from the kolkhoz (which at that time was equivalent to being sentenced to death by starvation).<sup>78</sup>

Those who survived the famine do not describe the harvest of 1932 as being anything like a harvest failure, but merely as mediocre. When the first procurement campaign was carried out in August, the overwhelming majority of the peasants in many areas met their norms. Then, in October, a new levy was imposed equal to half the earlier levy, and the local "tow brigades" went round searching and taking whatever they could find. At the beginning of 1933, a third levy was announced, and whatever remained from the earlier levies was taken at this time. Neither food nor seed were left in the village.<sup>79</sup>

There are so many accounts by survivors of the horrors of life in the villages of Ukraine that it is impossible to present an adequate picture here. In some areas, people became bloated as early as the spring of 1932, but the most terrible time was during the winter of 1932-33. Survivors tell of mass death by starvation, of mass burials in pits, of whole villages depopulated, of homeless waifs as well as adults flocking to the towns in order to find something to eat, of railroad stations literally flooded with dying peasants who begged lying down because they were too weak to stand.<sup>80</sup> Many of the starving tried to get across the border into

77. Robert Conquest, ed., *Agricultural Workers in the USSR* (London, Sydney, Toronto: 1968), pp. 24-25.

78. *Visti VUTsVK*, December 8, 1932, p. 1.

79. F. Pravoberezhny, *8,000,000*, pp. 51-54.

80. In addition to the files of the Harvard Refugee Interview Project, the following contain much eyewitness testimony: *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin*; Pravoberezhny, *8,000,000*; M. Verbytsky, ed., *Naibilshyi zlochyn Kremliia: Stvorenyi sovietskoyu Moskvoyu holod v Ukraini 1932-33 rr.* (London, 1952); Iur. Semenko, *Holod 1933 roku v Ukraini: Svidchennia pro vynyshchuvannia Moskvoyu ukrainskoho selianstva* (New York, 1963); Olexa Woropay, *The Ninth Circle (Scenes from the Hunger Tragedy of Ukraine in 1933)*, (London 1954). For Western eyewitness descriptions see: Malcolm Muggeridge, *Winter in Moscow* (Boston, 1934); William Henry Chamberlin, *Russia's Iron Age* (Boston, 1934). Other sources are examined by Dana Dalrymple, "The Soviet

Russia where bread was available. Iwan Majstrenko, a former Soviet functionary and newspaper editor, recalled the case of two villages across from each other on opposite banks of the river separating Ukraine and Russia, where peasants from the Ukrainian side would swim across at night in order to purchase bread the following morning, because bread was obtainable only on the Russian side.<sup>81</sup> In order to limit the famine to Ukraine, the political police established border checkpoints along the railroad lines in order to prevent the starving from entering Russia and prevent anyone coming from Russia from carrying food with him into Ukraine.<sup>82</sup> This meant a de facto "blacklisting," that is, economic blockade, of the entire Soviet Ukrainian Republic.

Graphic portraits of the horrors of village life emerge from the files of the Harvard University Refugee Interview Project, which was conducted during the early 1950s. It should be stressed that the interviewees were not particularly interested in the famine and that the responses were, therefore, made without any prompting in the course of respondents telling about their life experiences. One rather typical account (case No. 128) is the following:

"...there was the famine in Ukraine in 1933. We saw people die in the streets: it was terrible to see a dead man, when I close my eyes I can still see him. We had in our village a small church which was closed for services and in which we played. And I remember a man who came in there; he lay down with his eyes wide open at the ceiling and he died there! He was an innocent victim of the Soviet regime; he was a simple worker and not even a kulak. This hunger was the result of Soviet policy."

Other accounts are more graphic, as this one by a Russian woman (case 373):

"Well, in 1933-34 I was a member of a commission sent out to inspect wells. We had to go to the country to see that the shafts of the wells were correctly installed, and there I saw such things as I had never seen before in my life. I saw villages that not only had no people, but not even any dogs and cats, and I remember one particular incident: we came to one village, and I don't think I will ever forget this. I will always see this picture before me. We opened the door of this miserable hut and there...a man was lying. The mother and child already lay dead, and the father had taken the piece of meat from between the legs of his son and had died just like that. The

Famine of 1932-34," *Soviet Studies*, XV:3, pp. 250-284; XVI: 3, pp. 471-474 (1964-65). Useful bibliographies are: Alexandra Pidhaina, "A Bibliography of the Great Famine in Ukraine, 1932-1934," *The New Review: A Journal of East-European History*, XIII: 4 (1973), pp. 32-68; "Ukrainska literatura pro holod v 1932i 1933 rokakh," *Vilna Ukraina*, No. 18 (1958), pp. 42-44.

81. I. Majstrenko, "Do 25-richchia holodu 1933 r.," *Vpered*, 1958, No. 7, pp. 1-2.

82. Verbytsky, ed., *Naibilshyi zlochyn Kremliia*, pp. 89-90. See also: Leonid Plyushch, *History's Carnival: A Dissident's Autobiography* (New York and London: 1977), p. 41.

stench was terrific, we couldn't stand it, and this was not the only time that I remember such incidents, there were other such incidents on our trip..."

Nor were such horrors confined to the countryside. Cannibalism was even known in the cities, as a worker (case 513) described in the following account of what he saw:

"I remember a case in 1933. I was in Kiev. I was at that time at a bazaar — the bazaar was called the Bessarabian market. I saw a woman with a valise. She opened the valise and put her goods out for sale. Her goods consisted of jellied meat, frozen jellied meat, which she sold at 50 rubles a portion. I saw a man come over to her — a man who bore all the marks of starvation — he bought himself a portion and began eating. As he ate of his portion, he noticed that a human finger was imbedded in the jelly. He began shouting at the woman and began yelling at the top of his voice. People came running, gathered around her, and then, seeing what her food consisted of, took her to the militsia (police). At the militsia, two members of the NKVD went over to her and, instead of taking action against her, they burst out laughing. 'What, what you killed a kulak? Good for you! And then they let her go.'"

Nor were the common people the only ones to tell what they saw. Famine was, at the time, a common topic of conversation within the Soviet elite as well as among members of the foreign press, only a few of whom reported it. One account, no less valuable for coming to us second-hand, comes from Khrushchev himself, who stated in his unofficial memoirs smuggled out and published in the West:

"Mikoyan told me that Comrade Demchenko, who was then first secretary of the Kiev Regional Committee, once came to see him in Moscow. Here's what Demchenko said: 'Anastas Ivanovich, does Comrade Stalin — for that matter, does anyone in the Politburo — know what's happening in the Ukraine? Well, if not, I'll give you some idea. A train recently pulled into Kiev loaded with the corpses of people who had starved to death. It picked up corpses all the way from Poltava to Kiev...' "83

Of course, Stalin did know. In 1937, Terekhov, a secretary of the CP(b)U Central Committee, reported to him on starvation in the Kharkiv region, and Stalin accused him of telling fairy tales.<sup>84</sup> Later, both Admiral Raskolnikov of the Black Sea Fleet and General Yakir, commander of the Kiev Military District, both protested to Stalin about the famine and were rebuffed.<sup>85</sup>

According to the 1939 Soviet census, the number of Ukrainians in the USSR

83. N. S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston and Toronto, 1970), pp. 73-74.

84. Roy Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (New York, 1972), p. 94.

85. Plyushch, *History's Carnival*, pp. 40-41.

had decreased by over 3 million or 9.9 percent since the last official census was taken in 1926.<sup>86</sup> Had there been no famine, there would undoubtedly have been a substantial increase in population. Between 1897 and 1926 the Ukrainian population — despite the demographic catastrophes of World War I, revolution, civil war and the 1921 famine — grew an average of 1.3 percent a year.<sup>87</sup> In 1958-59 the Ukrainian population of Soviet Ukraine had a natural rate of population growth of 1.39 percent, but by 1969 the republic's natural rate of population growth had slowed to 0.6 percent.<sup>88</sup> Official Soviet administration estimates on the eve of collectivization show a natural rate of population growth for the Ukrainian republic declining slightly during the NEP from 2.45 percent a year in 1924 to 2.15 percent in 1928, but even in 1931 it was still 1.45 percent.<sup>89</sup> And since Ukrainians were concentrated in the countryside where the birth and population growth rates tended to be higher, their natural rate of population growth would be expected to be higher than for the republic as a whole.

The magnitude of the demographic catastrophe suffered by the Ukrainians is all the more sharply brought into focus when we compare Soviet population figures from 1926 and 1939 for the three East Slavic nations and the USSR as a whole.

|               | 1926 population | 1939 population | percent change |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| USSR          | 147,027,900     | 170,557,100     | +15.7          |
| Russians      | 77,791,100      | 99,591,500      | +28.0          |
| Byelorussians | 4,738,900       | 5,275,400       | +11.3          |
| Ukrainians    | 31,195,000      | 28,111,000      | -9.990         |

Comparison with the Byelorussians is particularly significant, since their purely political fate was very similar to that of the Ukrainians: they faced the same pressures to assimilate themselves to Russian nationality, but they did not go through the famine. Indeed, we have seen that, until the famine, the natural population growth for Ukrainians, although gradually declining, was significantly higher than the actual rate of Byelorussian population growth for the period. Others will have to calculate as best they can a more precise figure for

86. Kozlov, *Natsionalnosti SSSR*, p. 249.

87. Robert A. Lewis, Richard H. Howland and Ralph S. Clem, "The Growth and Redistribution of the Ukrainian Population of Russia and the USSR: 1897-1970," in Peter J. Potichnyj, ed., *Ukraine in the Seventies* (Oakville, Ontario, 1975), p. 153.

88. V. I. Naulko, *Etnichnyi sklad naseleennia Ukrainskoyi RSR: Statystyko-kartohrafichne doslidzhennia* (Kiev, 1965), p. 85; V. I. Naulko, *Razvitie mezhetnicheskikh svyazi na Ukraine* (Kiev, 1975), p. 67.

89. Naulko, *Etnichnyi sklad*, p. 84.

90. Figures from Kozlov, *Natsionalnosti SSSR*, p. 249.

the total number of Ukrainians who perished during the famine, but given the demographic evidence, 5 to 7 million dead seems a conservative estimate.<sup>91</sup>

Actually, it is possible that Soviet figures understate the losses suffered by the population. An official census was also made in 1937 but withdrawn before distribution, undoubtedly because it showed too clearly the magnitude of the losses suffered by the Soviet population, and it is not at all beyond the realm of possibility that those who prepared the 1939 census would have preferred to inflate their figures a little to reduce the risk of being arrested as were their predecessors two years earlier.

Far higher estimates of mortality come from Westerners who claimed to have been given figures by Soviet officials off the record. Adam J. Tawdul, a Russian-born American citizen who moved in the highest circles of Soviet society thanks to a pre-revolutionary acquaintance with Skrypnyk, claimed that Skrypnyk told him 8 million peasants had starved to death in Ukraine and the North Caucasus, and the famine was not yet over when Skrypnyk committed suicide.<sup>92</sup> Other Soviet officials gave him a figure of 8 to 9 million dead for Ukraine and the North Caucasus, plus an additional million or more for other regions.<sup>93</sup>

William Horsley Gannet, the British psychologist who was in Russia studying with Pavlov, stated that one official told him that as many as 15 million might have perished.<sup>94</sup>

The 10 million figure even comes out of Stalin's mouth, although the dictator did not actually say that so many had died. Winston Churchill recorded the following conversation which he had with Stalin:

“ ‘Tell me,’ I asked, ‘have the stresses of this war been as bad to you personally as carrying through the policy of the collective farms?’

“This subject immediately aroused the marshal.

“ ‘Oh, no,’ he said, ‘the collective farm policy was a terrible struggle.’

“ ‘I thought you would have found it bad,’ said I, ‘because you were not dealing with a few score thousands of aristocrats or big landowners, but with millions of small men.’

“ ‘Ten millions,’ he said, holding up his hands.’”<sup>95</sup>

Even if such an estimate did circulate among the Soviet elite, the fact is that even those who circulated them had no way of knowing the precise extent of the population loss. Regulations requiring the registration of burials could have made such knowledge possible, but by all accounts the peasants concluded that the dead were not afraid of even the GPU and buried their neighbors heedless of

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91. The Russian emigre S. Maksudov is now working on this problem, and we will hopefully have a more accurate figure in the not too distant future.

92. Adam J. Tawdul, “10,000,000 Starved in Russia in Two Years, Soviet Admits,” *The New York American*, August 18, 1935, pp. 1-2.

93. Dana J. Dalrymple, “The Soviet Famine of 1932-1934: Some Further References,” *Soviet Studies*, XVI: 4 (April 1965), p. 471.

95. Winston Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate* (Boston, 1950), p. 498.

the regulations. All we can say with certainty is that millions died, that the Ukrainian people lost 10 percent of their number and were thereby quite literally decimated.

### Famine as a tool of nationality policy

To be sure, all the peasants of the Soviet Union faced hard times in 1933, and there was mass starvation not only in Ukraine but also in the North Caucasus krai (including the Kuban) and along the Volga. However, the North Caucasus was then a largely Ukrainian area where Ukrainianization had been carried out during the 1920s, while its Cossacks had supported Kaledin in 1917 and provided the base for Denikin's Volunteer Army. The Volga contained the so-called Volga German communes, and, in any case, mortality there seems to have been far lower than in Ukraine and the North Caucasus. The point is that the areas affected by the man-made famine all contained groups which could plausibly be considered hindrances to Stalin's plan to resurrect a politically homogeneous Russian empire. It did not, strictly speaking, correspond with the main grain-producing areas, as would be expected were it solely a question of intensified extraction solely motivated by economic concerns: there was no famine in the Central Black Soil Region of Russia, while in Ukraine it extended into Volhynia and Podilia, hardly part of the basic grain-producing area of the USSR.

