WHO KILLED THEM AND WHY?

MIRON DOLOT

IN REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE STARVED TO DEATH
DURING THE FAMINE OF 1932-1933 IN UKRAINE

HARVARD UNIVERSITY UKRAINIAN STUDIES FUND

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Author's Note

Seven million Ukrainian farmers perished during the Famine of 1932–1933. Their extermination was an element of an official policy. It was genocidal famine, brought about by the Russian Communist Party of the Soviet Union as a means of subduing and annihilating the Ukrainian people as a nation.

History knows no other crime of such a nature and magnitude.

I

Famine by Command

The Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine stands out among all others. It was genocidal famine caused by the Soviet Communist Party and government as a means of subduing the Ukrainian people as a nation. During this famine, millions of Ukrainian farmers were deliberately starved to death. It is ironic that this, one of the most monstrous crimes of genocide in the history of mankind, is still officially ignored in the Soviet Union, and has never become known in most of the outside world. Ukrainians alone recall this tragic event—few others remember it, or even seem to care.

The Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine was not the result of any natural disaster. On the eve of the Famine Ukraine had a normal crop. Nor was this famine a direct result of the collectivization of farms, as is generally believed. Although collectivization provided favorable conditions under which the Famine could occur, it was not the direct or major cause. If it were, as some believe, then why didn't mass starvation also occur in Russia?

There can be no doubt today that the Famine of 1932–1933 was manmade. W. H. Chamberlin, a perceptive observer of the Soviet scene for the *Christian Science Monitor* at that time, writes the following:

> Famine was quite deliberately employed as an instrument of national policy, as the last means of breaking the resistance of the peasantry to the new system where they are divorced from personal ownership of the land and obligated to work on the conditions which the state may dictate to them and deliver up whatever the state may demand from them.[1]

Continuing, he writes:

> This famine may fairly be called political because it was not the result of any overwhelming natural catastrophe or such a complete exhaustion of the country's resources in foreign and civilian wars as preceded and helped to cause the famine of 1921–1922 . . . The government was determined to teach the peasants a lesson by the grim method of starvation,

1. Chamberlin, W. H. *Russia's Iron Age*, p. 82.

to force them to work hard in collective farms.[2]

A contemporary German historian and authority on the Soviet Union, George von Rauch, states that the Famine of 1932–1933 was "Government-planned,"[3] and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn calls it ". . . a famine that came about without drought and without war."[4]

Dr. V. I. Hryshko, who personally experienced the Famine and has been a life-long student of it, writes in his book *The Ukrainian Holocaust of 1932–1933* as follows:

> This was the first instance of peacetime genocide in history. It took the extraordinary form of an artificial famine deliberately created by the ruling powers. This savage combination of words for the designation of a crime—an artificial, deliberately planned famine—is still incredible to many people throughout the world, but indicates the uniqueness of the tragedy of 1933, which is unparallelled, for a time of peace, in the number of victims it claimed.[5]

A Concise Encyclopedia of Russia states that the Famine "was created artificially by the authorities as a means of breaking the resistance of the peasants to the collectivization of agriculture."[6]

In *The Golgotha of Ukraine*, a collection of eyewitness accounts of the Famine, compiled and edited by Dmytro Soloviy, it is stated that the Famine was "arranged purposely by the Kremlin regime to suppress the opposition of the freedom-loving Ukrainian peasants to collectivization."[7]

In *Special Report #4 of the Select Committee on Communist Aggression* (U.S.A. House of Representatives), it is noted that when all the Communist Party methods of subjugating the farmers to Communist rule failed, "Stalin decided upon a still more drastic device—the

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

3. Rauch, George von, *A History of Soviet Russia*, p. 221.

4. Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr I., *The Gulag Archipelago*, p. 55.

5. Hryshko, Vasyl I., *The Ukrainian "Holocaust," 1933*, p. 11.

6. Utechin, S. V., *A Concise Encyclopedia of Russia*, p. 175.

7. Soloviy, Dmytro, *The Golgotha of Ukraine*, p. 3.

starvation of Ukrainian villages. This was carefully planned and worked out in the greatest details."[8]

Another document, *Investigation of Communist Takeover and Occupation of the Non-Russian Nations of the U.S.S.R.*, includes a statement by the late F. M. Pigido, an economist, who lived and worked in Ukraine during the Famine of 1932–1933, and testified that

> Moscow employed the famine as a political weapon against the Ukrainians in the years of 1932–1933. This famine was in its entirety artificially induced and organized.

and that the Famine was actually the culminating point of the struggle of the Ukrainian people for their existence as a nation.[9]

And finally "The Memorandum of the Ukrainian Public Group to Promote the Implementation of the Helsinki Accords," which was published by the dissident movement in Kiev, in December 1976, gives the following description of the Famine:

> In 1933, the Ukrainian nation, which for centuries had not known famine, lost over six million people, dead by starvation. This famine, which affected the entire nation, was artificially created by the Government. Wheat was confiscated to the last grain. Even ovens and toolsheds were destroyed in the search for grain. If we add the millions of "*kulaks*" who were deported with their families to Siberia, where they died, then we have a total of more than ten million Ukrainians who in the short span of some three years (1930–1933) were destroyed with premeditation.[10]

Indeed, had Moscow so desired, the Famine could have been easily averted. There was ample food in the country for everyone. The Soviet government was aware of the desperate state of the Ukrainian people in the spring of 1932 and in the winter of 1932–1933; it knew well that there was no food left in the villages of Ukraine. Yet Moscow categorically refused to offer any assistance and did not even attempt to organize any relief at the local level. On the contrary, the requisitioning of foodstuffs from the farmers went on relentlessly. The grain collection brigades and commissions, as well as a multitude of Party and government emissaries, continued to criss-cross Ukrainian villages in search of "hidden" agricultural products. Moreover, throughout the Famine, the Soviet government was exporting huge quantities of

8. *The Communist Takeover and Occupation of Ukraine*, Special Report *#4*, p. 17.

9. *Investigation of Communist Takeover and Occupation of the Non Russian Nations of the U.S.S.R.*, p. 35.

10. *The Ukrainian Movement for Human Rights and Justice*, p. 68.

foodstuffs from Ukraine and selling them abroad at low prices. Meanwhile, Ukrainian men, women and children were dying of starvation.

During the long and violent history of relations between Ukraine and Russia, nothing has provoked so much Ukrainian hatred of Russians as the Famine of 1932–1933. The inhumanity of expropriating food from people already starving cannot be justified, forgotten or forgiven.

The exact number of victims who died of starvation during the Famine of 1932–1933 will never be known, for no records of those who died were kept. Even if they had been kept, they could not have been accurate, for many victims died and were buried wherever they happened to be while searching for food. Some died in the fields, in forests, at riversides, in ditches along the roads, far away from their homes and alone. Others met their death on city streets and squares. Their bodies were transported and thrown into ravines or refuse dumps outside the cities, or were buried in common graves in the city cemeteries. Many victims of starvation collapsed around railroad stations, in empty freight cars and along railroad tracks. Even if accurate records of the dead did exist, they would not be available because details of the Famine are still one of the most strictly guarded state secrets of the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, some reliable calculations of the number of people starved to death can be made on the basis of the normal rate of population growth during the pre-Famine years.