Some Russian emigrants have expressed the contrary view that the geography of the famine was essentially accidental and attempted to reason that Russia did not suffer famine because the population there lived on potatoes. It is true that potatoes were more plentiful in Russia than in Ukraine. They played a lesser role in the diet of Eastern Ukrainians than in Russian or Western Ukrainian diets, and it is possible that this circumstance might well have had some effect. Yet, claims that this was a major factor seem dubious because, had the regime's motive been primarily economic rather than national, it would surely have allowed foodstuffs like potatoes which had little marketable value to be brought into Ukraine, if only by “bagmen” traveling by train, while in fact border checkpoints were established along the Russo-Ukrainian border, and food being carried by passengers into Ukraine was seized. While the lower consumption of potatoes by Eastern Ukrainians probably made the regime's task somewhat easier, it does not in any way refute the evidence that the Russian Communist regime placed Ukraine on a de facto blacklist in order to teach the Ukrainian peasants, as William Henry Chamberlin put it, “a lesson by the grim method of starvation.”<sup>96</sup>

If we ask ourselves which national groups were most likely to constitute a threat to the new centralized and Russified Soviet Union which Stalin was creating, we arrive at the following: Ukrainians, second only to the Russians in

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96. William Henry Chamberlin *Ukraine: A Submerged Nation* (New York, 1944), p. 59.

numbers, they had fought a stubborn and protracted war for national independence and succeeded in turning Ukrainianization into a kind of surrogate independence under Skrypnyk; the Kuban and Don Cossacks, who had first given the White counterrevolution its base; and the Germans, who had welcomed the 1918 German occupation in Ukraine, might plausibly have been expected to behave similarly in the future and had also joined the Whites in large numbers. These were precisely the groups whose territories were affected by the famine.

It was not until immediately after the famine in late 1934 that Stalin felt strong enough to obviously turn to the Russians as the leading element in the Soviet state by forbidding the unpatriotic school of M. N. Pokrovsky to determine how schoolchildren were taught history. Before he had totally humbled the non-Russian nations it could have still caused political headaches if he had ordered local officials to distinguish among different national groups within a given territory in carrying out the grain procurements, and for this reason the famine was created on a territorial basis by means of excessively high procurement quotas for the territories in which the "suspect" nations lived. Within those territories, Russians suffered along with non-Russians, but in the final stages of the famine it was Russians who were sent into Ukraine to repopulate the most devastated villages and were given special rations to prevent them from dying along with the indigenous population.<sup>97</sup>

One can find numerous official statements connecting the need to eliminate Ukrainian nationalism with the need to "overcome difficulties in procuring grain," which was the euphemism for creating famine. Indeed, as we have seen, collectivization was intended to destroy the social basis of Ukrainian nationalism, although this was certainly not the reason the policy was adopted. In 1933 the official statements declared that it was necessary to eliminate Ukrainian nationalism because "nationalistic wreckers" were supposedly responsible for the difficulties in procuring grain, not vice versa.<sup>98</sup> However, the important thing is not which consideration preceded the other in the official statements; in the Bolshevik mind they were like the chicken and the egg: there was neither an answer nor reason to answer the question of which came first. As early as 1925, Stalin wrote: "The nationality question is, according to the essence of the matter, a problem of the peasantry."<sup>99</sup> Given such a view, crushing the peasants once and for all was the necessary condition for any final solution to the nationality problem.

97. Olexa Woropay, *The Ninth Circle*, p. 58.

98. Postyshev made this clear in his speech to the November 1933 plenum reviewing the "successes" of 1933 in agriculture, while Khvyliia and Liubchenko made similar statements during the summer of 1933: P. P. Postyshev, "The Results of the Agricultural Year 1933 and the Immediate Tasks of the Communist Party of the Ukraine," in *Soviet Ukraine Today* (New York, 1934), p. 11. *Visti VUTsVK*, June 22, 1933, p. 2 and June 30, 1933, p. 3.

99. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, VII, p. 72.

What was this solution? For the Ukrainian nation it was its destruction as a social organism and political factor. Its elites were destroyed — both its official Communist political leadership and its national cultural intelligentsia: this meant the nation's decapitation. Ukrainianization was ended and the old policy of Russification revived as the Ukrainian-language media and institutions shrank: this meant the re-Russification of the cities and the expulsion of Ukrainian nationhood back to the countryside from whence it came and where it was now taught submission by means of starvation. The collective farm was little different from the old pre-emancipation estate: the peasant was tied to the land by means of the internal passport system and forced to give most of his produce to the state which occupied the same position in relation to the peasant as the noble had in relation to his grandfather. Forced collectivization was a tragedy for all who were subjected to it, Russians as well as Ukrainians, but for the Ukrainians it was a special tragedy because, with the virtually complete destruction of their nationally self-conscious elites, it meant their destruction as a nation and reduction to the status of what the Germans used to call a "Naturvolk."

Nevertheless, there is today much cause for hope. Stalin himself gave a decisive blow to what he hoped would be the final solution to the Ukrainian problem when in 1939 he joined hands with Hitler and annexed Western Ukraine. With the expulsion of the Poles from Western Ukraine's cities they became Ukrainian, and the Ukrainian language, still seldom heard in the streets of Kiev and Kharkiv, rules in Lviv and Ternopil. With the Khrushchev thaw, the handful of survivors of the Ukrainian literary world of the 1920s again made themselves heard, and later a Ukrainian dissident movement arose. Stalin's attempt to solve the "Ukrainian problem" was not nearly so final as he hoped, but it dealt Ukrainians a blow from which they have still not fully recovered.

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# America's "Red Decade" and the Great Famine cover-up

by Dr. Myron B. Kuropas

In 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany. Before his death in 1945, some 16 million civilians, including 6 million Jews and from 9 to 10 million Gypsies, Poles, Ukrainians, Byelorussians and other untermenschen, were slaughtered to fulfill a diabolical dream.<sup>1</sup>

When World War II ended and the full extent of Hitler's horrors was finally revealed, the civilized world demanded justice. Thousands of Nazis and Nazi collaborators were hunted down, tried and executed for crimes against humanity. The criminals were punished, but the Nazi nightmare lingered on in hundreds of books, magazine articles, films and TV docu-dramas. Even today, in 1983, Nazi collaborators are being brought to trial to demonstrate that no matter how long it takes, no matter what the price, genocide shall not go unpunished. It is in remembering that we assure ourselves that the Holocaust shall never again become a policy of national government.

For Ukrainians, however, the Nazi Holocaust is only half of the genocide story. The other half is the Great Famine, a crime orchestrated by Joseph Stalin in the same year Hitler came to power. No one has ever been hunted down for that crime. No one has ever been tried. No one has ever been executed. On the contrary, many of those who willingly and diligently participated in the wanton destruction of some 7 million innocent human beings are alive and well and living in the Soviet Union.

Since the system which initiated the abomination is still very much intact, there is little likelihood that they will ever have to face an international tribunal for their barbarism. Nor is there any reason to believe that Communists have eschewed genocide as one of their strategies. Cambodia and Afghanistan have proven that.

While there is little the free world can do to punish Bolshevik criminals, the past can teach us to be wary of those contemporary religious and intellectual

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1. See Bohdan Wytwycky, *The Other Holocaust* (Washington: The Novak Report, 1980).

leaders who urge us to "trust" them.<sup>2</sup> One of the forgotten aspects of the Great Famine story is the role played by respected American clergy, diplomats, journalists and writers who, by defending Stalin in 1933, indirectly prolonged his reign of terror. Some were innocent dupes. Others were unconscionable conspirators. Almost all went on to pursue distinguished careers in their chosen professions without so much as a backward glance at the incredible human misery they helped conceal from world view. It is in remembering their actions that we can best assure ourselves that, in America at least, genocide shall never again go unnoticed.

## The Red Decade

During the 1930s, the United States found itself in the throes of the worst depression in its history. Banks failed. Businesses collapsed. Factories closed. Homes and farms were repossessed. Large city unemployment reached 40 percent. Bread lines and soup kitchens multiplied. The American dream, so real and vibrant during the 1920s, was shattered.

While America suffered, the radical Left reveled. Exploiting the economic turmoil and uncertainty which plagued the nation, Communists and their fellow travelers pointed to the "success" of the great Soviet experiment. Suddenly, thousands of despairing clerics, college professors, movie stars, poets, writers, and other well-known molders of public opinion began to look to Moscow for inspiration and guidance. As millions of jobless war veterans demonstrated in the streets and workers "seized" factories in sit-down strikes, the 1930s became what Eugene Lyons has called America's "Red Decade,"<sup>3</sup> a time when romanticized bolshevism represented the future, bankrupt capitalism the past.<sup>4</sup>

In the forefront of the campaign to popularize "the Soviet way" were American intellectuals, correspondents and even government officials who grossly exaggerated Bolshevik achievements, ignored or rationalized myriad failures, and, when necessary, conspired to cover up Bolshevik crimes. Especially impressed were those who traveled to the USSR during the 1930s, almost all of whom, it seems, found something to admire.

Some found a Judaeo-Christian spirit. Sherwood Eddy, an American churchman and YMCA leader, wrote: "The Communist philosophy seeks a new order, a classless society of unbroken brotherhood, what the Hebrew prophets would have called a reign of righteousness on earth." A similar theme was struck by the American Quaker Henry Hodgkin. "As we look at Russia's

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2. See Sydney Lens, "We Must Trust the Russians," *Chicago Sun-Times* (January 10, 1983). Also see Myron B. Kuropas, "Trust the Russians? C'mon!," *Chicago Sun-Times* (January 26, 1983).

3. Lens, *Radicalism in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1969), p. 297.

4. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt: The Politics of Upheaval*, (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1960), pp. 183-185.

great experiment in brotherhood," he wrote, "it may seem to us that some dim perception of Jesus's way, all unbeknown, is inspiring it..."<sup>5</sup>

Others discovered a sense of purpose and cohesive values. Corliss and Margaret Lamont concluded that the Soviet people were happy because they were making "constructive sacrifices with a splendid purpose held consciously and continuously in mind" despite some "stresses and strains" in the system.<sup>6</sup>

Still others found humane prisons. "Soviet justice," wrote Anna Louise Strong, "aims to give the criminal a new environment in which he will begin to act in a normal way as a responsible Soviet citizen. The less confinement the better; the less he feels himself in prison the better...the labor camps have won high reputation throughout the Soviet Union as places where tens of thousands of men have been reclaimed."<sup>7</sup>

The Soviet Union had something for everyone. Liberals found social equality, wise and caring leaders, reconstructed institutions and intellectual stimulation.<sup>8</sup> Rebels found support for their causes: birth control, sexual equality, progressive education, futuristic dancing, Esperanto. "Even hard-boiled capitalists," wrote Lyons, an American correspondent in Moscow, "found the spectacle to their taste: no strikes, no lip, hard work..."<sup>9</sup>

Contributing to the liberal chorus of solicitous praise for Stalin's new society were American diplomats such as U.S. Ambassador Joseph E. Davies who argued that Stalin was a stubborn democrat who insisted on a constitution which protected basic human rights "even though it hazarded his power and party control."<sup>10</sup>

Like most liberals, Davies never accepted the notion that Stalin's purge trials were staged. "To assume that," he wrote, "...would be to presuppose the creative genius of Shakespeare and the genius of Belasco in stage production."<sup>11</sup> Nor did he believe Stalin — whom he described as "clean-living, modest, retiring" — was personally involved in the elimination of his former colleagues.<sup>12</sup> Even though he had personally met and dined with many of the purge victims, Davies later concluded that their execution was justified because it eliminated Russia's "Fifth Column" which, in keeping with "Hitler's designs upon the Ukraine," had conspired to "dismember the union..."<sup>12</sup>

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5. Cited in Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China and Cuba, 1928-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 124.

6. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 127.

7. Cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145.

8. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 106.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

10. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 164.

11. Joseph E. Davies, *Mission to Moscow* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1941), pp. 191-192.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 262.

In the United States, meanwhile, the liberal press was equally enamored of Stalin. Writing in *Soviet Russia Today*, a monthly journal, Upton Sinclair, Max Lerner and Robert M. Lovett wrote glowing accounts of Moscow's important role in defending democratic principles.<sup>13</sup> In the words of Prof. Frederick L. Schuman, a charter member of the Soviet defense team:

"The great cleavage between contemporary societies is not between 'capitalism' (democratic or fascist) and 'communism' but between those (whether in Manchester, Moscow, Marseilles or Minneapolis) who believe in the mind and in the government of, by and for the people, and those (whether in Munich, Milan or Mukden) who believe in might and in government of, by and for a self-appointed oligarchy of property and privilege."<sup>14</sup>

For the *Nation*, Russia was the world's first true democracy and anyone who didn't believe it was "either malicious or ignorant."<sup>15</sup> For the *New Republic*, communism was "a false bogey."<sup>16</sup> When a group of 140 American intellectuals associated with the Committee for Cultural Freedom included the USSR in its list of nations which deny civil liberties and cultural independence, some 400 liberal Americans — including university presidents, professors and such prominent names as Langston Hughes, Clifford Odets, Richard Wright, Max Weber, Granville Hicks, Louis Untermeyer and James Thurber — signed and agreed to have published an "Open Letter" branding as "fascists" all those who dared suggest "the fantastic falsehood that the USSR and the totalitarian states are basically alike." Joining the condemnation with pointed editorial comments were the *Nation* and the *New Republic*.<sup>17</sup>

### How the press corps concealed a famine

In January 1928, Eugene Lyons, the newly hired correspondent for *United Press* arrived to take up his duties in Moscow. Although he had never actually joined the Communist Party in America, Lyons came with impeccable Leftist credentials. The son of an impoverished Jewish laborer on New York's Lower East Side, he joined the Young People's Socialist League in his youth. Beginning his professional career as a writer for various radical publications, Lyons eventually became the editor of *Soviet Russia Pictorial*, the first popular American magazine about the "wonders" of Soviet life, and a *New York* correspondent for TASS, the Soviet news bureau.<sup>18</sup>

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13. Frank A. Warren III, *Liberals and Communism: The "Red Decade" Revisited* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 105.

14. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 109.

15. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 105.

16. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 149.

17. Eugene Lyons, *The Red Decade: The Stalinist Penetration of America* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1941), pp. 342-351.

18. Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1937), pp. 3-49.

"My entire social environment in those years," he later wrote, "was Communist and Soviet...<sup>19</sup> If anyone ever went to the Soviet realm with a deep and earnest determination to understand the revolution...it was the newly appointed United Press correspondent...I was not deserting the direct service of the cause for the fleshpots of capitalism," he reasoned, "I was accepting, rather, a post of immense strategic importance in the further service of that cause, and doing so with the wholehearted agreement and understanding of my chiefs in TASS and therefore, presumably, of the Soviet Foreign Office."<sup>20</sup>

As an enthusiastic member of Stalin's defense team, Lyons consistently penned dispatches which glorified the Soviet Union. "Every present-tense difficulty that I was obliged to report," he wrote, "I proceeded to dwarf by posing it against a great future-tense vision."<sup>21</sup>

The longer Lyons remained in the USSR, however, the more disillusioned he became with Soviet reality. Eventually, his reports began to expose the sham of Bolshevik propaganda, and Moscow demanded his recall.

Returning to the United States in 1934,<sup>22</sup> he wrote about his experiences in "Assignment in Utopia," a book published by Harcourt-Brace in 1937. In a chapter titled "The Press Corps Conceals a Famine," Lyons described how he and other American correspondents conspired with Soviet authorities to deny the existence of the world's only human-engineered famine. The most diligent collaborators in the sordid affair were Walter Duranty, head of The New York Times Moscow bureau, and Louis Fischer, Moscow correspondent for the Nation.

The first reliable report of the catastrophe to reach the outside world was presented by Gareth Jones, an English journalist who visited Ukraine in 1933 and then left the Soviet Union to write about what he had witnessed. When his story broke, the American press corps — whose members had seen pictures of the horror taken by German consular officers in Ukraine — was besieged by their home offices for more information. Angered as much by Jones's scoop as by his unflattering portrayal of Soviet life, a group of American correspondents met with Comrade Konstantine Umansky, the Soviet press censor, to determine how best to handle the story. A statement was drafted after which vodka and "zakuski" were ordered and everyone sat down to celebrate with a smiling Umansky.

The agreed-upon format was followed faithfully by Duranty. "There is no actual starvation," reported The New York Times on March 30, 1933, "but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition." When the famine reports persisted over the next few months, Duranty finally admitted "food

19. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 607.

shortages" but insisted that any report of famine "is today an exaggeration or malignant propaganda."<sup>23</sup>

Duranty, of course, was aware of the situation in Ukraine and confessed as much to The New York Times book critic John Chamberlain, himself a Communist sympathizer. Believing, as he later wrote, that "the Russian Revolution, while admittedly imperfect, needed time to work itself out," Chamberlain was distressed by Duranty's casual admission that "3 million people had died...in what amounted to a man-made famine." What struck him most of all "was the double inequity of Duranty's performance. He was not only heartless about the famine," Chamberlain concluded, "he had betrayed his calling as a journalist by failing to report it."<sup>24</sup>

Fortunately, not all members of the American press corps in Moscow were involved with the cover-up. A notable exception was William Henry Chamberlin, staff correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor, who traveled to Ukraine in the winter of 1933 and reported that "more than 4 million peasants are found to have perished..."<sup>25</sup> In a book titled "Russia's Iron Age" published that same year, Chamberlin estimated that some 10 percent of the population had been annihilated by Stalin during the collectivization campaign.<sup>26</sup> In describing his journey to Ukraine Chamberlin later wrote:

"No one, I am sure, could have made such a trip with an honest desire to learn the truth and escaped the conclusion that the Ukrainian countryside had experienced a gigantic tragedy. What had happened was not hardship, or privation, or distress, or food shortage, to mention the deceptively euphemistic words that were allowed to pass the Soviet censorship, but stark, outright famine, with its victims counted in millions. No one will probably ever know the exact toll of death, because the Soviet government preserved the strictest secrecy about the whole question, officially denied that there was any famine, and rebuffed all attempts to organize relief abroad."<sup>27</sup>

First to provide extensive coverage of the Great Famine in the American press was the Hearst newspaper chain which, unfortunately, placed the event in 1934 rather than 1932-33.<sup>28</sup>

By that time, however, Stalin's American defense team was already busily denying the Chamberlin and Hearst reports. The most outstanding example was

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 572-580.

24. John Chamberlain, *A Life with the Printed Word* (Chicago: Regnery, 1982), pp. 54-55.

25. *Christian Science Monitor* (May 29, 1934).

26. William Henry Chamberlin, *Russia's Iron Age* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1934), pp. 66-67.

27. Chamberlin, *The Ukraine: A Submerged Nation* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944), p. 60.

28. See *Chicago American* (March 1, March 4 and March 6, 1935).

## The legacy of the Red Decade

Louis Fischer who in the March 13, 1935, issue of the Nation reported that he had visited Ukraine in 1934 and had witnessed no famine! Even though he was aware of it, Fischer made no mention that the famine had occurred a year earlier. Problems with collectivization could not be denied, however. In his book "Soviet Journey" Fischer described the process in the following simple terms:

"History can be cruel... The peasants wanted to destroy collectivization. The government wanted to retain collectivization. The peasants used the best means at their disposal. The government used the best means at their disposal. The government won."<sup>29</sup>

With help from certain members of the American press corps, the Bolsheviks succeeded in their efforts to shield the truth about Ukraine's Great Famine from the world's eyes. Concealing the barbarism until it was ended, they generated doubt, confusion and disbelief. "Years after the event," wrote Lyons in 1937, "when no Russian Communist in his senses any longer concealed the magnitude of the famine -- the question whether there had been a famine at all was still being disputed in the outside world."<sup>30</sup>

### The "need" for a famine

The famine story, however, would not die. Even Time magazine eventually admitted the possibility of 3 million Ukrainians dead.<sup>31</sup> None of this bothered Stalin's American defense team. In a 1933 publication titled "The Great Offensive," Maurice Hindus wrote that if the growing "food shortage" brought "distress and privation" to certain parts of the Soviet Union, the fault was "not of Russia" but of the people. Recalling a conversation he had with an American businessman, Hindus proudly wrote:

"'And supposing there is a famine...' continued my interlocutor... 'what will happen?'"

"'People will die, of course,' I answered.

"'And supposing 3 or 4 million people die.'"

"'The revolution will go on.'"<sup>32</sup>

If a famine was needed to preserve the revolution, so be it. "Maybe it cost a million lives," wrote Pulitzer Prize novelist Upton Sinclair, "maybe it cost 5 million -- but you cannot think intelligently about it unless you ask yourself how many millions it might have cost if the changes had not been made... Some people will say that this looks like condoning wholesale murder. That is not true; it is merely trying to evaluate a revolution. There has never been a great social change in history without killing."<sup>33</sup>

Although Svoboda reported on the famine<sup>34</sup> and thousands of Ukrainians took to the streets in New York City, Chicago, Detroit and other cities to protest Stalin's terrorism,<sup>35</sup> the White House remained indifferent. On November 16, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt formally recognized the legitimacy of the Soviet Union and the Bolshevik regime.

Commenting on America's decision to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR, The Ukrainian Weekly reported that some 8,000 Ukrainians had participated in a New York City march protesting the move and added that while the protest was "not intended to hinder the policies... of the United States government -- we Ukrainians are as anxious as anyone else to cooperate with our beloved president" -- nevertheless, "we look dubiously upon the value of any benefits which America may obtain from having official relations with a government whose rule is based on direct force alone," a government which is unable "to provide for its subjects even the most ordinary necessities of life, and which has shown itself capable of the most barbaric cruelty, as evidenced by its reign of terror and the present Bolshevik-fostered famine in Ukraine."<sup>36</sup>

Fifty years later, The Ukrainian Weekly is still warning a largely indifferent America about the perils of trusting Soviet Communists. If docu-dramas such as "The Holocaust," in which the USSR was portrayed as a haven for Jews fleeing Nazi annihilation, and "The Winds of War," in which Stalin was depicted as a tough but benevolent leader whose loyal troops sang his praises in three-part harmony, are any indication of current media perceptions of the Stalinist era, then the legacy of the Red Decade lives on.

The world has been inundated with a plethora of authoritative information regarding Hitler's villainy and has become ever vigilant in its efforts to prevent a repetition of his terror. This is good, but it is not enough. Hitler was not this century's only international barbarian, and it is time we recognized this fact lest we, in our single-minded endeavors to protect ourselves from another Hitler, find ourselves with another Stalin.

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29. Cited in Lyons, *The Red Decade*, p. 118.

30. Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia*, pp. 577-578.

31. *Time* (January 23, 1939).

32. Cited in Hollander, p. 120.

33. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 162.

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34. See *Svoboda* (February 6, May 25, June 11, and July 14, 1932).

35. See *The Golgotha of Ukraine* (New York: The Ukrainian Congress Committee, 1953), p. 5.

36. *The Ukrainian Weekly* (November 23, 1933).



## Malcolm Muggeridge on Stalin's famine: "deliberate" and "diabolical" starvation

by Marco Carynnyk

"The novelty of this particular famine, what made it so diabolical, is that it was the deliberate creation of a bureaucratic mind, without any consideration whatever of the consequences in human suffering," Malcolm Muggeridge said. He was talking about the genocidal famine that swept Ukraine and the adjacent North Caucasus, two of the most abundant lands in all of Europe, in the winter of 1932 and the spring and summer of 1933.

The harvest of 1932 had been a fair one, no worse than the average during the previous decade, when life had seemed a bit easier again after three years of world war and five years of revolution and famine. But then, as the Ukrainian peasants were bringing in their wheat and rye, an army of men advanced like locusts into every barn and shed, and swept away all the grain. The few stores that the peasants managed to put away were soon gone, and they began eating leaves, bark, corn husks, dogs, cats and rodents.

When that food was gone and the people had puffed up with watery edema, they shuffled off to the cities, begging for bits of bread and dying like flies in the streets. In the spring of 1933, when the previous year's supplies were gone and before the new vegetation brought some relief, the peasants were dying at the rate of 25,000 a day, or 1,000 an hour, or 17 a minute. (In World War I, by comparison, about 6,000 people were killed every day.) Corpses could be seen in every country lane and city street, and mass graves were hastily dug in remote areas. By the time the famine tapered off in the autumn of 1933, some 7 million men, women and children had starved to death.

Malcolm Muggeridge was there that terrible winter and spring. As a correspondent for the Manchester Guardian in Moscow, he was one of the few Western journalists who circumvented Soviet restrictions and visited the famine regions — and then honestly reported what he had seen.

Shortly before Mr. Muggeridge's articles appeared in the Guardian, the Soviet authorities declared Ukraine out of bounds to reporters and set about concealing the destruction they had wreaked. Prominent statesmen, writers and journalists — among them French Prime Minister Edouard Herriot, George Bernard Shaw and Walter Duranty of The New York Times — were enlisted in the campaign of misinformation.

The conspiracy of silence was largely successful. For years to come, Stalinists and anti-Stalinists would argue whether a famine had occurred and, if so, whether it was not the fault of the Ukrainian peasants themselves. Today, as Ukrainians throughout the world (except in the Soviet Union, of course, where the subject cannot even be mentioned) commemorate the 50th anniversary of the famine, the events of 1933 are still largely unknown.

Muggeridge and I talked at his cottage in Sussex, England. I was particularly anxious to know why he, unlike other foreign correspondents in Moscow in 1933, took the trouble to investigate the famine.

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*Why did you decide to write about the famine?*

It was the big story in all our talks in Moscow. Everybody knew about it. There was no question about that. Anyone you were talking to knew that there was a terrible famine going on. Even in the Soviets' own pieces there were somewhat disguised acknowledgements of great difficulties there: the attacks on the kulaks, the admission that the people were eating the seed grain and cattle.

You didn't have to be very bright to ask why they were eating them. Because they were very hungry, otherwise they wouldn't. So there was no possible doubt. I realized that that was the big story. I could also see that all the correspondents in Moscow were distorting it.

Without making any kind of plans or asking for permission I just went and got a ticket for Kiev and then went on to Rostov. The Soviet security is not as good as people think it is. If you once duck it, you can go quite a long way. At least you could in those days. Having all those rubles, I could afford to travel in the Pullman train. They had these old-fashioned international trains — very comfortable, with endless glasses of hot tea and so on. It was quite pleasant.

But even going through the countryside by train one could sense the state of affairs. Ukraine was starving, and you only had to venture out to smaller places to see derelict fields and abandoned villages.

On one occasion, I was changing trains, and I went wandering around, and in one of the trains in the station, the kulaks were being loaded onto the train, and there were military men all along the platform. They soon pushed me off. Fortunately, they didn't do more. They could have easily hauled me in and asked, "What the hell are you doing here?" But they didn't. I just cleared off. But I got the sense of what it was like.

I'll tell you another thing that's more difficult to convey, but it impressed me enormously. It was on a Sunday in Kiev, and I went into the church there for the Orthodox mass. I could understand very little of it, but there was some spirit in it that I have never come across before or after. Human beings at the end of their tether were saying to God: "We come to You, we're in trouble, nobody but You can help us."

Their faces were quite radiant because of this tremendous sense they had. As

no man would help them, no government, there was nowhere that they could turn. And they turned to their Creator. Wherever I went it was the same thing.

Then, when I got to Rostov, I went on to the North Caucasus. The person who had advised me to go there was the Norwegian minister in Moscow, a very nice man, very well-informed, who said, "You'll find that this German agricultural concession is still working there. Go and see them, because they know more about it than anybody, and it'll be an interesting experience." So I went there. It was called the Drusag concession.

*What difference did you see between Drusag and the collective farms in Ukraine and the North Caucasus?*

The difference was simply that the agriculture in the concession was enormously flourishing, extremely efficient. You didn't have to be an agronomer, which God knows I'm not, to see that there the crops, the cattle, everything, was completely different from the surrounding countryside.

Moreover, there were hordes of people, literally hordes of people trying to get in, because there was food there, which gave a more poignant sense to the thing than anything except that service in the church. The German agronomes themselves were telling me about it. They'd been absolutely bombarded with people trying to come there to work, do anything if they could get in, because there was food there.

*I have read in a British Foreign Office dispatch that Drusag employed five people simply to pick up bodies of peasants who had come in and died of hunger.*

Yes, that's what I'd heard, too, if not more. The peasants staggered in and dropped dead.

*Were the Germans able to do anything for the peasants?*

They could help them with a little food — they were quite charitable in their attitude — but, of course, they couldn't do more than that flea-bit.

*What were you thinking and, more importantly perhaps, what were you feeling when you saw those scenes of starvation and privation in Ukraine? How does one respond in such a situation?*

First of all, one feels a deep, deep, deep sympathy with and pity for the sufferers. Human beings look very tragic when they are starving. And remember that I wasn't unaware of what things were like because in India, for instance, I've been in a village during a cholera epidemic and seen people similarly placed. So it wasn't a complete novelty.

The novelty of this particular famine, what made it so diabolical, is that it was not the result of some catastrophe like a drought or an epidemic. It was the deliberate creation of a bureaucratic mind which demanded the collectivization of agriculture, immediately, as a purely theoretical proposition, without any consideration whatever of the consequences in human suffering.

That was what I found so terrifying. Think of a man in an office who has been ordered to collectivize agriculture and get rid of the kulaks without any clear notion or definition of what a kulak is, and who has, in what was then the GPU and is now the KGB, the instrument for doing this, and who then announces it in the slavish press as one of the great triumphs of the regime.