V. I. Hryshko maintains that according to the analysis of Soviet statistics of population growth, the casualties of the Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine total 7.5 million.[11]

Juriy Lavrynenko came to the conclusion that "during the period of the Famine at least 6 million people died in Ukraine as a result of it, and about 80 percent of the Ukrainian intelligentsia . . . also perished,"[12]

F. M. Pigido testified that "as to the number of victims of the Famine in Ukraine, according to various computations, it is from six to seven million."[13] *Special Report #4*, contains the following statistical summary of the Famine:

> The most conservative estimate is that there were about 4,800,000 dead, although there are many recognized scholars who have placed the number at between 5 and 8 millions. In addition, there was the loss to

11. Hryshko, V. I., *op. cit.*, p. 11.

12. *Investigation of Communist Takeover . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

> Ukraine of that part of the population which did succeed in getting out of the country and securing work in other sections of the Soviet Union.[14]

A plausible estimate of the number of famine victims in Ukraine was given by Petro Dolyna in his work *Famine as a Political Weapon* which was published as part of *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*. His computation is based on the 2.36 percent population increase in Ukraine in 1924–1927. As of 17 December 1926, Ukraine had a population of 29,042,934. Taking the natural population increase to be 2.36 percent, the Ukrainian population should have been approximately 38,426,000 people by 1 January 1939. But, as the census taken on that day shows, the actual figure was only 30,960,221. Thus 7,765,000 people were missing.[15]

The English historian Bernard Pares, speaking about the victims of the Famine said:

> There are no sure estimates on the subject, and there was no Government admission and organized foreign help; but the loss of life is generally held to have been as much as five million.[16]

Von Rauch, the German historian, writing on the Famine, stated that "The number of victims of catastrophic famine is estimated at between ten and eleven million."[17]

Finally, V. P. Timoshenko, analyzing the Famine and its consequences, used the censuses of 1926 and 1939 to compute the number of famine victims. He discovered that, according to statistics of 1939, the population of the Soviet Union had increased between these two censuses by 15.9 percent. Moreover, the 1939 census indicates that the total number of Ukrainian nationals was 28,070,000 compared to 31,200,000 in 1926. Assuming that during 1926–1939 the national growth of the Ukrainian population was equal to the average growth of the total population in the U.S.S.R., a population of 36,200,000 Ukrainians should have been expected in 1939. It can be concluded, therefore, that 8,000,000 Ukrainians disappeared between the two censuses.[18]

Though the exact number of victims cannot be determined, the magnitude of Ukraine's losses in the Famine is obvious.

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14. *The Communist Takeover and Occupation . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
15. *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*, Vol. 2, p. 127.
16. Pares, Bernard, *Russia*, p. 103.
17. Rauch, George von, *op. cit.*, p. 222.
18. *Report on the Soviet Union in 1956*, p. 49.

II

Back to Serfdom

Now to the question of how the Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine came about, and why those millions of innocent farmers had to die.

In order to understand the nature of and the reasons for the Famine, one must consider the three official policies adopted and pursued by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union before and during it. First was the State Grain Collection. Second came the Policy of Compulsory Collectivization of Agriculture. Finally, Moscow began its offensive against the Ukrainian national movement. These policies were inseparable. They interacted like cogwheels in an intricate machine. The Policy of State Grain Collection gave rise to the collectivization of agriculture, which was meant to allow easy grain collection by the state. The *History of the CPSU* claims that the policy of total collectivization was decided by the Fifteenth Congress (December 1927), that this decision was preceded by a long period of careful preparation; and that collectivization had no purpose other than to liberate farmers from capitalism, to improve their living standards and to bring progress and prosperity to the countryside. But in fact, the policy of total and compulsory Collectivization was not a creation of the Fifteenth Congress: this policy came later, at the end of 1929, as all the Party resolutions and government decrees indicate. There actually was no preparation for its introduction at all: it came abruptly and unexpectedly, on Stalin's whim. It was brought about to hasten industrialization and to subordinate the farmers to the dictates of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The procurement of agricultural products had been a problem for the Communist government since its inception. At first, during the Civil War in 1918–1921 it had been done through requisition. In 1921, when NEP was introduced, taxes in kind were imposed. In 1923 the Communist government decided to go to the free market for food. But the free market, with its fluctuation of prices, could not satisfy the state's gargantuan appetite. Having adapted the policy of industrialization, the Communist Party made great demands upon agriculture, or, to be more precise, upon farmers. Agricultural products actually were the only solid basis for industrialization. The countryside was to supply the ever increasing industrial population and the army with foodstuffs.

There was a great need for more grain, more meat, more dairy products and more and more agricultural raw material, both for the needs of the country's population and for export. In fact, agricultural produce was the only commodity that the Soviet Union could trade on the foreign markets in order to acquire the foreign currency needed for development of industry.

But the procurement of agricultural products was not an easy task. Being the only grain purchaser, the government forced the farmers to sell their produce at the prices which it was willing to pay. These prices were shamefully low. For example, in 1927–1928, in the USSR as a whole, free market prices of grain stood 60 percent above the government prices, and a year later they increased to 100 percent, and even to 170 percent in Ukraine.[1]

Needless to say, this differential in prices, and also the fact that the government failed to supply farmers with manufactured goods, brought about embittered and often violent conflict between the government and the farmers. Stalin feared that the shortage of foodstuffs would prevent him from carrying out his ambitious industrialization program, and thus endanger his standing as undisputed Party leader, the position in which he was entrenching himself at that time. It became clear to him that as long as the farmers were economically independent they would be able to circumvent the government's demands. At the end of 1927, or in the first half of 1928, Stalin came to the conclusion that the farmers' independent economy was intolerable and had to go. Farmers had to be collectivized, and in place of an independent farmers' economy another system had to be established, a system in which the collective farmers would deliver all of their marketable grain to the state and cooperatives. Thus during this 1927–1928 growing season the Communist Party of the Soviet Union decided to crush the independent farmers by any means available.

At about this time, in 1928, an acute grain shortage actually did develop. The procurement of grain for the state on the free market was becoming costly and more difficult. On 21 July 1928, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR decreed the introduction of a new system of foodstuffs procurement for the state, namely, contracting (*kontraktatsiia*) for farmers' sales in advance.[2] The contracting was to be done through village cooperatives, which were actually state commercial enterprises, and which now became official government grain collecting agencies. Farmers now had to legally bind themselves to deliver a given amount of their products, based on the size of the independent farm, or collective farm. The state in its turn was to pay

1. *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy*, p. 96.

2. *Istoriia Kolkhoznogo Prava*, Vol. I, p. 142.

for these deliveries at fixed prices, which, as already mentioned, stood almost 100 percent below the free market prices of early 1929. It is no wonder that contracting failed for the same reason as the previous attempts did, namely, the economic independence of the farmers and their ability to avoid the government's monopolistic prices by refusing to deal with the government.

The harvest of 1929 came and passed, but grain procurement remained a nagging problem for the government. This was the year when the final version of the First Five Year Plan was adopted (April 1929), and the government badly needed foreign currency. The government had to do something to facilitate and to speed up grain procurement. On 21 July 1929, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR issued a decree which allowed the grain procurement agencies (village cooperatives and village Soviets) to collect foodstuffs not only from farmers who were under contract, but also from those who were not. It ordered them "to start an aggressive campaign for collection of noncontracted grain."[3] In reality this was the reestablishment of the policy of compulsory requisition of agricultural products; the same policy which the Communists pursued during the Civil War in 1918–1921. It is important to note that it was during this time, in the summer and autumn of 1929, that special Bread Procurement Commissions (Brigades) were set up in all villages throughout Ukraine. Controlled by the Communist Party, these commissions and brigades were organized with the single purpose of securing the collection of grain quotas. Later, when total collectivization and the policy of "liquidation of the *kulaks* as a social class" was announced, these commissions and brigades became the major force in organizing collective farms and in expropriating *kulaks*. In fact, they became the arbitrary rulers of the countryside.