And even when the horrors of it have become fully apparent, modifying it only on the ground that they're dizzy with success, that this has been such a wonderful success, these starving people, that they must hold themselves in a bit because otherwise they'd go mad with excitement over their stupendous success. That's a macabre story.

*There were kulaks throughout the Soviet Union, and they were "liquidated" as an entire class. Collectivization also took place throughout the Soviet Union. And yet the famine occurred at the point when collectivization had been completed, and it occurred not throughout the Soviet Union, but largely in Ukraine and the North Caucasus. How do you explain that?*

Those were the worst places. They were also the richest agricultural areas, so that the dropping of productivity would show more dramatically there. But they were also places, as you as a Ukrainian know better than I, of maximum dissent. The Ukrainians hated the Russians. And they do now. Therefore, insofar as people could have any heart in working in a collective farm, that would be least likely to occur in Ukraine and the North Caucasus.

*Given the deliberate nature of the famine in Ukraine, the decision on Stalin's part to proceed with collectivization and to eliminate resistance at any cost and to get rid of the kulak, vaguely defined as that category was, and given the fact that food continued to be stockpiled and exported even as people dropped dead on the streets, is it accurate to talk about this as a famine? Is it perhaps something else? How does one describe an event of such magnitude?*

Perhaps you do need another word. I don't know what it would be. The word "famine" means people have nothing whatsoever to eat and consume things that are not normally consumed. Of course there were stories of cannibalism there. I don't know whether they were true, but they were very widely believed. Certainly the eating of cattle and the consequent complete destruction of whatever economy the farms still had was true.

I remember someone telling me how all manners and finesse disappeared. When you're in the grip of a thing like this and you know that someone's got

food, you go and steal it. You'll even murder to get it. That's all part of the horror.

*How does one rank the famine of 1933 with other great catastrophes?*

I think it's very difficult to make a table of comparison. What I would say with complete truth and sincerity is that as a journalist over the last half century I have seen some pretty awful things, including Berlin when it was completely flat and the people were living in little huts they'd made of the rubble and the exchange was cigarettes and Spam.

But the famine is the most terrible thing I have ever seen, precisely because of the deliberation with which it was done and the total absence of any sympathy with the people. To mention it or to sympathize with the people would mean to go to the gulag, because then you were criticizing the great Stalin's project and indicating that you thought it a failure, when allegedly it was a stupendous success and enormously strengthened the Soviet Union.

*What sort of response did you encounter when you came back from the Soviet Union and published your findings, particularly from people close to you, like the Webbs?*

The Webbs were furious about it. Mrs. Webb in her diary puts in a sentence which gives the whole show away. She says, "Malcolm has come back with stories about a terrible famine in the USSR. I have been to see Mr. Maisky [the Soviet ambassador in Britain] about it, and I realize that he's got it absolutely wrong." Who would suppose that Mr. Maisky would say, "No, no, of course he's right"?

*This is precisely the attitude that the British government was taking at that time. L. B. Golden, the secretary of the Save the Children Fund, which had been very active during the famine of 1921-22 in Russia and Ukraine, approached the Foreign Office in August 1933. He'd received disturbing information about famine in Ukraine and the North Caucasus, but the first secretary of the Soviet Embassy had assured him that the harvest was a bumper one, and so Golden asked the Foreign Office whether a public appeal should be put out. The Foreign Office told him not to do anything, and he did not. The Soviet authorities were not admitting to a famine, and therefore it was agreed that nothing should be said.*

Absolutely true. The other day I had occasion to meet Lord March, the representative of the laity on the World Council of Churches. "Why is it that you're always putting out your World Council complaints about South Africa or Chile?" I asked. "I never hear a word about anything to do with what's going on in the gulag or with the invasion of Afghanistan. Why is that?"

He said, "Whenever we frame any resolution of that sort, it's always made clear to us that if we bring in that resolution, then the Russian Orthodox Church and all the satellite countries will withdraw from the World Council of Churches."

"Then do you not pursue the matter?" I asked. And he said, "Oh yes, we don't pursue it because of that." I was amazed that the man could say that. But there it was, and it's exactly true of the Foreign Office.

*You published "Winter in Moscow" when you got back from the Soviet Union, and you were attacked in the press for your views.*

Very strongly. And I couldn't get a job.

*Why was that? Because people found your reports hard to believe?*

No, the press was not overtly pro-Soviet, but it was, as it is now, essentially sympathetic with that side and distrustful of any serious attack on it.

*How do you explain this sympathy?*

It's something I've written and thought about a great deal, and I think that the liberal mind is attracted by this sort of regime. My wife's aunt was Beatrice Webb, and she and Sidney Webb wrote the classic pro-Soviet book, "Soviet Communism: A New Civilization." And so one saw close at hand the degree to which they all knew about the regime, knew all about the Cheka [the secret police] and everything, but they liked it.

I think that those people believe in power. It was put to me very succinctly when we were taken down to Kharkiv for the opening of the Dnieper dam. There was an American colonel who was running it, building the dam in effect. "How do you like it here?" I asked him, thinking that I'd get a wonderful blast of him saying how he absolutely hated it. "I think it's wonderful," he said. "You never get any labor trouble."

This will be one of the great puzzles of posterity in looking back on this age, to understand why the liberal mind, the Manchester Guardian mind, the New Republic mind, should feel such enormous sympathy with this authoritarian regime.

*You are implying that the liberal intelligentsia did not simply overlook the regime's brutality, but actually admired and liked it.*

Yes, I'm saying that, although they wouldn't have admitted it, perhaps not even to themselves. I remember Mrs. Webb, who after all was a very cultivated upper-class liberal-minded person, an early member of the Fabian Society and so on, saying to me, "Yes, it's true, people disappear in Russia." She said it with

such great satisfaction that I couldn't help thinking that there were a lot of people in England whose disappearance she would have liked to organize.

No, it's an everlasting mystery to me how one after the other, the intelligentsia of the Western world, the Americans, the Germans, even the French, fell for this thing to such an extraordinary degree.

*One man who didn't fall for it was George Orwell. Did you discuss your experiences in the Soviet Union with him? I ask because Orwell mentioned the famine in his essay "Notes on Nationalism." "Huge events like the Ukraine famine of 1933, involving the deaths of millions of people," he wrote, "have actually escaped the attention of the majority of English Russophiles."*

We discussed the whole question. George had gone to the Spanish Civil War as an ardent champion of the Republican side. In Catalonia he could not but realize what a disgraceful double-faced game the Communists were playing there. He was in a thing called POUM [Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista, the United Marxist Workers' Party], which was allegedly Trotskyist. Those people were not being knocked off by the Franco armies, they were being knocked off by the Communists. And he was deeply disillusioned. He then wrote what I think is one of his best books, "Homage to Catalonia."

And so what brought us together was that we were in the same dilemma. People assumed that because he had attacked the Communists, he must be on the Franco side. Just as people thought that because I'd attacked the Communist side, I must be an ardent member of the right wing of the Conservatives. And so we had that in common, and we became friends. He had a feeling that I also had strongly, that the Western world is sleepwalking into becoming a collectivist, authoritarian society. And that's really what "1984" is about.

*Where do you think that Orwell got the idea for "Animal Farm"? His fable of the revolution betrayed is so accurate that it even portrays the famine. Food falls short, and the animals have only chaff and mangels to eat. Napoleon (Stalin) conceals the facts and orders the hens to surrender their eggs so that he can procure grain to keep the farm going. The hens rebel and Napoleon orders their rations to be stopped, decreeing that "any animal giving so much as a grain of corn to a hen shall be punished by death."*

It's his masterpiece. It is one of the few books written in the 20th century that I would say will always be read. It's a beautiful piece of writing. If you show it to children, they love it and don't understand the other part of it. I think that he had a deep hatred of intellectuals as people. He felt that they were fortunate, and in "Animal Farm" he was illustrating how a revolution can be twisted into its opposite. It is a superb allegory of the whole thing.

But it's difficult to explain. He wasn't a man who discussed political theories. He had an instinct that these intellectuals were somehow double-faced, and he

never tired of railing against them. If you had asked him about the Soviet Union, he would have just said, "It's a dictatorship, and they behaved disgracefully in Spain." So he'd write the whole thing off in that way. He still called himself a socialist.

*To the very end.*

To the very end of his life. He actually went canvassing for Anuerin Bevin, and I've always wondered what particular line of talk he would have fallen into. He wasn't a person with whom you could exchange ideas as such. He was kind of impressionistic in his mind.

*Absorbed things without actually analyzing them.*

That's right. And in "1984," all that business about Newspeak and doublethink is beautifully done. And it is the kernel of the whole thing. And the terrorism and the fact that you drift into a situation in which people are in power with no program except to remain in power, which is very much the state of affairs that's come to pass. The people in the Kremlin at this moment are not in power because they've got plans to do this or the other thing. All they want is a policy which will enable them to stay in power.

*All that you've said about the image of the world that liberals have and about reporting, in this case from the Soviet Union, leads to a rather large and difficult question about the reliability of the image of the world that we are given.*

Yes, indeed. I believe that this is how posterity will see it. We are a generation of men who have become completely captivated and caught up in false images. Television and all these things are splendid instruments for keeping them going. Splendid. And I would say that the collapse of Western civilization will be much more due to that than to anything else.

*False images?*

False images. And it's enormously difficult to correct them. Children who grow up now have been looking at television and hearing the voice of the consensus, and they know nothing else. So I can't myself believe that there's any escape from this except that the whole show will blow up sometime or other. But I think that Orwell's position was rather different. He looked back on the past with nostalgia, which is peculiar in a man of his attitude of mind and temperament.

*He was very conservative and very English in many ways.*

Deeply conservative. The most conservative mind I've ever encountered. But

let's take this much more sinister thing we were talking about now, this complete imprisonment of people at all levels into images which are fantasy, bringing about in them a kind of unanimity, a consensus, which is very dangerous and which is really the party line. For instance, I know a great many people in the BBC. I would have the greatest difficulty in finding any people there, more than a handful, who would have other than the consensus views on things like abortion, euthanasia or overpopulation. There's a consensus, and the consensus seems to be true, and the images over which people spend a high proportion of their lives shape, color and dominate all their thoughts.

*What is your way to overcome these images?*

As a Christian, I believe that you can, if you want to, find reality, which is what people call God. You can relate yourself to that reality, and as a person belonging to what's called Western civilization you can find in the drama of the Incarnation everything that's some therefrom, you can recover contact with reality. That is in fact the only way. The ordinary man gets up and spends four, five or six hours of his day looking into these pictures and being subjected to this fantasy view. I often think that like Caliban's island, full of sounds and sweet airs, when we wake, we cry to sleep again. But if people ever do wake, and I don't believe they wake much anymore, they cry to sleep again. And crying to sleep again is turning on the apparatus.

*Marco Carynnyk has published poetry and criticism, as well as edited and translated nine books. He is a visiting fellow at the Kennan Institute in Washington, and is writing two books and filming a documentary about the famine of 1933. Clips from his interview with Malcolm Muggeridge have been shown on programs about the famine prepared by CKCP in Montreal, Radio Quebec and the CBC.*

NEW YORK EVENING JOURNAL • America's Greatest Evening Newspaper • FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1935

# SOVIET HUNGER VICTIMS ROBBED OF SHOES AFTER DEATH

## CORPSES LEFT UNBURIED PEASANTS STARVE TO SAVE CHILDREN FROM GROUND OF DEAD

### IN OPEN-AIR GRAVEYARD

By Thomas Walker, Correspondent

The bodies of the dead were lying in the open air, and the peasants were starving to save their children from the ground of the dead. The bodies were left unburied in an open-air graveyard. The peasants were starving to save their children from the ground of the dead.



**WOMAN EXILED**  
**Hid Potatoes**  
A woman was exiled for hiding potatoes. She was found with a large quantity of potatoes in her home. She was exiled to a remote area for this crime.

**Pretty Girl**  
**Among Dead**  
A pretty girl was found among the dead. She was one of the many victims of the famine. Her body was found in an open-air graveyard.

**MOTHER SACRIFICED LIFE FOR HER**  
A mother sacrificed her life for her child. She was found dead in an open-air graveyard, with her child lying next to her. She had starved to death to save her child from the ground of the dead.

**Leg of Horse**  
**Russian Steer**  
A leg of horse and a Russian steer were found among the dead. These were the only remains of the animals that had been killed for food during the famine.

**WOMAN SAVED CONBOY SILENT**  
**IN FERRY LEAP—ON 'ECSTASY**  
A woman saved a conboy in a silent ferry leap. She was found in a state of 'ecstasy' after the leap. She had jumped into the water to save the conboy from the ground of the dead.

**MODERN YOUTH**  
**SEEN ADVANCED**  
Modern youth was seen advanced. They were found in a state of advanced starvation. They had starved to death because they had no food to eat.

**MORE MELLON**  
**ART REVEALED**  
More Mellon art was revealed. The art was found in a state of advanced starvation. It was revealed that the art was made during the famine.

**DEATH IN A UKRAINE DITCH: PEASANT-HUNGER VICTIM**  
A peasant died in a ditch in Ukraine. He was a victim of the famine. His body was found in a ditch, and he had starved to death.

**TOKIO PROTEST**  
**TO U. S. ENVOY**  
A protest was held in Tokyo. The protesters were protesting against the famine in Ukraine. They were demanding that the U.S. government do something to help the victims.

**Freed Killing Suspect**  
**Held on Gun Charge**  
A killing suspect was freed. He was held on a gun charge. He had been accused of killing someone during the famine.

PHOTO BY AMERICAN PICTURES, INC.

The New York Evening Journal, which provided extensive coverage of the Ukrainian famine written by its correspondent, Thomas Walker, printed the above report and photographs in its February 21, 1935, issue.

## Survivors' accounts

*The following eyewitness accounts were first published in the two-volume publication "The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book," published in 1953 and 1955 by the Democratic Organization of Ukrainians Formerly Persecuted by the Soviet Regime.*

*The people themselves assumed an entirely different attitude towards those who suffered from hunger. This is what R.B., an agronomist who traveled through Ukraine from Kiev to Donbas in March of 1933, says on the subject.*

Two peasant women boarded our car at the Hrebinka station. They looked frightened, but they got in with their children and stood in the corridor. This was an express train from Shepetivka to Baku, which made only the major stops. For that reason, and also because it had already been filled in Kiev, so far no starving peasants had boarded our car.