On 7 November 1929, Stalin published his article "Years of Great Change" in *Pravda*. He announced that a radical change had taken place in agriculture, which had evolved from primarily small, backward individual farming, to large scale, advanced, collective agriculture, and finally to cultivation of land in common. It was probably around this date that compulsory collectivization of farmers became an official policy. The decision to this effect was made at the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on 10–17 November 1929. The plenum adopted a resolution which made total and compulsory collectivization of agriculture an immediate, practical goal. The plenum called for extraordinary measure against the *kulaks*; it established an All-Union People's Commissariat of Agriculture; it resolved to mobilize at least 25,000 Party members, who eventually became known in the

3. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

villages as the "Twenty Five Thousanders" or simply "Thousanders," to be sent to villages as organizers of collective farms.

Finally, on 27 December 1929, at the First Conference of Marxist Agricultural Economists, Stalin announced the introduction of collective and state farms, the transformation of the countryside along a new socialist pattern, and the "liquidation of *kulaks* as a social class."

The trap had now snapped shut, and the farmers found themselves firmly bound to the collective farms, just as their grandfathers had been bound as serfs to the feudal estates less than seventy years before.

III

"A Terrible Struggle"

The introduction of collectivization in Ukraine was followed by a long and exhausting struggle between the forces of the Communist Party and its government on the one hand, and the farmers on the other. It was truly a struggle for life and death. The government's aim was to wear down, exhaust, and finally destroy the farmers as independent householders and free individuals. All of the government's forces and resources were mobilized with the single purpose of breaking the farmers' innate resistance to being herded into the collective farms.

The farmers themselves thought resistance was only a matter of endurance. They would just have to persevere against all odds in order to reserve their independence and freedom. They resisted collectivization efforts by flatly refusing to join the collective farms, by wrecking the machinery, by slaughtering their cattle and horses, by killing Communist officials and burning down collective farm buildings, and by fleeing from their villages to the cities in desperation . . .

On one occasion Winston S. Churchill asked Stalin whether the stresses of World War II had been as difficult for him personally as carrying through the policy of collectivization. Stalin answered that the latter was more difficult and called the collective farm policy a "terrible struggle" lasting four years and involving ten million men.[1]

Now let us comprehend the context of this statement. Stalin said this in August of 1942. At that time the Soviet Union was undergoing one of the most spectacular military disasters in history. The army had been routed. Millions of soldiers had already been killed or captured, and the most populated and important industrial and agricultural areas had been lost to the enemy. The city of Leningrad was besieged, its population dyng of starvation, and enemy troops stood less than fifty miles from Moscow. The entire country was on the verge of collapse. And yet, at this moment, Stalin says that carrying through the policy of collectivization was more of a struggle than waging World War II.

But what Stalin failed to tell the Prime Minister was the fact that the "terrible struggle" against "ten million small men" had taken place mainly in Ukraine; that the reason for that struggle was not merely the forcing of the farmers into collective farms, as is generally believed now, but was mainly an attempt at thwarting the Ukrainian people's aspirations toward independence. He concealed the fact that

1. Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, p. 489.

simultaneously with the introduction of collectivization policy, Moscow had initiated a full-scale campaign against anything that could identify Ukraine as a separate nation. And it is precisely to this aspect of the struggle that we must address ourselves in order to fully understand what transpired during those years, the most tragic in modern Ukrainian history.

Ukraine has always been, and still is, a source of grave anxiety to Russia. Although it had been under Russian occupation for a considerable time, it had been neither assimilated nor subdued. At the root of the hostilities between Ukrainians and Russians lies the question of nationality. In spite of the long years of Russian domination, and the corresponding attempts at Russification, the Ukrainians have refused to give up their language, literature, history, art, music or customs, and above all the notion of their national independence. There was especially clear evidence of this in the last decade and a half before the Famine of 1932-1933. At the time of Russia's October Revolution, the Ukrainians rebelled against Russian rule and declared their independence. But, as was to be expected, Russia could not tolerate the loss of such a rich country, and Ukraine was soon invaded and reoccupied. The Ukrainian revolution was thus put down with savagery, and Russia—this time Soviet Russia—once again established herself in Ukraine as a colonial ruler.

But the revival of Ukrainian national life could not be stopped. The process of Ukrainization, started during the short period of independence, was to continue. Ukrainian became the official language of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. Education, science, literature, and art acquired a national Ukrainian character in terms of both form and content.

The national revival went far beyond the sphere of culture. At this time the Ukrainians formed their own national church, independent of Russia's—the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. A new kind of national consciousness developed, and a highly patriotic intelligentsia began to take over the leadership of the economic, cultural, and political life of the country. Some politicians defended the rights of the Ukrainian people to practice their national way of life. Others openly opposed Russian Communist rule in Ukraine, and demanded Ukrainian independence. Certain men of letters advanced the concept of the essential incompatibility of Ukrainian and Russian culture, and proposed that Ukrainian intellectual and cultural life be based on European and Western, rather than Russian, models. A popular writer and sincere Communist, M. Khvylovyi, went so far as to call on Ukrainians to go "away from Moscow!" Khvylovyi was supported by many other prominent writers and critics, and also by O. Shumskyi, then Commissar for Education, who was later dismissed

from his post by Stalin and eventually liquidated.

Some economists also dared to argue openly that it was time to stop treating Ukraine as a colony; that Ukraine was not merely the southern part of the USSR—but a country in its own right, with a distinct people and historical roots reaching back thousands of years.

When the collection of foodstuffs for the state ran into trouble, and when the policy of collectivization met the violent resistance of the Ukrainian farmers, Moscow sensed the danger and became alarmed. The Ukrainian national movement has always been identified with Ukrainian farmers. In 1926 nearly 90% of Ukrainians lived in the countryside. The farmers' refusal to deliver their assigned foodstuff quotas to the state, and especially their violent opposition to collectivization, was looked upon as a nationalist rebellion. Ukrainian nationalism was now blamed for all difficulties which the Communists encountered in Ukrainian villages. Stalin stated this openly when, in his "Marxism and the National-Colonial Question" he wrote:

> Farmers present by themselves the basic force of the national movement . . . Without farmers there can be no strong national movement. This is what we mean when we say that the nationalist question is, actually, the farmers' question.[2]

Another time, speaking elsewhere about Ukrainization, Stalin accused the Ukrainian cultural movement of assuming the proportions of a general struggle against Moscow, against Russian culture, and against its highest achievement—Leninism.

> Yes, the danger in Ukraine is becoming more and more real. . . At a time when Western-European proletarians and their Communist Parties are full of sympathy for Moscow, the Ukrainian Communist Khvylovyi is unable to say anything but to call upon Ukrainian leaders to run away from Moscow as fast as possible.[3]

Thus Ukrainization became dangerous for the Russian Communist Empire, i.e., the Soviet Union, and as such it became outright treason. Moscow could not tolerate such dissent, and, not unexpectedly, struck Ukraine with all its might. It used the policy of collectivization and the state grain collection campaign as vehicles of war against the Ukrainian national movement, and the Famine was to be the weapon with which Moscow dealt its final blow.

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2. Stalin, J. V., *Marksism i Natsional'no-Kolonial'nyi Vopros*, p. 152.

3. Stalin, J. V., *Sochinenia*, Vol. VIII, p. 152.

IV

The Administration that Paved the Way for the Famine of 1932–1933

To insure the fulfillment of state grain quotas, and to implement the policy of collectivization, the Communist Party sent multitudes of its faithful members to the countryside. In addition to the Thousanders (25,000 in all) who were ordered to the villages by the November (1929) Party plenum, hundreds of thousands of various Party and Government emissaries were sent to the countryside with the express purpose of overwhelming the independent farmer. They were to extract from him whatever foodstuffs he still had. They were to break his will and spirit, and, finally, herd him into a collective farm. In the years of 1928–1930 alone, at least a quarter of a million Party members were sent to the countryside. The majority of them were Russians.[1]

It must be emphasized, that the Party Central Committee sent no fewer than 30,000 city workers into Ukrainian villages in order to reinforce the membership of the Communist Party, which in the Ukrainian countryside totalled only about 40,000 members in the beginning of 1930. This was in addition to a contingent of Thousanders assigned earlier to expedite the policy of mass collectivization. The number of emissaries dispatched to Ukrainian villages to enforce collectivization equaled, if not exceeded, the total of native Communists in those villages.[2] Upon arrival in their assigned villages, the first move of the Party emissaries was to establish a new administration through which the Party would then be able to take complete control. By means of this administration the Party was able to detect and destroy any opposition to its policies, easily extort foodstuffs and rapidly collectivize the farmers. Initially, the new administrative system did not arouse any suspicion among the villagers because it appeared to be non-threatening and simple. The villages were to be divided into units and subunits. The larger villages would be divided into Hundreds, Tens and Fives. The smaller ones were only divided into Tens and Fives. Some other villages preserved their old subdivisions, the *kutky*—a number of houses clustered together and officially registered under a certain name.

1. *Voprosy Istorii*, 1949, #5, p. 17.

2. *Report on the Soviet Union in 1956*, p. 44.

Let us take a village with 800 households and 4,000 inhabitants and see what kind of administration it would have. It would be divided into 8 Hundreds, 80 Tens and 160 Fives, or a total of 248 units. Since each unit had an individual in charge assigned to it by the Village Soviet, this village would have 248 subdivisional functionaries or officials. In addition, a special Propagandist was assigned to each Hundred, and one Agitator to each Ten and to each Five, doubling the number of functionaries to 496. Also, a Bread Procurement Commission would be appointed to each Hundred. This Commission consisted of ten or more members, increasing the number of village subdivisional functionaries by 80 to 576. Finally, there were three permanent *vykonavtsi*, locally appointed militia deputies, for each Hundred, or 24 in all. The permanent *vykonavtsi*, who actually performed the function of local police, could make arrests without any legal formalities. This made 600 subdivisional functionaries. Thus, each unit of a hundred households was controlled by 75 persons. This number can be increased if the members of the Village Soviet and the collective farm officials are included.

The majority of the appointees to these subdivisional positions were selected from among the ordinary farmers and as such, they found themselves in a precarious situation. There was nothing they hated as much as collective farming, yet they became the instrument of its implementation. They were appointed to tasks much as soldiers are. Individuals with any function in such organizations and institutions were looked upon as officials, regardless of whether they were actually government employees. The title "official" meant a great deal, for it secured almost unlimited power for those who bore it. Anything with the slightest ring of officialdom to it was dreaded by the ordinary villager, until the attainment of such status gave this same person a tremendous advantage. According to the Communists, to be a Soviet official was an honor. Anyone who refused to accept the honor of an official appointment, or who opposed an official's activity, incurred a severe penalty as an "enemy of the people." Obviously, few dared to refuse an appointment or show opposition.

In order to be able to demand the fulfillment of obligations to the state, an official had to meet them himself and set an example. Failure to do so would lead to an accusation of disobedience to the Party and government. Since the task of these officials was collectivizing and gathering foodstuffs, they thus had to collectivize themselves and deliver their quotas.

Previously, there had been only one authority in the village—the Village General Meeting. At this meeting, the Village Soviet ("Council") was elected for a two-year term. The Soviet chose the Village Executive Committee with its chairman and clerk. Political

organizations such as the Communist Party and *Komsomol* did not yet play an important role within the village administrative system, for membership in these organizations was still a rarity in the Ukrainian countryside. This kind of village self-government was abolished by the Thousanders on their arrival in the villages to which they were assigned. Both the Village General Meeting and the Village Soviet lost their power to the Communist Party, the membership of which increased rapidly among the villagers. The Communist Party organization, replacing the Village Soviet in all its former functions, also became master of the village by dictating its will to the Village General Meeting, which lost its power and became merely the curtain from behind which the Communist Party pulled the strings. Only Party or Komsomol members or persons of unquestionable loyalty to the Party and the government could be elected or appointed to executive offices.

About the time of the Thousanders' arrival, two new institutions were introduced: the Special Section and the Workers-and-Farmers-Inspection.

The Special Section was a branch of the GPU, the political secret police. Officially, the Special Section was represented by only one man who occupied an office in the building of the Village Soviet and wore a full dress GPU uniform at all times. The recruiting that went on behind its doors, as well as the identity of secret agents, remained a mystery. It was generally believed, however, that one agent was planted in each Hundred to inform the GPU of the activities of each villager in that particular Hundred.

The Workers-and-Farmers-Inspection was a local branch of a Commissariat of the same name. Today it is known as the Commission of State Control. It was in charge of checking the practices of the Government agencies, and the loyalty and efficiency of officials. When total collectivization was decreed the Party and government charged the Commissariat with controlling the fulfillment of this policy.

The Workers-and-Farmers-Inspection was also represented in villages by one man. He was an outsider, of course. A commission of five local people would be appointed to assist him. He also maintained his own secret agents who spied on the local officials. Serving as the antenna of the government, this representative of the Workers-and-Farmers-Inspection checked, and thereby controlled, the functions of village government officials. When he found "discrepancies," he assumed the role of both arbiter and judge. His decisions were final and he was feared as much as any secret policy officer.

The local officials were supported by all the military and civilian forces of the state and, in effect, by the whole complex of institutions and organizations headed by the Communist Party. The *Komsomol*, the *Pioneers*, and the *Komnezam* were particularly active and effective forces

in the hands of the local Communists.

Komsomol is the abbreviation for the "Young Communist League," the training ground for future Party cadres, which is accorded second place in the Soviet political hierarchy. Controlled and directed by the Communists, these youths proved to be most vigorous and effective. Their responsibilities and positions were second only to those of the Communists themselves. They served as a source of trusted agents for the secret police. The leader of a village *Komsomol* organization was usually a party candidate sent to the village by the county (*raion*) center.

The *Pioneers* is a political organization of school children between the ages of eight and fourteen. Members of this children's organization served as both messengers and agents. They did not hesitate to inform on their own parents. Denunciation was considered a heroic, truly Communistic deed, and the Pioneers' best expression of Soviet patriotism.

Komnezam is the abbreviation for the "Committee of Poor Peasants." Created by the Communists during the Revolution, and revived in the late Twenties, this organization became one of the most powerful tools of collectivization.

V

Village Administration in Action

The monstrous machine of collectivization, composed of human parts, was set in motion. It ground, it pulled, it pushed, and it kicked. It was run by human beings, and it worked on human beings. It was merciless and insatiable. Once it was set in motion, it could not be stopped, and it consumed more and more victims. The Hundreds, Tens and Fives with their commissions, propagandists, agitators, executors, and many other functionaries; the *Komsomol*, *Pioneers*, and *Komnezam*; the governmental institutions: the Village General Meeting, the Village Soviet, and the Village Executive Committee—all these subdivisions, organizations, and governmental institutions and establishments, became cogwheels in this ugly machine, and the Party its skillful operator. It puffed and squeaked and screeched, but it moved on and on, leaving behind blood, misery and tears.

The officials never left the farmers alone. There was no end to meetings: there were General Meetings, Hundreds', Tens' and Fives' meetings. Meetings took place every day, even on Saturdays and Sundays. Meetings were held in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, continuing late into night. No one could ignore them, since doing so would result in being declared an enemy of the Communist regime. Thus the farmers were forced to listen to long harangues about the merits of collective farming and of delivering grain quotas to the state.