Although it was quite crowded, people in our compartment squeezed a little tighter and made room for the new passengers. They came in and sat down, holding their children's hands. They had no baggage, except a very small bundle in the hands of each woman. In reply to our questions they told us with some hesitation that they were going to the Donbas, where there were some people from their village, and they expected to get bread and possibly work with their aid, but they feared for the fate of their children.

A little boy, about 4 years old, who had been sitting in his mother's lap, now said "Mother, I want something to eat." The woman looked at him with pity and started untying her small bundle, from which she pulled out a piece of something black, resembling bread. She broke it up and divided it among the children.

The passengers now got busy; each pulled something out of his bag and gave it to them.

"Mother, look, real bread," cried the little girl, when she had a piece of standard rationed Soviet bread from one of the passengers. The children scrambled all over each other, as if each wanted the other's piece of bread. Their eyes were glowing, like those of hungry animals.

Somebody remarked that it was not good for them to eat a lot at first. The mothers then held the collected goods in their laps. Tears streamed down their faces; then the children cried, too, and all of the other women in the compartment. Many men turned their faces away, unable to conceal their tears. Some spell had been broken. That which hitherto people could only imagine now confronted them as grim reality.



A mother and her son, homeless and hungry, were photographed during their futile search for food. The photo appeared in the New York Evening Journal. The caption noted that there were thousands of such peasants wandering throughout Ukraine.

## EYEWITNESS RECOLLECTIONS

**Pavlo Bozhko** recalled the following episode.

Once, in the Sakhnovshansk district of the Poltava region, there were rich farms inhabited by well-to-do Ukrainian farmers. When collectivization started these farms were all dekurkulized and obliterated; on their sites several hog radhosps (Soviet state farms) were set up. I worked at one of these, called the "Paris Commune," during 1932-33.

At that time, famine was raging everywhere. The Soviet state farm workers lived wretchedly. They did not receive any wages for their work although, to be sure, their need for bread was greater than their need for money, since the starvation rations they received were indeed miserable. Still, none of us workers died, nor were we unduly famished at the time.

No famine was intended for the hogs of the state farm. These received regularly, according to plan, a variety of concentrated feed such as rye, corn millet and barley of fairly good quality. Bread was baked for us from the hog feed, each worker receiving 800 grams daily and each non-worker receiving 400 grams per day.

There was an extra ration of soup and meat from the kitchen besides, that was not bad at all. Every day it was necessary to slaughter one or another of the several thousand hogs because it had been injured or had some non-contagious disease. All this was used by our kitchen.

Paying no heed to the strict control of the political department, we all stole pocketfuls of hog feed to bolster the surrounding population, but it was not enough.

In the villages all around us, such as Mazharka, Tarasivka, Kopanky and Kotivka, a most fearful famine was raging. There was no one to dig graves and bury the dead.

The starving from all the villages around dragged themselves to these state farms and begged for work, but the farms could not take them all. Whoever was taken on, however, was saved by the hog feed from death by starvation.

*The following recollection was related by* **R.L. Suslyk.**

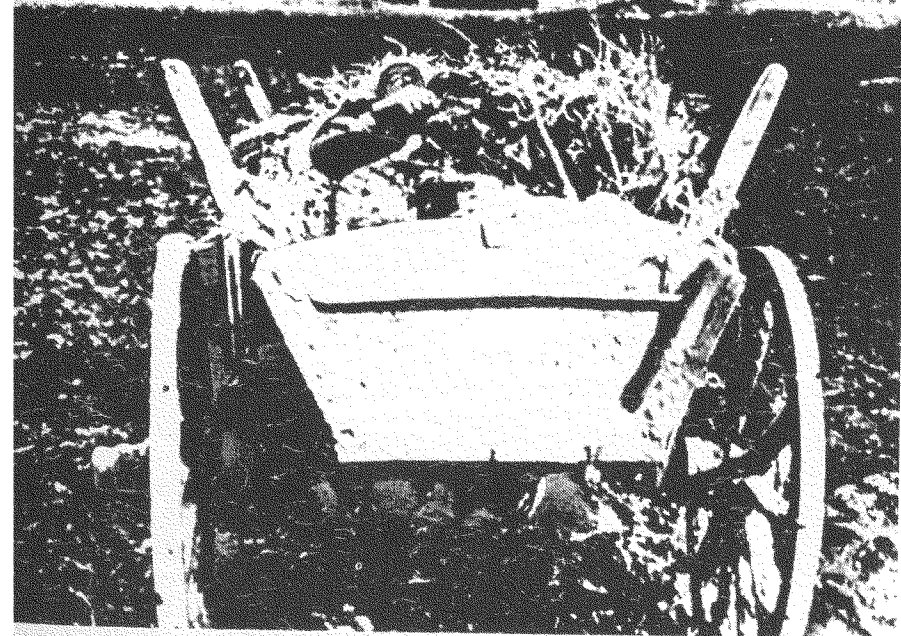
The authorities prohibited the grinding of grain by domestic millstones. If a millstone was discovered in a peasant dwelling, it was promptly broken and in some cases the owner was penalized by the confiscation of property or at least a fine.

Elaborate hiding places had to be devised. In 1932-33, the residents of the villages of Nirka and Severynivka in the Hrunsky region hid their millstones in a swamp between the villages. The swamp was dotted with dry areas on which the peasants could lay the millstones.

Grinding took place during the night in order to avoid the sharp eyes of the authorities.



A child experiences the agony of starvation.



Body of a famine victim lies in a hay wagon.

## EYEWITNESS RECOLLECTIONS

The millstones were of diverse shapes and sizes, usually the prototype of the regular millstones at the flour mill.

Quite often the peasants devised various types of grinders, most commonly one made of a wagon wheel. A set of grooved cones would be inserted into the axle head of the wheel, one mobile and one stationary. Small quantities of grain would then be thrown in and crushed.

Machinists in the cities and towns aided the peasants by shaping the metal grinding plates and cones for them. Such utensils could easily be concealed by depositing them in a pot, filling it with water, and shoving it into an oven. It was possible to crush two kilograms of grain an hour with such an implement...

**J.P. Muzyna**, an eyewitness now residing in Detroit, tells of a case mentioned by William Henry Chamberlin.

I witnessed the discovery of a slaughterhouse of children in Poltava. It was a small building in the center of the city. Right next to it were: railroad cooperative store No. 1, a railroad first-aid station, a pharmacy and a building for the homeless. A band of criminals lured small children, killed them, salted the meat in barrels and sold it. Refuse was dumped into an open sewer, whose banks were overgrown with high weeds, and they floated away. One day thousands gathered here to watch the GPU load a lot of children's clothes, shoes, schoolbags and other things on trucks. They had been stored in the attic, the criminals probably having no way of getting rid of them. All attempts of the GPU to disperse the mob of unfortunate mothers who had come to look for their lost children were of no avail. They had to resort to a threat of arms.

In his account, **L. Pylypenko** recalls the desperate measures employed by starving peasants.

The population of Rohozov in the Kiev region, in an effort to save their lives, used the most unlikely substances as foodstuffs. Some went into the fields where dead horses were buried and cut chunks of meat from the carcasses. (The horses were dying to the same extent as the people at the time.) They cooked the meat and ate it without bread or potatoes.

Others had dried calves' hides from former days; these were scalded with hot water, scraped free of hair, chopped in little pieces and boiled in water.

Still others went on hunger-swollen legs to the threshing grounds in the fields where the collective farm's threshing machine had worked the previous year. There, they winnowed the chaff in sieves, hunting for stray kernels of grain and weed seed. They pulverized these in a mortar and baked "baladony" of the flour.

When the spring sun became stronger and the drift ice began to break up in the ponds, the waves began to throw up dead fish along the shores; the people gathered this fish, cooked and ate it.



A crowd gathers before an empty food store in Kharkiv.



This photo by Thomas Walker shows a common sight along the road to Kharkiv. The corpses of 15 more victims were nearby, noted Mr. Walker in a caption to the photo.



## EYEWITNESS RECOLLECTIONS

Later, when it became really warm and the white acacia trees began to bloom, the people picked these blossoms, dried them in ovens, crushed them in mortars and devised all sorts of culinary delicacies for a meal. The children swarmed like bees over the acacia trees, feasting on the sweet white blossoms.

*The following was recalled by **Natalka Zolotarevich.***

In 1933 the superintendent of the district clinical hospital in Chornoukhy was a Jew named Moisei Davidovich Fishman. He and his wife, Olga Volkova, who was likewise a physician, never lost the milk of human kindness during those difficult years, and, instead of carrying out the orders of the authorities, they courageously ignored them and helped the starving populace.

At that time the authorities had forbidden doctors and hospitals to admit the starving for treatment if the diagnosed illness was "debility from hunger." One could get into a hospital only if one had some other illness. Nevertheless, the hospitals did feed the patients and would not let them die of hunger.

And so Dr. Fishman admitted people distended from hunger to his hospital at every possible opportunity, diagnosed their illness as due to some other cause and slowly restored them to a normal state. For his deeds, Dr. Fishman more than once had unpleasant interviews with the authorities, but being the good, authoritative physician he was, he did what his humane conscience prompted him to do, and defended himself against their attacks.

The memory of these two noble individuals, Drs. Fishman and Volkova, will long be cherished in the hearts of those people of the district whom they rescued from the famine.

*The following incident is described by **M.D., an engineer who worked on the railroads in the Northern Caucasus.***

Early in 1933 from Kavkaz station in the Northern Caucasus, every morning at a fixed hour before dawn two mysterious trains would leave in the direction of Mineralni Vody and Rostov. The trains were empty and consisted of five to 10 freight cars each. Between two and four hours later the trains would return, stop for a certain time at a small way station, and then proceed on a dead-end spur towards a former ballast quarry. While the trains stopped in Kavkaz, or on a side track, all cars were locked, appeared loaded and were closely guarded by the NKVD.

Nobody paid any attention to the mysterious trains at first; I did not either. I worked there temporarily, being still a student of the Moscow Institute of Transportation. But one day conductor Kh., who was a Communist, called me quietly and took me to the trains, saying: "I want to show you what is in the cars." He opened the door of one car slightly, I looked in and almost swooned at the sight I saw. It was full of corpses, piled at random. The conductor later told me this story: "The stationmaster had secret orders from his superiors to comply



This orphaned girl (left) was found wandering the streets of Kiev. A homeless boy carries water in a bucket. (New York Evening Journal)



A boy who had no way of burying his deceased father attempted to cover his body with straw. (New York Evening Journal)

## EYEWITNESS RECOLLECTIONS

with the request of the local and railroad NKVD and to have ready every dawn two trains of empty freight cars. The crew of the trains was guarded by the NKVD. The trains went out to collect the corpses of peasants who had died from famine and had been brought to railroad stations from nearby villages. Among the corpses were many persons still alive, who eventually died in the cars. The corpses were buried in the remote section beyond the quarries.

**O. Osadchenko** told this tragic account of the death of his entire family.

I come from the village of Barashi, of the same district in the Zhytomyr region. Since my uncle was a district official during the tsarist regime, we were not permitted to join the collective farm and had to live "as God wills." Enormous taxes were levied upon us which we were quite unable to meet.

In the fall of 1932 I was unable to pay my taxes, therefore the village activists, augmented by officials of the district authorities, seized all my belongings, even stripping my wife of the clothes she wore.

In the spring of 1933, my daughters, Vira and Maria, died of starvation, followed by my father and my wife's entire family.

One day in spring I went to the fields to look for some food. I was very swollen. As I proceeded slowly, I noticed the ravens flying around and alighting at a certain spot. I came closer and saw a woman lying down. She was still alive and begged me to help her to get up. But neither she nor I possessed sufficient strength.

I met the chairman of the village soviet, Suprunenko, and the secretary, Puman, on the way and told them about the dying woman; whereupon Suprunenko retorted: "You, too, will soon perish. Perish, you kurkuls, that is the way out for you if you do not want to make a living by decent work."

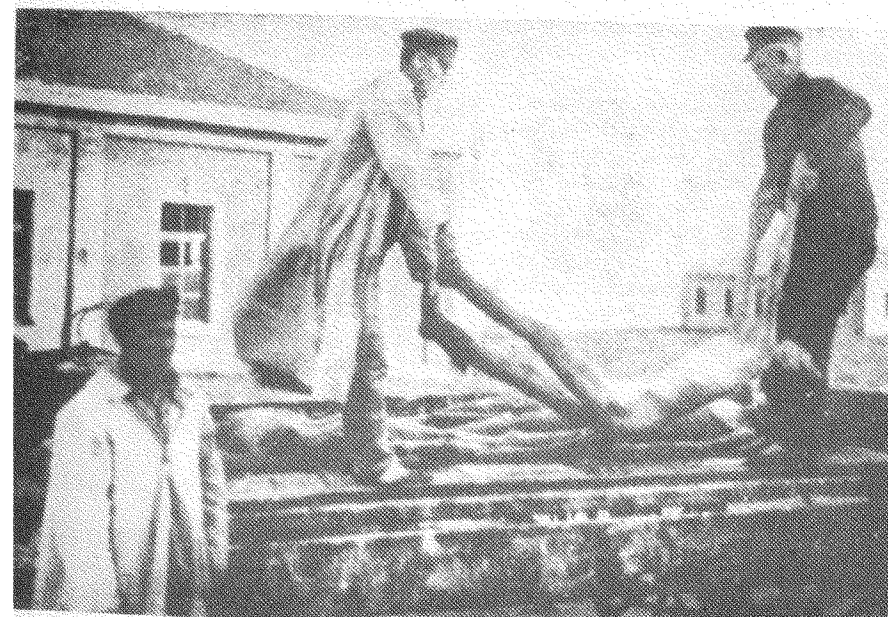
*The following was recalled by **Panas Kovalyk**.*

Toward the end of April 1933, the starving of the village of Novo-Voznesenka in the district of Vorontsiv, of the region of Mykolayiv, made an attack on the grain stockpile at Mali Hirka, where there was corn rotting in the open. The distance to the stockpile was 18 kilometers. Twenty-three persons fell dead along the way, but the rest managed to reach their destination.

Two NKVD men, Kuznetsov and Sablukov, met these hungry people with machine-gun fire. Yakiv Husynsky, a sailor from Simferopil, happened to come upon this scene. He stole up from the side, killed Kuznetsov and Sablukov with his pistol, pulled the machine guns down from the corn ricks, and trained one of them on the door to the office... Later he compelled them to take a count of the dead... There were 697. There were only a few wounded, because in this weakened condition many died even though only slightly wounded.



Hungry villagers on their way to the city of Kharkiv in search of food.



Corpses of famine victims are loaded onto a wagon to be taken out of the village.