There was no end to officials' making visits to farmers. The Bread Procurement Commission would come almost every day. The Propagandists and Agitators talked incessantly about how wonderful life would be on a collective farm. The officials of Hundreds would stop at houses to remind the farmers that their Hundreds were lagging behind in delivery of grain quotas to the state. Then the officials of the Tens would come to plead with farmers to join the collective farm, for otherwise they, the officials, would be considered saboteurs. As soon as they left the house, the Fives' officials would arrive with the same plea, and with tears in their eyes. The farmer would be told again that if he did not join the collective farm, they, the officials, would be blamed and might be banished from the village forever.

A group of *Pioneers* would visit the farmers next. They too had been given the assignment of collectivizing a certain number of households. The *Pioneers* would be followed by a group of *Komsomol* members and the latter by the *Komnezam.* Sometimes a group of teachers would stop by at the farmers' houses, or groups of laborers from the neighboring cities would come, or even farmers from neighboring villages. The procession went on endlessly.

After these initial cajolings, brute force was applied. The first blow was Stalin's campaign to liquidate the *kulaks* in the first few months of 1930. A wave of unexpected arrests swept over the countryside. The *chekists* combed the villages, usually at night, forcing their victims into vans and disappearing with them before dawn. The most prominent villagers—school teachers (traditionally the most popular people in the village), village clerks, store owners, priests, lay church activists—were the first arrested. These people comprised the village intelligentsia. They distinguished themselves as community leaders and activists, as organizers of village cultural life, of theaters, folk choirs, educational establishments, such as *Prosvita* ("Enlightenment"), and sport clubs.

The villages were deprived of their leadership overnight. The farmers, many of whom were illiterate and ignorant, were left to fend for themselves.

The arrests were a prophylactic measure, preparation for an all out offensive against the *kulaks.* The regime wanted to rid the villages of potential leaders in case of farmers' uprising. All those people rounded up during the first assault on the farmers were liquidated. Not one of them ever returned home.

A week or two later, another wave of arrests swept across the same villages. This time the arrested were those who were labeled as *kulaks.* Since the *chekists* alone could not handle this, the entire new administration was mobilized for the job, and the thousanders and other emissaries were put in charge. It had been proclaimed that the *kulaks* must be destroyed as a class. No pity and no mercy were to be shown them. The *kulaks* were not to be regarded as human beings. The Party propagandists invented the most derogatory names for them, calling them vermin, hyenas, sharks, snakes and the like.

According to a decree, issued on 8 February 1929, the number of "the richest *kulak* households should not exceed 3 percent of the entire rural population."[1] Thus, if the number of independent farmers in Ukraine in 1928 was 5,200,000,[2] then 3 percent would make 156,000 independent farmers. If, on the average, an independent farmer's

1. *Istorila Kolkhoznogo Prava*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–128.

2. *Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia*, Vol. 13, p. 163.

household consisted of 5 members, then 780,000 persons in Ukraine were officially labeled *kulaks* and thus doomed to extermination in the first days of 1930. These were the most active and productive element of the farm population.

This was only the beginning of the liquidation of the *kulak* families. After being rounded up, they were driven to railroad stations where freight trains with empty boxcars were waiting for them. Men, women, children and infants; young and old, healthy and sick—all were indiscriminately loaded into cattle cars and sealed up. No heat or food was provided for them. All this was done under the close supervision of the GPU and militia guardsmen, as if those people were common criminals. Needless to say, countless people died of hunger, exposure and disease during the long journey, lasting for weeks, to the cold Russian north. Those who survived the transport were further decimated by the severity of the Arctic regions where they were usually left in the forest to fend for themselves. Only the sturdiest were able to start a new life there under the most primitive conditions.

Not all of the arrested and deported *kulaks* and their families were what could be called "well-to-do peasants." Here is what Roy Medvedev, a dissident historian, writes about those who were arrested during the campaign against *kulaks* at the beginning of 1930:

> Many low-middle peasants, poor peasants, and even some day laborers, who had never hired labor . . . were given the senseless label of "*subkulaks*" and were banished. In some districts up to 20 percent of the peasants were banished; for each *kulak* evicted, three or four middle or poor peasants had to be arrested.[3]

An offensive of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union against the Ukrainian national movement was synchronized with the attack on the farmers.

The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was the first to go, being formally dissolved in January 1930. During the same year, all of the bishops of the Church, as well as most of the prominent priests and outstanding laymen were arrested and exiled or executed. About 90 percent of the church buildings were either destroyed or turned into warehouses, barns, clubs, dancing halls, museums and so forth.

> Altogether, according to Ukrainian Orthodox sources, the Bolsheviks killed two metropolitans, 26 archbishops and bishops, some 1,500 priests, 54 deacons, and approximately 20,000 lay members of the regional and parish councils, as well as an undetermined number of rank-and-file believers.[4]

3. Hryshko, V. I., *The Ukrainian "Holocaust," 1933, op. cit.*, p. 36.

Simultaneously with the campaign against the Church, a policy of an all-out Russification of Ukraine was renewed and intensified and the teaching of the Russian language was introduced in all schools throughout Ukraine. The entire propaganda machine was mobilized to glorify the Russian language as one superior to Ukrainian, as "Lenin's language, the language of advanced revolutionary proletarians." Only those who spoke Russian were assigned to leadership posts; high positions were closed to Ukrainians.

The most ruthless attack was directed against the intelligentsia. Beginning with 1930, a string of trials rigged by the secret police, was set up. These trials resulted in complete liquidation of the Ukrainian national leadership. First to be tried were the members of the so-called "Union for the Liberation of Ukraine." Forty-five of the most prominent Ukrainian cultural figures were accused of attempting to separate Ukraine from the Soviet Union. All of them were convicted and exiled to far away Arctic regions from which they never returned. After this trial was over a witch-hunt was directed against a great many other people active in local communal arrested and exiled.

Moreover, the Ukrainians were astonished to learn that many other "nationalist subversive organizations" had been "uncovered," and many more men and women were arrested under the pretext of belonging to organizations such as the Ukrainian National Center, the Ukrainian Military Organization, the Union of Ukrainian Youth, the Brotherhood for Ukrainian Statehood, and the like.

4. *Ukraine: A Concise Encyclopedia*, p. 171.

VI

Battle for the Ukrainian Crop of 1932

Nineteen thirty-two witnessed the last battle of the war against the farmers. The government used every possible method of extracting as much agricultural produce from the countryside as it could, without any regard to consequences. The farmers, already on the verge of starvation, desperately tried to keep what food they had left, and in spite of governmental efforts to the contrary, stay alive.

The long, cold winter of 1931–1932 slowly gave way to spring. By April the snow had already melted, and the weather became damp and drizzly, with a heavy fog frequently descending upon the villages. Intermittently cold winds chased away the fog and brought cold, torrential rains in its place.

Around this time the plight of the villages became desperate. This was the spring of 1932—the spring of haunting memory, when the Famine broke out and claimed its first casualties. An endless procession of beggars wandered the roads and paths, going from house to house. In various stages of starvation, dirty and in rags, they humbly begged for food, any food—a potato, a sliver of beet, or a kernel of corn. They were the first victims of starvation.

Some of the starving still tried to earn their food by doing chores in or outside the villages. Sullen, emaciated men walked from house to house with an ax, or a shovel, in search of work, hoping that someone would hire them to dig up a garden, or chop some firewood in exchange for a couple of potatoes. But they had no luck.

Crowds of destitute women and children could be seen all over the potato fields, looking for any potatoes left over from the preceding year's crop. Others roamed the forests in search of something edible. The riverbanks, surrounded by new greenery—young shoots of reed and other plants, were also crowded with people who would also try to catch something in the water.

But the majority of those seeking help went into the cities, much as they had done before. It had never been difficult to find work such as gardening, cleaning backyards, or sweeping the streets. Now, however, hiring farmers for any work whatsoever in the cities was officially prohibited throughout Ukraine.

There were some villagers who saw their salvation in the cities' marketplaces, where they tried to sell their best clothes, from pre-revolutionary times, as well as family heirlooms, handicrafts, women's jewelry, homemade shirts, towels, and tablecloths embroidered with traditional Ukrainian designs, handwoven rugs, and so forth. They sold these treasures for next to nothing, or traded them in for something edible. But many of the hungry villagers did not go to the marketplaces with the intention of selling or bartering—they had nothing to sell, and no money to buy anything. These public places were their last hope of finding some scraps of food, and they became almost permanent residents there. With outstretched hands and tears in their eyes they wandered in the midst of the market crowds, begging passers-by not to let them die.

At night they slept right in the marketplaces, under tables and benches, in the bushes or in corners of neighboring backyards. Some of them would be mugged, or even murdered during the night; others were picked up by militiamen on night duty, taken out of the city limits and dumped out somewhere to fend for themselves, with strict orders not to return. Yet many of them would return, in spite of everything, while others would go back to their villages in dejection, having resigned themselves to death. Some were in such a weakened state that they died wherever the militia had abandoned them.

Still other villagers tried to survive by descending upon the railroad stations and tracks. Those who had something of value to sell came with their valuables in hopes of finding buyers among the travelers and passengers. Others came empty-handed, simply to beg for a piece of bread. A few brave souls came to the stations with the intent of traveling to some distant cities, usually to Russia, where there was no famine. Such an undertaking was a very risky and difficult one, however, for train tickets were sold only to those who had written permission from collective farms. The GPU-men and the militia were constantly checking the travelers' documents making it difficult to elude them and travel illegally. Even those returning from Russia to Ukraine with legal travel documents were carefully searched. Any food found among their belongings was confiscated.

By this time deprivation had spread to all the villages in Ukraine. Death from starvation had become a daily occurrence. Everywhere, on roads and paths, in gardens and in fields, one would encounter dead human bodies, left unburied for days like those of stray animals.

Burials were constantly occurring in the village cemeteries. One would see strange funeral processions: children pulling homemade handwagons with the dead bodies of their parents in them, or the reverse, parents carting the bodies of their children. There were no coffins, for the villagers had no boards, no nails, and certainly not the

strength to build anything. The bodies of the starved were simply deposited in large common graves, one on top of another. These common graves would serve as the best proof of the veracity of this document.

Starvation notwithstanding, the state grain collection campaign continued in full force. Toward the end of May 1932, the Party mobilized and sent an additional 112,000 Thousanders to the villages. This latest group of Thousanders was instantly given the nickname "Morticians," or "Comrade Morticians." A better nickname could not have been invented, for the villages were full of starving farmers—some already dead, others about to die. The specter of death was obvious to anyone entering the villages. Yet the Thousanders, and a multitude of various Party and Government representatives, continued their search for "hidden grain," house after house, unabatedly, in spite of the countless victims of starvation which they could see with their own eyes. In their pursuit of the fulfillment of grain delivery quotas they stopped at nothing. They resorted to physical violence, imprisonment, eviction, banishment to concentration camps, and so on. They would break into homes and search everywhere, in trunks, ovens, stoves, and chimneys. Even little sacks of seeds that the women had carefully preserved for their spring sowing were taken away. Often during their search, in place of grain the Thousanders would find only the bodies of starved farmers and their families.

There are two Soviet documents which help to estimate, at least tentatively, how many people died in 1932 in Ukraine. The first is a book by M. Grin and Kaufman, *Ekonomicheskaia geografia SSSR po oblastiam i respublikam* (Moscow, 1933), in which the population of Ukraine as of 1 January 1932 was given as 32,548,000. The second one is "*SSSR—Strana Sotsialisma*" (Moscow, 1936), in which the population of Ukraine as of 1 January 1933 was fixed at 31,902,000 people. Taking the difference between the data given for 1 January 1932 and 1 January 1933, 646,000, and adding the normal population increase of 858,000, a total of 1,504,600 persons who disappeared in 1932 can be calculated.

June 1932 brought some relief, and deaths from starvation became less frequent. Early fruits and berries began to ripen, and many kinds of vegetables were ready for consumption. Those who could not plant their gardens for lack of seeds simply helped themselves now by stealing from others, including from collective farms, whatever and whenever they could. At nightfall the collective farm vegetable fields would be swarming with villagers, ravenous with hunger, who grabbed everything they could find in the darkness, digging up potatoes, pulling out young cabbages and root vegetables. Though unripe, the milky grain of new wheat helped satisfy the hunger of the starving

farmers.

But farms soon proved to be an unreliable source of food, because the "Morticians" eventually put an end to it. They organized brigades of "Communist Vigilantes," and entrusted them with guarding the collective farm fields. Armed with shotguns, the vigilantes watched the fields day and night from tall watchtowers erected for this purpose. Moreover, the collective farmers working in the fields were bodily searched at the end of each working day as well. The officials were afraid that they might succeed in hiding some vegetables or wheat under their clothing.

To safeguard the crop of 1932 the government passed several drastic laws. The cruelest of these laws was passed on 7 August 1932, and made all collective farm properties "socialist property." The punishment prescribed by this law for stealing "socialist property" was execution by firing squad and confiscation of all possessions. To glean the already harvested fields, to fish in the rivers, to pick up a fallen dry twig in the forest, or even to collect dry weeds along the roads for fuel was an unpardonable crime equal to state treason. There was not anything that was not considered "socialist property." One could forfeit one's life by picking up a single potato or ear of wheat in the field.

The last group of Thousanders, the Morticians, were sent to the villages with explicit orders to prepare and conduct the harvest of the new crop and to secure its swift and smooth requisitioning and delivery to the state. Sometime in the middle of July villagers throughout Ukraine witnessed the arrival in their villages of units of soldiers and teams of students and industrial laborers, all sent there to "help" the collective farmers with their harvest. On the appointed day, all the newcomers, and those villagers still able to stand on their feet left the villages for the fields, following the military trucks with red banners and communist slogans. But the 1932 harvest, which began with such fanfare and parades in the Ukrainian villages, proved to be a bitter one for the farmers. All the crop harvested was taken straight from the threshing machines to collection points, usually at the railroad stations. The state delivery quota had first priority, and no one even dared mention the needs of the farmers. From the very start of the harvest to the end, not a single pound of wheat was distributed to the villagers.

By the end of August, the state grain collection campaign was reopened with even greater intensity and vigor. The farmers were constantly reminded that their villages were lagging behind in the fulfillment of grain delivery quotas. Endlessly long meetings were conducted daily, during which the farmers had to listen to political harangues about the virtues of delivering foodstuffs to the state. All of this was beyond the farmers' comprehension. In fact, it would have been ridiculous were it not so serious. The farmers had been members

of collective farms for more than two years now, and they no longer had any land of their own. Since the start of collectivization, the State Bread Procurement Commission had criss-crossed the villages several times, taking all the grain reserves the farmers still had. Now, in August 1932, the villagers' subsistence depended entirely on vegetables, fruits, and the bread rations they were receiving while working on the collective farms. Nevertheless, the Communist officials continued to search the farmers' premises, taking away every single kernel of grain they could discover.

Finally, sometime during September, the collective farmers received their advance payment in kind, a meager ration of an average of half a pound of grain per labor day. It must be noted here that the livelihood of the rural population in Ukaine depended almost exclusively on bread, for the villagers were completely deprived of any other food such as meat, eggs, fat, and dairy products. There were no groceries, bakeries or any other food stores in the villages. Moreover, it was officially prohibited to sell or to buy food in the villages in any way. To compound the farmers' hardship, the Government passed a law, according to which the farmers who had not met the grain delivery quotas were prohibited from buying goods of general consumption such as salt, kerosene, soap, matches, and other items in the stores.