## EYEWITNESS RECOLLECTIONS

**Iryna Medvid** told the following story of her experiences as a teacher in famine-torn Ukraine.

On the orders of the People's Commissar of Education Mykola Skrypnyk, the third course in Kharkiv University in the academic year 1932-32 was divided into two parts. On the surface this seemed a logical move for students who were graduating from the pedagogical institute to practice teaching in schools. In reality, authorities had ulterior motives.

Arrests and escapes of many school teachers in Ukraine had resulted in a serious teacher shortage, and the order was issued to relieve the situation. I was assigned with a group of students to the Vovchansk district, in the Kharkiv region. The District Department of Education then sent me to student teach in a school at the children's village, Tsiurupa, which was located on the old estate of General Brusilov.

Even though the children's village was maintained by the government, the children were always hungry. The daily ration consisted of two thin slices of soggy bread, a colored liquid in the morning they called tea, a thin liquid they called soup and a thicker one called cereal for lunch, and again a thin liquid for dinner. The children were listless, apathetic, drowsy. They paid no attention and displayed little reaction to anything.

The small children suffered most of all because anything they had was stolen from them by the older ones. It was impossible to accomplish anything in such difficult conditions and finally all our youthful fervor waned amid the starvation and hopelessness.

One day, during the Russian-language period, I had gone through the whole program — checked the pupil's homework, explained the new assignment in the difficult foreign language and asked some questions. The monosyllabic answers took very little time. The classroom was shrouded in an oppressive stillness. The children sat motionless waiting for the bell, never laughing, talking or asking questions. I racked my brains wondering how to dispel the gloom and awaken some spark of interest in the children.

Then my eyes fell on a new April issue of the Teacher's Magazine. I leafed nervously through the pages until an article caught my attention and I began to read.

The children sat quietly for some time, then they began to perk up their heads and, opening their eyes in amazement, they came up and surrounded my desk.

I continued to read: "The children finished their lessons and the bell rang. Laughing and playing, they skipped downstairs to the dining room where lunch awaited them, among other things, cocoa, white bread and butter. The servant had extra work sweeping up bread crumbs which the boisterous children carelessly scattered."

The children around me, famished and just barely existing, suddenly spoke up. "Where, where was there such food?"

Choking back tears, I answered: "In Moscow."



This photo of a 14-year-old girl and her 2-year-old brother accompanied an article by Thomas Walker. Mr. Walker wrote that the boy had never tasted milk or butter.

## EYEWITNESS RECOLLECTIONS

**Andriy Melezhyk** recalled this story of a mother eating her child.

Luka Vasylyovych Bondar lived in Bilosivka in the district of Chornoukhy in the region of Poltava. He was 38 years old. He had a wife named Kulina and a 5-year-old daughter named Vaska. Before collectivization he owned five hectares of land, and therefore belonged to the class of poor peasant.

In March of 1933 Luka, although distended with hunger, went away to some distant villages in search of something to eat, and did not return. About a week later his wife Kulina died of starvation and the collective farm brigade removed her body to the cemetery.

After she was interred, the neighbors started wondering what had happened to her daughter Vaska, who was not known to have died. They entered Kulina's house and began to search for the child. In the oven they found a pot containing a boiled liver, heart and lungs. In the warming oven they found a large earthenware bowl filled with fresh salted meat, and in the cellar under a barrel they discovered a small hole in which a child's head, feet and hands were buried. It was the head of Kulina's little daughter, Vaska.

And there is also this horrific story. Nikifor Filimonovich Sviridenko, from the village of Kharkivtsi in the Pereyaslav district, was the son of poor people who did not own any land before the revolution. After the revolution Nikifor was given a piece of land, married his Nataalka, and set up housekeeping. He had two small children.

During the winter of 1932-33 the government, conducting its grain-garnering operations, relieved them of their last kernel of grain. Nikifor's relatives, like a great many other families, starved for some time and finally perished.

In February 1933, the neighbors noticed that for two or three days there had been no sign of life in Nikifor's dwelling. Accordingly, three women entered the house through the unlocked door. On the mud floor they saw Nikifor's corpse, while the dishevelled, hunger-distended Nataalka lay nearby. No children were to be seen. The neighbors asked Nataalka how she was feeling, and she answered, "I'm hungry. There's an iron pot on the porch. Bring it in. It has food in it."

One of the women went out to the porch and saw the little fingers of a child protruding from a small pot standing on the floor. She screamed in fright. The other woman came out, and removed the whole tiny hand from the whitish liquid in the pot.

They began to question the woman, "Where are your children, Nataalka?"

"They're on the porch," replied Nataalka, whose reason had been unbalanced by hunger.

Nikifor and Nataalka had murdered their children and eaten the first one, but had not yet begun on the second. Nikifor was dead, and Nataalka was taken to jail after this, but she also died there three days later.

Proof as to how widespread cannibalism had been in Ukraine at that time can



This photo, taken by Thomas Walker, shows a man who stepped too close to forbidden territory and was shot in the back without warning by a Soviet soldier. Standing over the dead man is his orphaned son. The two were picking up scattered grains of wheat on a Soviet collective farm in Bilhorod.

## EYEWITNESS RECOLLECTIONS

be furnished by such facts as these: in the Lukianovka jail in Kiev they had a separate building for "maneaters." Among the prisoners in the Solovky Islands in 1938 there was 325 cannibals of 1932-33, of whom 75 were men and 250 women.

**Stepan Dubovyk** recalled this story of trying to flee the famine.

On May 13, 1930, my father and I, after being dekurkulized, were confined in Kharkiv prison. All our possessions, our home, grain, horses, barns, orchards were given to the poor.

I escaped from prison and for a time hid with a Bulgarian in Kharkiv, at 36 Ivanytska St. After some time I secured work on the railroad in Balaklaya where I had a chance to see how, every night, hundreds of people were brought to the station, loaded into freight cars and shipped to the north. A little later I became a reserve train conductor, stationed at Osnova.

At the peak of the famine, 1933, I, as head of a train, had occasion to help people, which I did as much as possible. For instance, on May 15, I received an order from the personnel director, Petro Shapozhnik, to take passenger train No. 315-316 from Osnova to Balaklaya on the Kharkiv-Levada route. This was an order at a time when tickets were sold only to holders of official documents, which meant only those who were employed. This ruling barred farmers from travel.

Our train reached Balaklaya in the evening and remained there until 4 a.m. the following morning. Many people, their hands and feet swollen from starvation, were milling about the station trying to get on the train to seek bread in the cities and towns. They begged and pleaded, but were refused tickets for the journey. It was a pitiful, distressing scene. Finally, I ordered the guards to take them on and they did.

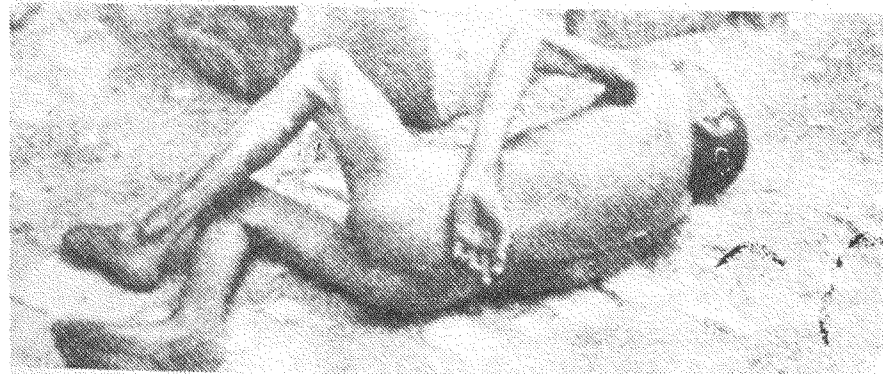
From Balaklaya the train went to Kharkiv, and then returned to Osnova. The head guard, Onopko, and the head of the workers' committee, Svinariov, started proceedings against me. I was accused of organizing the illegal transportation of passengers and was dismissed from work. My pay was withheld.

This ban on free travel by starving farmers was an added cause of the deaths of hundreds of people in the surrounding districts. For example, 400 people died of starvation in the village of Borshchivka, 350 in the village of Blahodyrivka, 300 in Virbiuka, an unaccounted number in Savyntsi, 1,000 in Balaklaya, 600 in Andriyivka, 700 in Henkivka, 1,200 in the collective farm "Red Star," 1,800 in the small towns of Boromlia, and so on in all the villages, hamlets and towns throughout Ukraine. All these figures are approximations.

Graves could not be dug fast enough to bury all the dead, so they were simply dumped in wells or any holes or pits that could be found, and covered with dirt when they were full.



A 15-year-old boy (left) is a veritable skeleton because of lack of food. The villager above spent two years in jail where he suffered many tortures, and then was released and found himself fighting starvation, according to the New York Evening Journal.



A naked corpse, stripped of clothing during the night, lies on the street.

## EYEWITNESS RECOLLECTIONS

The following account was provided by **Maria Zuk**, who left famine-torn Ukraine in September 1933 to join her husband in Canada.

The account appeared in the October 12, 1933, issue of *Svoboda*.

The conditions in Ukraine were bad enough in 1930, but in 1931 they became really critical. The present situation is as follows. There is literally no bread there; no potatoes (all the seed potatoes having been eaten up); no meat, no sugar; in a word, nothing of the basic necessities of life. Last year some food was obtainable occasionally for money, but this year most of the bazaars (markets) are closed and empty. All cats and dogs disappeared, having perished or been eaten by the hungry farmers. The same is the case with the horses, so that cows are mostly used as draught animals. People also consumed all the field mice and frogs they could obtain. The only food most of the people can afford is a simple soup prepared of water, salt and various weeds. If somebody manages to get a cup of millet in some way, a tablespoon of it transforms the soup into a rare delicacy. This soup, eaten two or three times a day, is also the only food of the small children, as cow or any other milk has become a mere myth.

This soup has no nutritive value whatever, and people remaining on such a diet get first swollen limbs and faces, which makes them appear like some dreadful caricature of human beings, then gradually turn into living skeletons, and finally drop dead wherever they stand or go. The dead bodies are held at the morgue until they number 50 or more, and then are buried in mass graves. In the summer the burials take place more often in view of quick decomposition which cannot be checked even by liberal use of creoline. Especially devastating is the mortality from hunger among children and elderly people. Nobody ventures to dress the dead family members in any clothes, as the next day they would be found at the morgue, naked, stripped of everything by unknown criminals.

There are many cases of suicide, mostly by hanging, among the village population, and also many mental alienations.

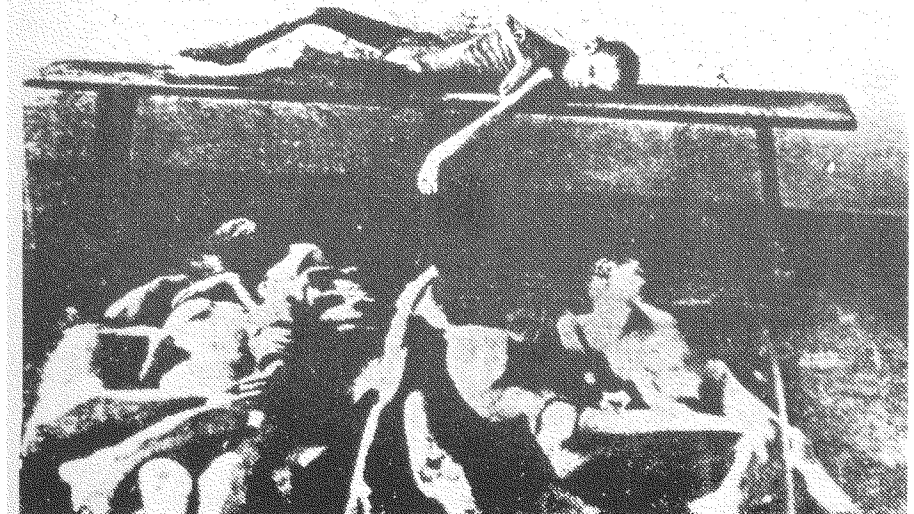
The famine in Soviet Ukraine in 1921 was undoubtedly a terrible one, but it appears like child's play in comparison with the present situation.

The village Kulmazovka was one of the more fortunate ones, but in the adjoining villages of Okshanka and Synukhin Brid the death toll defied all description. Those who were not deported to the dreaded Solovetsky Islands, or to the Ural Mountains, died from starvation, and at present not more than one quarter of the original population is living there — and they are leading a life of misery. No word of complaint or criticism, however, is tolerated by the authorities, and those guilty of an infraction of this enforced silence disappear quickly in a mysterious way.

Worst of all, there is no escape from this hell on earth, as no one can obtain permission to leave the boundaries of Ukraine, once the granary of Europe, and now a valley of tears and hunger.



The boys above were lucky to find some half-rotten potatoes buried in the ground.



The unburied corpses of several who died of starvation.

## Press accounts

*The following excerpt is from a story by William Henry Chamberlin, the Christian Science Monitor's Moscow correspondent for 10 years. The article appeared in the May 29, 1934, issue of the Christian Science Monitor.*

Some idea of the scope of the famine, the very existence of which was stubbornly and not unsuccessfully concealed from the outside world by the Soviet authorities, may be gauged from the fact that in three widely separated regions of Ukraine and the North Caucasus which I visited — Poltava and Byelaya Tserkov and Kropotkin in the North Caucasus — mortality, according to the estimates of such responsible local authorities as Soviet and collective farm presidents, ranged around 10 percent. Among individual peasants and in villages far away from the railroad it was often much higher.

I crossed Ukraine from the southeast to the northwest by train, and at every station where I made inquiries the peasants told the same story of major famine during the winter and spring of 1932-33.

If one considers that the population of Ukraine is about 35 million and that of the North Caucasus about 10 million and that credible reports of similar famine came from parts of the country which I did not visit, some regions of the Middle and Lower Volga and Kazakhstan, in Central Asia, it would seem highly probable that between 4 million and 5 million people over and above the normal mortality rate lost their lives from hunger and related causes. This is the reality behind the innocuous phrases tolerated by the Soviet censorship, about food stringency, strained food situation, etc.

What lay behind this major human catastrophe? It was very definitely not a result of any natural disaster, such as exceptional drought or flood, because it was the general testimony of the peasants that the harvest of 1932, although not satisfactory, would have left them enough for nourishment, if the state had not swooped down on them with heavy requisitions.

Hidden stocks of grain which the despairing peasants had buried in the ground were dug up and confiscated; where resistance to the state measures was especially strong, as in some stanytsias, or Cossack towns, in the Western Kuban, whole communities were driven from their homes and exiled en masse, to the frozen wastes of Siberia.

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*Thomas Walker, an American newspaperman who reported extensively on the famine, provided the following account, which appeared in the February 18, 1935, issue of the New York Evening Journal.*

I have recently toured the Ukraine... where 6 million peasants have perished

from starvation in the past 18 months, due to the excessive tolls made on their crops by the Bolshevik government.

Last winter, Red Army soldiers, under orders from Moscow, took so much of the season's crops from the peasants that they were unable to feed themselves and their livestock through the winter.

About 20 miles south of Kiev, I came upon a village that was practically extinct by starvation. There had been 15 houses in this village and a population of 40-odd persons.

Every dog and cat in the village had been eaten. The horses and the oxen had all been appropriated by the Bolsheviks to stock the collective farms...

In one hut they were cooking a mess that defied analysis. There were bones, pigweed, skin and what looked like a boot top in this pot. The way that the remaining half dozen inhabitants eagerly watched this slimy mess showed the state of their hunger.

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*The following details were provided by Harry Lang, who was born in tsarist Russia and came to the United States in 1904. He witnessed the famine as a correspondent for the Daily Forward, a Jewish Socialist newspaper based in New York. The accounts appeared in the April 16, 1935, issue of the New York Evening Journal.*

We arrived in Kharkov, then the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. The first street scenes I saw spoke their own language. Men and women were returning at sunset from the great tractor plant and other factories. Their clothes were old, dirty strips of sacking... Many women were carrying infants in their arms.

And all, men and women alike, thousands of them, had lumps of black bread under their tattered sleeves. On the way, they nibbled at the bread and swallowed every crumb. The hand of hunger was sticking out from the mutilated chunks of bread.

A high official of the Ukrainian Soviet, with whom we established contact, confidentially advised me to take a trip to the villages. Only there, he said, would I see the full handiwork of the famine. And he added:

"Six million people have perished from hunger in our country in 1932-33." Then he paused, and repeated: "Six million."

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One of the grave-diggers came up to me and started a conversation.

"You are looking at our fresh graves?" he said. "You see, Kiev has also made its contribution to the second Five-Year Plan. Tell my brothers in America about it."

In the Kiev cemetery I saw hundreds of people scarified by the GPU, bearing the marks of torture from persecution and hunger. They stood over the graves of their dear ones and begged the dead for bread.

I walked along until I came to a woman sobbing and crying aloud.

"What shall I tell you, my dear sister? You are well off. You see nothing you hear nothing. Mother wanted to come and join you today. But she hasn't the strength. We have nothing to eat at home, dear sister. Do you remember the beautiful home which we once had?" She was talking to the dead.

A young man, with his eyes half-closed, was addressing himself to two graves over which stood one headstone:

"Can you do nothing for me? Nothing? How long must I continue to suffer?"

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With bated breath I was watching the Soviet investigators at work. Suddenly something else caught my eye. A peasant woman, dressed in something like patched old sacks, appeared from a side path. She was dragging a child of 3 or 4 years old by the collar of a torn coat, the way one drags a heavy bagload. The woman pulled the child into the main street. Here she dropped it in the mud... The peasant woman was the mother. The child's little face was bloated and blue. There was foam around the little lips. The hands and tiny body were swollen. Here was a bundle of human parts, all deathly sick, yet still held together by the breath of life.

The mother left the child on the road in the hope that somebody might do something to save it.

My escort endeavored to hearten me. Thousands and thousands of such children, he told me, had met a similar fate in Ukraine that year...

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**Whiting Williams** also witnessed the horrors of famine in Ukraine. The following account was published in London in the journal *Answers* in 1934.

I am not reporting merely what I have heard. Once I saw with my own eyes the victims of famine. Men and women were literally dying of hunger in the gutter... They ("wild children") sat in the streets, their eyes glazed with despair and privation, begging as I have never seen anyone beg before... There was one youngster I saw in Kharkov. Half-naked, he sunk, exhausted, on the carriage-way, with the curbstone as a pillow, and his pipe-stem legs sprawled out, regardless of danger from passing wheels. Another — a boy of 8 or 9 — was sitting among the debris of a street market, picking eggshells out of dirt and examining them with heartbreaking minuteness in the hope of finding a scrap of food still sticking to them. His shrunken cheeks were covered with an unhealthy

whitish down that made me think of those fungoid growths that sprout in the darkness out of dying trees.

... There are hordes of those wild children in all the towns. They live and die like animals.

From other sources I heard whispers of a still stranger and more dreadful possibility — that some of the leaders of Russian communism today might regard the continuance of the famine over this winter as being quite useful, because it would drive home to peasants and factory hands alike the grim but essential lesson: "work or starve."

Personally, I find it difficult to believe this. It is too inhuman! But I know that one British agricultural expert, who has traveled widely in Russia and knows the psychology of its rulers, has suggested quite seriously that the famine may be starvation "according to plan."

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*Well-known British journalist and author Malcolm Muggeridge, who was a Moscow correspondent for the Manchester Guardian in the early 1930s, recalled the famine in the March 1958 issue of Encounter.*

When I was a newspaper correspondent in Moscow in the early 1930s ... the newspapers were our only source of information.

Some of the correspondents, like Louis Fisher at that time, felt bound to defend the regime. They somehow managed to sustain their Soviet addiction, and to write little homilies in the Nation and other such publications on the theme: "I have seen the future and it works." They had seen the future all right, but it didn't work, except as the past had worked — brutally, mendaciously and callously.

Occasionally Fisher would go so far as to rebuke the rest of us for our flippancy and skepticism, with the air of a choir-master calling sniggering, whispering choirboys to order and due solemnity.

Other correspondents, like Walter Duranty of The New York Times, just wanted to stay in Moscow, where they managed to have a fairly prosperous and comfortable time on bootlegged rubles. The official rate was about six to the pound, but it was fairly easy to get 400. One would collect them in large newspaper parcels, like fried fish.

Duranty presumably calculated that, in the circumstances, he might as well send what was pleasing to the Soviet authorities. And The New York Times was happy enough to use his messages. They were fit to print. It is part of the mystique of newspapers that what matters is where news derives, not whether it is reliable. In the eyes of night editors, the dateline is all.

I remember in particular a message Duranty sent when Ukraine was suffering an acute famine due to the forced collectivization of agriculture. He dwelt



picturesquely upon the apple-cheeked milkmaids, the bursting granaries, the fat cattle and the lush crops.

No doubt someone will one day dig all this out and prove, on the strength of The New York Times's reputation or reliability, convincingly that, despite subsequent official admissions, there was no famine in the USSR in the winter of 1932-33.

Future historians are likely to find this age more difficult than the Dark Ages to document, but for the opposite reasons — because there is so vast and contradictory an amount of documentation, mostly deliberately faked.

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*The following incident was recalled by Eugene Lyons in his 1937 book "Assignment in Utopia." Mr. Lyons reported from the Soviet Union for United Press from 1928 to 1934.*

It was at the railroad station at R., while on a trip into the country, in the summer of 1932, that I witnessed a scene which was to prove more significant than I guessed at the moment — a tiny symptom of the shattering tragedy engulfing southern Russian [Ukraine]. An old peasant, with a shaggy head and matted beard, wearing a burlap coat, patched trousers and reed shoes was weeping aloud, unashamedly, and pleading with the stationmaster through his sobs. The peasant was holding a large heavy sack.

"You can go on the next train, tomorrow morning, yes," the stationmaster said, not unkindly, "but not your bundle. Law is law — no bread can be transported without a license."

"But, citizen stationmaster, dear one," the old man repeated, "how can I return to the village with empty hands? Without the money and without bread? Tell me, dear one, how shall I face the village? They await my return and their bellies are empty. Now I have spent all their money — no bread, no money..."

The stationmaster shrugged his shoulders. He had been listening to this refrain for hours: since his men ordered the shaggy peasant and his sack off the train. The peasant now turned to me and several other spectators.

"Some of us in the village" — he mentioned a province in Ukraine — "got together. We threw our money in one pot, and they chose me to go north, where money could buy bread. I paid a fortune for what I have in this sack. And now they won't let me take it to the village. And why? Others in nearby villages did the same, and they had bread to eat for weeks. They feasted. Why were they allowed but not I? Is that Soviet justice? Citizen stationmaster, whom will it harm if I take this bag on a train? I shall keep it on my lap and creep into a corner on the topmost shelf."

"It will do you no good, citizen," the stationmaster said. "You'll be chucked off at some other station. Law is law."

Several weeks earlier I had read the decree forbidding the transport of bread

and other food products without a license. The purpose, the papers explained dishonestly, was to prevent the further overcrowding of trains. I had wondered whether the decree deserved a line by cable, and decided against it.

The weeping old peasant hit by the decree, unable to understand why he should not be permitted to bring bread to his family and his neighbors, personalized that law for me. Always, anywhere, it is easier to accept news in the abstract, in cold print, than in its warm human form. For months I forgot this incident. Then, as the horrors of famine began to pile up, the scene came to life again in my mind, its every lineament sharply etched. Not all the sophistries of my Communist friends explaining and justifying the famine could erase this old man in his burlap coat.

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*The following recollection of the famine was provided by Arthur Koestler, journalist and author of 36 books, many of them powerfully anti-totalitarian. It appears in "The Yogi and the Commissar" (1945).*

I spent the winter of 1932-33 mainly in Kharkov, then capital of the Ukraine. It was the catastrophic winter after the first wave of collectivization of the land; the peasants had killed their cattle, burned or hidden their crops and were dying of starvation and typhoid; the number of deaths in the Ukraine alone is estimated at about 2 million. Traveling through the countryside was like running the gauntlet: the stations were lined with begging peasants with swollen hands and feet, the women holding up to the carriage windows horrible infants with enormous wobbling heads, sticklike limbs, swollen, pointed bellies. You could swap a loaf of bread for Ukrainian embroidered kerchiefs, national costumes and bedcovers; foreigners could sleep with practically any girl, except party members, for a pair of shoes or stockings. Under my hotel room window in Kharkov funeral processions marched past all day. The electricity supply in Kharkov had broken down; there was no light in the town, and the trams functioned only for an hour or so a day to take workers to the factories and back. There was also no fuel or petrol in the town and the winter was hard even for the Ukraine, with temperatures of 30°C below zero. Life seemed to have come to a standstill, the whole machinery on the verge of collapse.

These were the conditions which drove the old Bolshevik guard into opposition against Stalin, to their half-hearted conspiracy of despair; they were the real background of the purges and trials. Today the catastrophe of 1932-33 is more or less frankly admitted in Soviet circles; but at the time not the slightest allusion to real conditions was allowed to appear in the Soviet press, including the newspapers of the Ukraine itself. Each morning when I read the Kharkov Kommunist I learned about plan figures reached and over-reached, about competitions between factory shock brigades, awards of the Red Banner, new giant combines in the Urals, and so on; the photographs were either of young

# EYEWITNESS RECOLLECTIONS

people, always laughing and always carrying a banner in their hands, or of some picturesque elder in Uzbekistan, always smiling and always learning the alphabet. Not one word about the local famine, epidemics, the dying out of whole villages; even the fact that there was no electricity in Kharkov was not once mentioned in the Kharkov newspaper. It gave one a feeling of dreamlike unreality; the paper seemed to talk about some quite different country which had no point of contact with the daily life we led; and the same applies to the radio.

The consequence of all this was that the vast majority of people in Moscow had no idea of what went on in Kharkov, and even less of what went on in Tashkent, or Archangel, or Vladivostok — 12 days' train journey away, in a country where traveling was reserved for government officials; and these travelers were not of a talkative nature. The enormous land was covered by a blanket of silence and nobody outside the small circle of initiated could form a comprehensive picture of the situation.

A second belt of silence isolated the country from contacts with the outside world. Foreign missions and newspaper correspondents were concentrated in Moscow. The capital had priority in everything, from food and fuel to industrial goods, toothbrushes, lipsticks, contraceptives and other luxuries unknown in the rest of the country; its living standard was entirely unrepresentative. If the average citizen of Moscow was to a large extent ignorant of what was going on in remoter parts of his own country, the foreigner's ignorance was unbounded. He could only travel chaperoned by security officials performing the various functions of interpreters, guides, car drivers, chance acquaintances and even amorous conquests. His contacts were restricted to Soviet officials; to the ordinary Soviet citizen social intercourse with foreigners meant running the risk of being accused of espionage or treason. In addition to the difficulty of obtaining factual information, the foreign correspondent was faced with the problem of passing it on. To smuggle out news vetoed by the censor meant expulsion; a risk which both journalists and their employers will take only reluctantly, and only when vital issues are at stake. But 'vital issue' is an elastic term, and the practical result of continuous pressure was that even conscientious newspapermen evolved a routine of compromise; they cabled no lies, but no less volens confined themselves to "official dope" and expressed such comment or criticism as they dared "between the lines" by some subtle qualifying adjective or nuance — which naturally passed unobserved by anybody but the initiated reader.<sup>1</sup> The cumulative effect of all this was a picture distorted by half-truths and systematic omissions. This was the foundation on which direct Soviet propaganda could build.

1. I am talking, of course, of progressive and neutral papers; if the red scare campaign of the reactionary press had any influence on the Left at all, it was to increase their loyalty to the Soviet Union.

NEW YORK EVENING JOURNAL—A Paper for People Who Think—SUNDAY, MARCH 3, 1935

## "PEASANTS IN UKRAINE BEING WIPED OUT"




**CRIMINALS' HUMOR**—The peasants of Ukraine are being wiped out by the famine. The peasants are being killed by the lack of food. The peasants are being starved to death. The peasants are being sold as slaves. The peasants are being used as cannon fodder. The peasants are being treated as sub-human.

**JOURNEY'S END**—The peasants of Ukraine are being wiped out by the famine. The peasants are being killed by the lack of food. The peasants are being starved to death. The peasants are being sold as slaves. The peasants are being used as cannon fodder. The peasants are being treated as sub-human.




**Soviets Rob Farmers Of Crops**

**PAY DIRT**—The peasants of Ukraine are being wiped out by the famine. The peasants are being killed by the lack of food. The peasants are being starved to death. The peasants are being sold as slaves. The peasants are being used as cannon fodder. The peasants are being treated as sub-human.

**BRIGHTER**—The peasants of Ukraine are being wiped out by the famine. The peasants are being killed by the lack of food. The peasants are being starved to death. The peasants are being sold as slaves. The peasants are being used as cannon fodder. The peasants are being treated as sub-human.