VII

Ordeal by Hunger

The meager allotment of food received from the collective farms as advance payment in kind was soon consumed and starvation again set in. Before 1932 the farmers actually lived off their private gardens. Even in the winter of 1930–1931, when there was a great shortage of bread, they managed to survive because they had their own vegetables and fruit. But the year of 1932 was different. During the massive famine in the spring most of the people consumed even the seeds usually reserved for planting. Now they were left with no seeds, and the gardens remained unplanted, overgrown with weeds.

As a result, by the end of November the villagers began to experience horrors incomparably greater than those of the spring famine. In the spring they could at least hope for a new crop of vegetables and fruits. But now, as winter approached, the situation was different because the villagers were totally deprived of their resources. The dried and preserved wild berries, edible roots, cabbages and pumpkins, beets and fruit had already been consumed. They had no more food, and no hope of receiving any, either. Now they faced a severe winter, with freezing temperatures and great snowstorms which would last until the end of March or longer, more than four long months. And they would have to wait more than seven months for the next harvest.

Just as during the famine of the spring, multitudes of beggars again roamed the villages, pleading for food. Once again one could see the famished, dressed in rags and tatters, all over gardens, orchards, and forests, searching for something edible. Again they went to neighboring towns, to the railroad stations and tracks, in hopes of getting some scraps of food from the passers-by, or from passengers. Those villagers who could again tried to go farther away, mainly to Russia, in search of food. But as their exodus increased, so did the government's determination to keep them confined to their villages. It was strictly forbidden for the farmers to appear in any city or town, or even in any village other than their own, without a proper certificate from their collective farms. Travel to any part of the Soviet Union was also strictly forbidden. In order to prevent the starving farmers from leaving their villages, the government introduced a single-passport system for the entire country at the end of December, 1932. A person without this

passport was not permitted to live in any city or town, or be employed and receive food rations there. Only the farmers did not receive such passports.

In early 1933 the cold was severe. Snow piled up many feet high on the network of paths and roads in and around the villages, shutting them off from the rest of the world even more than the government's restrictions. The farmers' initial bewilderment and helplessness gave way to panic. Desperate attempts by individuals to find salvation outside the villages continued, but without much success. The roads to towns and cities, and to distant parts of the country were tightly closed to them. The militia and GPU-men checked every farmer on trains and on city streets demanding to see their passports and questioning them about their destination.

For the majority of the farmers who were less daring there was nothing left now but to recognize the hopelessness of their situation in the face of such great obstacles. They gave up entirely, and stayed in their villages. Gradually weakened by lack of food, freezing for lack of fuel, they took to their beds and sank deeper and deeper into resignation, mental apathy and stupor. Some were convinced that starvation was a well-deserved punishment from God for their support of the Communists during the Revolution.

Nor was there any hope for outside help. The starvation of the Ukrainian people did not disturb Moscow in the least. The Soviet regime was only worried by the ever decreasing delivery of grain from Ukraine. An article in *Pravda*'s issue of 7 January 1933 accused the Ukrainian Communist Party and government of permitting "class enemies" to sabotage the grain collection. This was an unmistakable sign of changes to come. A decree of 19 January 1933, issued jointly by the Party and government, abolished the system of contracting for foodstuffs and introduced taxes in kind in its place.[1] It must be noted that the Party and government were dealing with *collective* farms this time, not with independent farmers, as before. In other words, the collection of grain did not present any difficulties now: it was simply a matter of taking the grain directly from the threshing machines and transporting it straight to the collection points, as had already been done during the harvest of 1932. This law was only "legalizing" the expropriation of grain from the collective farmers, giving the various collecting agencies—the cooperatives and the Village Soviets with their commissions and brigades—the right to make use of all available government law enforcement agencies in requisitioning the new crops from the collective farms and their members.

1. *Istoriia Kolkhoznogo Prava*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 19.

A week later, on 24 January 1933, the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union established Political Departments (*politotdely*) in the MTS (Machine-Tractor Station) and ordered the Party's organizations to commandeer an additional 15,000 Thousanders to the countryside. The major purpose of setting up the *politotdely* was to strengthen the collective farms. Their first task was to enforce the grain delivery quotas, the taxes in kind, regardless of whether the crop had been satisfactory or not. This new enforced grain collecting contributed greatly to the horrible Famine of 1932–1933. According to official statistics, the crop yield, though not large, was sufficient to feed the population of Ukraine, had it not been for the excessive grain delivery quotas.

At the January plenum of the Central Committee the Ukrainian Communist Party was accused of failure to carry out its obligations in meeting the grain procurement plan. This allowed P. Postyshev, appointed by the same plenum as Moscow's "Viceroy" in Ukraine, to start a purge of the Ukrainian Communist Party. Almost all the members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine were liquidated. A great number of rank-and-file Ukrainian Communists, especially those who did not hide their national identity, were expelled from the Party and either executed or banished. Postyshev admitted that he purged one-fourth of the members and candidates of the Ukrainian Communist Party as a hostile class element, by which he meant people with nationalist sentiments. He purged hundreds of secretaries of district Party committees, and hundreds of chairmen of district executive committees. This constituted a complete and total liquidation of the Ukrainian national element in the Communist leadership. After this purge, the Communist Party of Ukraine became an obedient tool in the hands of Postyshev, the Russian Communist dictator of Ukraine, who was now able to enforce any edict of Stalin, even if it resulted in the death of millions of Ukrainians.

The purges were not limited to the Party. Almost all those who were in any way rightly or wrongly identified with the national movement for freedom and independence were hunted down and eliminated. Some committed suicide, out of despair, or in protest, as did M. Khvylovyi, on 3 May 1933, and M. Skrypnyk, Commissar of Education of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, who ended his life on 6 July 1933.

Of the approximately 240 writers and poets active in Ukraine, about 200 were liquidated. The same fate met prominent Ukrainian philologists, three-quarters of whom were murdered.[2] The number of Ukrainians eliminated by the regime increases to incredible proportions when one considers that the middle and low echelons of the

2. *Communist Takeover and Occupation....* p.19.

intelligentsia, including white-collar workers, teachers, agriculturists, engineers, were also purged.

Toward the end of March 1933, famine struck the villagers with full force. Life for them had sunk to an almost animal-like struggle for survival. The villages ceased to exist as coherent communities. Those inhabitants who managed to stay alive shut themselves in within the walls of their dwellings. There was little, if any, communication, even between immediate neighbors, who ceased to care about one another. Friends, and even relatives became strangers. Mothers abandoned their children, and brothers left their brothers.

Then came the late, cold spring of 1933. The snow melted slowly. Ice cold winds blew continually, often bringing heavy clouds, snow and rain, causing the villages to sink deeply in mud and slush, which would then freeze into dirty knobs.

Starvation reached a point at which death was desirable. Many houses were standing with no signs of life, the dead or dying still inside them. As the snow melted away, human corpses were exposed everywhere: in backyards, on the roads, in fields—wherever death had caught up with them. As the weather got warmer, the bodies started to thaw and decay.

Special Burial Brigades were set up in the villages for the purpose of collecting and burying the corpses of the starved farmers and their families. Horse-drawn carts went through the villages, stopping at each house to collect dead bodies, much the way garbage collectors collect garbage in the cities.

"Any dead?" the cart driver would shout as he approached a house.

Someone would appear at the window and shake his head. No, no dead ones in this house.

The cart moved on to another house.

"Any dead?"

Silence. There was no need to repeat the question. The driver broke into the house and started dragging the corpses out: one, two, sometimes an entire family.

The physical condition of those still alive was indescribable. They were unkempt and haggard, and so weak that they could hardly drag their feet. Many of them sat or lay silently, too feeble even to talk. They could only whisper if they wanted to say something. The bodies of some were reduced to skeletons, with grayish-yellow, sagging skin. Their faces looked like rubber masks: large, bulging, immobile eyes sunk deep back into the skull. Their necks seemed to have shrunk into their shoulders. The look of their eyes was glassy, a sign of approaching death. The bodies of others were swollen, yet another mark of the final stages of starvation. Their swollen faces, arms, legs and stomachs

resembled the surfaces of rubber balloons. The swollen tissues would soon begin to crack and burst, followed by a rapid deterioration of the body.

The thaw brought with it a new wave of beggars. Old and young, mostly women and children, slowly moved from house to house, dragging their rag-covered feet. With protruding, frightened eyes and outstretched hands, they would approach people, but now they did not plead—they were voiceless, so they just cried. Their heavy tears were often mixed with fluid slowly oozing out of cracks in their swollen faces. They would beg for a potato peel, or for a single kernel of corn.

The plight of the children was the most heart-rending of all. Not many survived the winter. Those who had were reduced to mere skeletons, too weak to cry. No words can describe their suffering. Their heads resembled inflated balloons, and their arms and legs were like sticks protruding from their bodies. Their stomachs were bloated out of proportion, and water flowed uninterruptedly from their genitals. Their faces were prematurely aged and twisted, and they looked like old people: wrinkled, listless and very, very sad. No longer able to cry, they were in that constant stupor that is peculiar to those dying from hunger.

In the midst of all this suffering the Thousanders, along with their Bread Procurement Commissions, continued their activities, demanding the delivery of grain quotas and searching for "hidden" foodstuffs—disregarding the mass starvation evident all around them.

After visiting Ukraine in the spring of 1933, the Englishman Malcolm Muggeridge, wrote that he saw something of the battle going on between the government and the farmers:

> On the one side, millions of starving peasants, their bodies often swollen from lack of food; on the other, soldiers, members of the GPU carrying out the instructions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They had gone over the country like a swarm of locusts and taken away everything edible; they had shot or exiled thousands of peasants, sometimes whole villages; they hd reduced some of the most fertile land in the world to a melancholy desert.[3]

By the end of July 1933, the villages of Ukraine had become desolate places, deathly quiet and silent, as if the Black Death had passed through them. No sound of human voices could be heard—no talking, no laughter, not even crying. The boisterous voices of children were stilled. Dogs and cats had been killed and eaten.

3. Malcolm Muggeridge, "War on the Peasants," *The Fortnight Review*, London, 1 May 1933.

By this time the starvation had abated somewhat. There were plenty of new vegetables and fruits everywhere. In order to save the grain crops, the authorities needed farm workers, and they had no choice but to supply collective farm members with sufficient food rations to sustain their existence.

It was a beautiful July, warm and sunny, with flowers in full bloom and a bumper crop of grain, fruits and vegetables. But the abundance and fragrance of nature could not be fully appreciated. The empty farmhouses amid their ruined surroundings, and the unbearable stench of the unburied bodies of people deliberately starved to death, would not allow the horror the farmers had gone through to be forgotten.

GLOSSARY

Chekist was a member of the original Soviet secret police, *Cheka*, which is an abbreviation for Extraordinary Commission, or more precisely, All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Fighting Counter-Revolution and Sabotage (1917–1922). It was succeeded by the GPU. The old title, *Chekist*, is still being used, and even today's members of the KGB are often referred to as *Chekists*. Communist propaganda eulogizes them as national heros.

Commissariat was the name given to central government departments from 1917–1946. In 1946, these "People's Commissariats" were renamed ministries.

GPU is the abbreviation for *Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie*, or State Political Administration. It is the name of the Soviet secret police which took the place of the *Cheka* in February 1922. In 1923, the GPU was renamed OGPU, which meant United State Political Administration. But the acronym GPU continued to be used popularly even after 1923. OGPU remained a separate institution until 1934 when it was absorbed into the NKVD, The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs. After several reorganizations and name changes, in March 1954 the secret police or state security agency emerged as the KGB, which is an acronym for *Komitet Gosudarstvenno Bezopasnosti*, the Committee for State Security.

Komnezam is the abbreviation for the Ukrainian *Komitet Nezamozhnykh Selian* which means Committee of Poor Farmers. Such committees were first set up in Russia in the summer of 1918 by the local Party organizations from agricultural laborers and poor farmers, were soon extended to Ukraine, and were known by the Russian acronym *Kombedy*. In Russia the *Kombedy* were soon dissolved (in November of 1918, by the decision of the Fourth All-Russian Congress of Soviets, 6–9 November 1918), but in Ukraine, these *Committees of Poor Farmers* renamed *komnezany* lasted until 1933 and became the most effective instruments of the aggressive Communist policy in the Ukrainian countryside, where the *Komnezam* was an important feature of every Ukrainian village. Its purpose was twofold: to introduce the Revolution into the village, and to assist in the enforcement of food deliveries to the state. In

Ukraine, the Communists also used these Committees as instruments in the collectivization of agriculture.

Komsomol is the Russian acronym for Communist Youth or Young Communist League, established in 1918. Young people between fourteen and twenty-six years of age may be members of this organization. The *Komsomol* played a decisive role in carrying out collectivization.

The Russian word *kulak*, Ukrainian *kurkul*, originally meant village usurer. Any farmer who employed hired labor, possessed heavy machinery, hired out such machinery, contracted to work on other farms, or leased land for commercial purposes, etc., was later branded as *kulak* (*kurkul*). This definition found ready recognition in the West, and consequently it is customary here to believe that *kulak* means a rich or well-to-do farmer. Such a translation or interpretation of this epithet can be wrong and misleading because the Communists applied this label indiscriminately to all farmers, even to genuine paupers. During collectivization the label *kulak* was widely used, and it became an epithet of abuse for all those farmers who refused to join the collective farm. The policy of "liquidation of *kulaks* as a social class," introduced by the Communist Party in 1929, resulted in the disapperance of millions of farmers labeled as *kulaks*. Many of them were simply murdered; others were starved to death during the Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine; and still others were deported to the "corrective labor camps" or to the concentration camps. The label *kulak* was attached to anyone, even to nonfarmers who showed the slightest sign of disagreement with or opposition to the Communist agricultural policy during that time. The possession of a one-room house, a cow and a few chickens, or the possession of a house with a tin roof or board floor was enough for a person to be labeled a *kulak*.

MTS is the abbreviation for Machine and Tractor Stations, a state enterprise which, until 1958, supplied all machine works for collective farms and received payments in kind for their services. Since January 1933, when the political sections were established, the MTS became the main force behind the expropriation of agricultural products from farmers.

Soviet is a Russian word, and it means council and/or assembly. It denotes the organ of government, central and local. There is a Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., and Supreme Soviets in each constituent republic. There are also regional and local soviets.

Ukrainian National Republic. On 27 March 1917, during the Russian Revolution, the Ukrainians established the Ukrainian Central Rada (Council) which declared the autonomy of Ukraine on 23 June 1917, and established the Ukrainian National Republic (UNR) on 20 November 1917. On 22 January 1918, the Ukrainian National Republic was declared an independent and sovereign state. Moscow could not tolerate the loss of Ukraine, a country rich in natural resources, and soon Ukraine was invaded by the Soviet Russian armed forced. For almost four years, from March 1917 until the autumn of 1920, the Ukrainian people fought to preserve their freedom and independence. But Ukraine lost the unequal struggle and was conquered. Ukraine was proclaimed the "Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic" and a Bolshevik regime established.

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