The March 3, 1935, issue of the New York Evening Journal featured these photos of famine-stricken Ukraine. The photographs were taken by Thomas Walker in the Poltava, Kharkiv and Bilhorod areas in Ukraine.

## Leonid Plyushch

In *"History's Carnival: A Dissident's Autobiography"* (1979), former Soviet political prisoner **Leonid Plyushch** recalls how he learned about the Ukrainian famine.

Political writings began to appear in samizdat in 1962. One of the first works that I read was Admiral Fyodor Raskolnikov's letter to Stalin, which included facts not mentioned in the official press. I was most disturbed by Raskolnikov's thesis that the famine of 1933 in Ukraine had been deliberately engineered, and set about finding people who had witnessed it. My grandfather told me that in 1933 he had seen a mountain of corpses in a village in one of the most prosperous provinces. He asked his boss, a Latvian sharpshooter in the Civil War, about the corpses. "That was a kulak demonstration," the man replied coolly.

An acquaintance of mine who had been involved in the collectivization campaign in Siberia returned to Ukraine in 1933. The population of his native village was almost extinct, and his house stood empty. From his younger brother he learned that the survivors were eating bark, grass and hares. "What will you do when the hares are gone?" my acquaintance asked his brother. "Mother said that we should eat her if she dies," came the reply. I heard from him about several cases of cannibalism he encountered there, too terrible to relate. The famine, he explained, had begun in 1931, when the more prosperous peasants refused to join the collective farms that were being established. The party began to hold daily meetings, which all the peasants were forced to attend. They were faced with the statement: "Anyone opposed to the collective farm is opposed to the Soviet government. Let's vote. Who is against the collective farm?" Very few peasants were bold enough to vote against the collectives, and more than 90 percent joined.

Knowing that they would have to turn their horses and cattle over to the collectives, the peasants slaughtered their livestock. Many took pity on their horses and turned them out. Herds of starving horses ran wild throughout



Ukraine. In response to such "sabotage" the government reinforced its economic and police terror. Special taxes were levied by the village councils on top of the regular taxes. The chairman of the council would frequently pile up taxes on his personal enemies regardless of their income. If the peasants did not turn in enough grain to pay the taxes, activists would conduct searches. If grain was found, the chimney on the house would be demolished as a sign that this was the house of a kulak or a "kulak's henchman" who was sabotaging the government's measures. Peasants were often taxed until all their grain was gone. The grain thus collected was guarded by troops in special granaries. If hungry peasants tried to break in, the soldiers would shoot at them. Much grain rotted, and much was exported. In 1933 the situation was made even worse by drought and crop failure. Starving peasants fled to the cities and to other republics. Troops were stationed at the borders of Ukraine to prevent them from leaving. In the cities bread was issued in small rations so that the city dwellers would not be able to help the peasants. Many city dwellers sympathized with the peasants, but some maliciously reminded them of the Civil War, when the cities had been starving and the peasants had either refused to sell bread or had bartered it for prized possessions. Writing about the famine was forbidden, and people who mentioned it in letters were often sent to prison for anti-Soviet propaganda. Parcels of food to Ukraine were frequently sent back.

While the famine was in progress Ukrainian writers were dispatched to write reports about the peasants' prosperous life in the new collective farms. Many writers who saw the reality joined the ranks of the opposition. Others were so frightened that they became fellow travelers (the Ukrainian phrase is more colorful — "tag-alongs") and then active "builders of communism." Iona Yakir, the famous Red Army commander, went to Moscow to demand that the grain collected by the government be distributed to the hungry peasants. Stalin told him that a military officer should stay out of politics.

The information that I gathered about the famine was so stunning that it reduced to insignificance the purge of almost the entire party, government, trade unions and armed forces in the 1930s. No one knows exactly how many people perished in the famine, but party members cite a figure of 5 or 6 million — as many as the number of Jews killed by the Nazis — and others speak about 10 million victims. The true figure probably lies in between. In the 1960s people began to say that the Bolsheviks had got what was coming to them. The Bolsheviks murdered by Stalin were, after all, guilty of crimes against the people. But why did millions of innocent ordinary people have to die? A single death is terrible, and the inequality 1,000,000 > 1 does not hold true for ethics, but the mere thought of millions of victims defies all attempts to comprehend. Leftists in the capitalist world must remember this; they must think about the means by which they intend to construct what Dostoyevsky called the crystal palace of the future.

## Petro Grigorenko

**Petro Grigorenko**, a Soviet Army general-turned-dissident, writes about the famine in his **"Memoirs"** (1982), noting that at first, blinded by his belief in communism, he misjudged the situation.

We believed Stalin to be a wise leader. He was warning us against rushing forward and at the same time pointing out the impossibility of retreat from our achievements. Behind his "wise" words were plans for an awful crime against the peasantry — a man-made famine.

I do not accept the justification of ignorance. We were deceived because we wanted to be deceived. We believed so strongly in communism that we were ready to accept any crime if it was glossed over with the least little bit of Communist phraseology...

I could have seen the awful danger that hovered over our people. In the summer of 1930, before we as plenipotentiaries of the Central Committee were sent off to take in the harvest, the secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party, Stanislav Kossior — a plump man with a big, round, shiny, shaved head — told us: "The peasant is adopting a new tactic. He refuses to reap the harvest. He wants the bread grain to die in order to choke the Soviet government with the bony hand of famine. But the enemy miscalculates. We will show him what famine is. Your task is to stop the kulak sabotage of the harvest. You must bring it in to the last grain and immediately send it off to the grain delivery point. The peasants are not working. They are counting on previously harvested grain they have hidden in pits. We must force them to open up their pits."

I remember how depressed his speech made me.

Kossior was a victim of Stalinist terror, but I had no sympathy for him. His speech at the instruction session proves him an organizer of the man-made famine. But at the time I did not see the larger picture. All my disgust was concentrated on Kossior himself. Later I blamed everything I discovered about



the Ukrainian famine on Kossior. When he was arrested in 1937, I considered it just retribution for his activities against the people.

Others, however, judged the situation more accurately than I. After Kossior's speech, along with Yasha Zasha Zlochevsky, head of organization of the Komsomol committee, I asked him what he was thinking.

He shrugged his shoulders, and his face was sad.

"I think Kossior is either a fool or a criminal!" I declared.

"What don't you like?"

"I believe he wants to organize a famine."

"Aha! So you also figured it out?" Yasha suddenly came alive.

"How could I not figure it out? I am from the countryside myself and I know very well that pits full of grain are a myth. They did exist in the early 20s, but they've long since disappeared."

"Kossior knows that himself."

"Then he is a scoundrel and an enemy of the people," I retorted.

"Not just Kossior. They are all corrupt. To them, human beings are nothing. They want power at any price." Yasha hurled word after word as if they were blows.

## Ukrainian Herald

*Issue 7-8 (spring 1974) of the Ukrainian Herald, a clandestine journal of the Ukrainian dissident movement, contained a major article titled "Ethnocide of Ukrainians in the USSR." The article, which documents the systematic destruction of the Ukrainian nation through physical genocide and Russification, devotes much attention to the famine of 1932-33. The excerpts below are taken from the English-language edition of Issue 7-8 published in 1976 by Smoloskyp Publishers.*

In the years 1932-33 a famine unparalleled in its dimensions raged in Ukraine, on the Don, in the Kuban, and in those areas along the Volga River where the majority of the inhabitants were Ukrainian.

The singular characteristic of the famine of 1932-33 was that it was not a natural disaster, but had been planned at the top in the Kremlin. It was, in a manner of speaking, a political famine.

The harvest in Ukraine in 1932 was good throughout the country, but the collective farm workers were not paid even one kernel of grain for a day of work. Moscow imposed on Ukraine an unbelievably high quota of sale of grain to the state. The centralized plan was carried out throughout all levels. It worked in the following fashion: a quota was set for a region, but regional officials pledged to

deliver even more grain [than had been stipulated] and so on down the line to the [individual] collective farm. Naturally, there was no way the collective farm was able to fill the quota. As a result, armed detachments of authorized agents were sent into the villages to enforce the shipping out of all the threshed grain. If a local official protested against such measures, he was relieved of his post and later liquidated. Such was the case, for instance, with the first secretary of the regional party committee in Odessa Region.

The peasants were deprived of any means of existence. During the winter and in the spring of 1933, an unheard of famine flared up, sending to the grave those millions of Ukrainian peasants mentioned above.

People, driven to despair, went mad and turned to cannibalism. At first, such cannibals were shot on the spot, but later they were thrown into concentration camps. Cordons of troops prevented the peasants from entering the cities; those who broke through wandered about until they fell down on the street. Such people were loaded onto trucks together with the corpses and dumped outside the city. Others were hunted down by the militia and later put on trial (those who were not completely exhausted). The peasants were easy to recognize by their dress. Some escaped capture by buying, if they had the means, city clothes from laborers.

It must be said that the cities, especially those like Kharkiv and Kiev, were carefully cleaned of the starving and the dead peasants, so that foreign correspondents and political figures could be shown the clean streets, thus rectifying the "slandorous fabrications circulated by bourgeois propaganda."

Entire villages died out. For instance, such villages as Chernechchyna, Moroshyna, Oleshchyna, all in Poltava Region, died out completely; in the village of Veseli Shemrantsi in Kiev Region, 2,000 inhabitants died. There were thousands of such villages in Ukraine.

The great Russian writer and Nobel Prize winner A. Solzhenitsyn in his novel "The First Circle" accurately painted the horrible picture, the proportions and the location of the famine in these approximate words: "A wagon driver stalks through the village. He knocks on a door: 'Are there any deceased here?...' Or a little further on: 'Is anyone alive in there?'" (We quote from memory, therefore, there may be some inaccuracies. These two phrases in A. Solzhenitsyn's novel are written in Ukrainian.)

We will cite one more example to show the heights of hypocrisy and cynicism that were reached by the propaganda of the occupational regime at that time in Ukraine. In the spring of 1933, at the entrance to the city of Kirovohrad stood a triumphal arch, and on it was the slogan: "We have entered the first phase of communism — socialism." Lying around the arch were the bodies of several dozen peasants who had died of starvation. This is the kind of socialism that was brought to the Ukrainian people by those who, "illuminated by the light of

Lenin's ideas," were building "the most equitable" society in the history of mankind.

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Forced mass collectivization initiated in 1929 dashed the peasants' illusions about the possibility of possessing the dreamed-about and fought-for land, and this set them against the Bolshevik government with even greater hostility.

Stalin and his toadies had to make a choice: they could either forget the strategic plans of Russian imperialism for world domination and allow the enslaved non-Russian nations to choose their own fate, or carry on the policies of their predecessors — the tsars — and continue annihilating the non-Russian nations, primarily the Ukrainian people, since Ukraine for centuries provided Russian imperialists with an economic basis. The latter [option] was taken.

Moscow's regime was carrying out its dictatorial policies in Ukraine not only by military force, but also through the control that the Russian-dominated and Russified cities, even though they constituted the minority, exercised over the preponderant Ukrainian villages.

Thus, according to the 1926 census, the total urban population of that part of Ukraine which was then under Moscow consisted of 5.7 million persons, while in the villages there were 23.8 million. Such control could not be too promising for the long run. Furthermore, plans were being made for industrialization, which would necessitate an influx of a new working force from the villages into the cities. The city was faced with the prospect of Ukrainianization. This meant that the occupying regime would lose its control over the Ukrainian city, over the intelligentsia, over the administrative apparatus, and this, in turn, would make it necessary to recognize the sovereignty of the Ukrainian nation not only in words but in deeds.

...Bolshevik Moscow, headed by the "father of all nations," put to use all of its power to prevent the Ukrainian city from becoming Ukrainian. And this was the main reason for the death-carrying famine in Ukraine in the years 1932-33!

This "original" and "most equitable in the whole world" method of solving the national problem was devised by "Father Stalin."

The second reason for the famine of 1932-33 lay in the search for funds for an industrialization [that was to be undertaken] at a pace which would outstrip capability, an industrialization of the entire empire, at that. The huge sums necessary for this were not available. It was decided to find them in bountiful Ukraine, by snatching from the peasants the last morsel of bread from their mouths. The bread was needed to satisfy the growing needs of the cities and, primarily, in order to obtain hard currency, for export.

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[In the Kuban region] Whole stanytsias died out and the country turned into a

## *DISSIDENTS ON THE FAMINE*

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wasteland. The depopulated stanytsias were repopulated with emigrants from Stavropolsky Krai, Central Russia, and the Urals. In 1933 from the just-mentioned areas came 500 families to the Medvediv stanytsia, 200 families to the Troysia stanytsia, 136 families to the Staro-Myshastiv, and so on, into all the stanytsias of Western Kuban, which was formerly a wholly Ukrainian area in its ethnic composition. From this list alone one can get a fairly good idea of the extent of the devastation caused by the famine. Naturally, not a word of truth about this famine, the reasons behind it, and the number of its victims appeared in any Soviet periodicals or scholarly publications. Nor is this horrible period depicted in the "socialist realism" of Soviet literature. Even the 1939 census data on the Krasnodarsky Krai has not been published. The falsifiers from the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR have the following to say about this tragedy:

"Major difficulties were encountered in the building of the kolkhoz [kolhosp] system, difficulties which were skillfully taken advantage of by the kulaks [kurkuls] in 1932-33, when they mounted a last assault against the kolkhozes. Striving to organize mass sabotage, the kulaks seized upon the occasion of a poor harvest, hid all the available grain, and then spread the provocative rumor among the population that all those who had any grain would be shot and that in order to save themselves they should hide this grain... Large stores of grain were uncovered at that time, while all around people were dying of starvation."

It is quite easy to refute this brazen lie because, first of all, the collectivization in such bread-producing regions as Kuban and Ukraine had, on the whole, been completed by the end of 1932. Secondly, before the end of the collectivization period, the kurkuls were already in exile and were breaking in the forested gorges of Siberia. The confiscation of their possessions and their deportation were calculated to make a psychological impression on the rest of the population and to help herd it into the kolhosp. In the third place, the famine came about not as a result of a poor harvest in 1932, but because all of the grain had been requisitioned by the government. And so the famine raged in the winter and early spring of 1933. Those peasants who survived did not have the strength to harvest the grain in 1933 and for this purpose the regime was forced to engage the urban population. And fourthly, the famine was created artificially to undermine the strength of the largest non-Russian nation in the empire, a nation which had taken energetic steps towards the creation of its own national state. This was something which stood in the way of the creators of the new Red Russian empire.