

**INVESTIGATION OF THE UKRAINIAN FAMINE  
1932-1933**

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**REPORT TO CONGRESS**

**COMMISSION ON  
THE UKRAINE FAMINE**

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ADOPTED BY THE COMMISSION  
APRIL 19, 1988

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Commission Efforts and Accomplishments**

The purpose of the Commission on the Ukraine Famine, as defined by its enabling legislation, is "to conduct a study of the 1932-1933 Ukrainian Famine in order to expand the world's knowledge of the famine and provide the American public with a better understanding of the Soviet system by revealing the Soviet role" in it. Its duties, as mandated by federal law, are (1) to study the Famine by gathering all available information about the Famine, analyzing its causes and consequences, and studying the reaction of the free world to the Famine; (2) to provide interim reports to Congress; (3) to provide information about the Famine to Congress, the executive branch, educational institutions, libraries, the news media, and the general public; (4) to submit a final report to Congress on or before April 23, 1988; and (5) to terminate 60 days thereafter.

The Commission on the Ukraine Famine has held hearings throughout the nation and heard testimony from 57 eyewitnesses to the Famine of 1932-1933. Thus, the hearings have in themselves collected an impressive body of material documenting the tragedy which befell Ukrainians. Full texts of these hearings have been published as interim reports and are available to the public.<sup>1</sup>

The Commission has also transcribed and is preparing for publication a supplement of over 200, in-depth interviews with eyewitnesses. Unlike the statements made in public hearings, which must be brief because of time constraints, the oral histories were as necessary for the narrators to tell their stories. Some have lasted over two hours. The majority of the oral histories were collected directly by Commission staff; others were collected by Leonid Heretz as part of a pilot project which James Mace directed in 1984 under the sponsorship of the Ukrainian Professionals and Businesspersons Association of New York and New Jersey. In addition, the Ukrainian Famine Research Committee in Canada and a number of private individuals gave the Commission additional tapes which they collected. The full text of these interviews and statements in the original language will run to over 2,000 pages, constituting an invaluable source for future scholarship on the Famine. The transcripts will be published and made available to the public. Ten sample oral histories were translated in full and appear as an appendix to this report.

Important aspects of our mandate are to make the Famine more widely known and to provide information on request to government agencies and private individuals. Dissemination of information about the Famine was facilitated by the forging of links between the Commission and the scholarly community through the participation of members and staff in various conferences, lecture, and publications.

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<sup>1</sup> *First Interim Report of Meetings and Hearings of and before the Commission on the Ukraine Famine Held in 1986* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1987); *Second Interim Report of Meetings and Hearings of and before the Commission on the Ukraine Famine Held in 1987* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1988).

### *Executive Summary*

Thanks to the initiative of Commission member Dr. Myron Kuropas, curriculum development became a major focus of Commission efforts. Commission members and staff attended various teachers' conferences in Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Colorado, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Arizona. Dr. Kuropas, in addition to organizing the first teachers' conference on the Famine in Chicago, also participated in the Detroit conference and conducted conferences in Wisconsin and Colorado. In order to better provide information to educational institutions, the Commission produced a teachers' guide to the Famine. It was written by Dr. Kuropas with staff assistance and published in cooperation with the Ukrainian National Association.<sup>2</sup> This guide was first introduced in 1986 at a teachers' conference in Chicago and has been widely used elsewhere. In addition, the Commission worked with curriculum officials interested in developing their own units on the Famine in California and Pennsylvania. Similar guides were published by the New York State Department of Education and by the Connecticut-Western Massachusetts Branch of the National Council of Christians and Jews.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the softbound New York guide, the Kuropas curriculum package used a folder format to facilitate the addition or deletion of materials. The guide prepared in Connecticut under the auspices of the National Council of Christians and Jews also adopted this flexible format.

### **Findings**

Based on testimony heard and staff research, the Commission on the Ukraine Famine makes the following findings:

- 1) **There is no doubt that large numbers of inhabitants of the Ukrainian SSR and the North Caucasus Territory starved to death in a man-made famine in 1932-1933, caused by the seizure of the 1932 crop by Soviet authorities.**
- 2) **The victims of the Ukrainian Famine numbered in the millions.**
- 3) **Official Soviet allegations of "kulak sabotage," upon which all "difficulties" were blamed during the Famine, are false.**
- 4) **The Famine was not, as is often alleged, related to drought.**
- 5) **In 1931-1932, the official Soviet response to a drought-induced grain shortage outside Ukraine was to send aid to the areas affected and to make a series of concessions to the peasantry.**

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<sup>2</sup> Myron Kuropas, *The Forced Famine in Ukraine, 1932-1933: Curriculum and Resource Guide for Educators* (Washington and Jersey City, Commission on the Ukraine Famine and Ukrainian National Association, 1986).

<sup>3</sup> Walter Litynsky and JoAnn Larson, compilers, *Case Studies: Persecution/Genocide. The Human Rights Series: Volume III* (Albany, Bureau of Curriculum Development of the State Education

*Executive Summary*

- 6) In mid-1932, following complaints by officials in the Ukrainian SSR that excessive grain procurements had led to localized outbreaks of famine, Moscow reversed course and took an increasingly hard line toward the peasantry.**
- 7) The inability of Soviet authorities in Ukraine to meet the grain procurements quota forced them to introduce increasingly severe measures to extract the maximum quantity of grain from the peasants.**
- 8) In the Fall of 1932 Stalin used the resulting "procurements crisis" in Ukraine as an excuse to tighten his control in Ukraine and to intensify grain seizures further.**
- 9) The Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933 was caused by the maximum extraction of agricultural produce from the rural population.**
- 10) Officials in charge of grain seizures also lived in fear of punishment.**
- 11) Stalin knew that people were starving to death in Ukraine by late 1932.**
- 12) In January 1933, Stalin used the "laxity" of the Ukrainian authorities in seizing grain to strengthen further his control over the Communist Party of Ukraine and mandated actions which worsened the situation and maximized the loss of life.**
- 13) Postyshev had a dual mandate from Moscow: To intensify the grain seizures (and therefore the Famine) in Ukraine and to eliminate such modest national self-assertion as Ukrainians had hitherto been allowed by the USSR.**
- 14) While famine also took place during the 1932-1933 agricultural year in the Volga Basin and the North Caucasus Territory as a whole, the invasiveness of Stalin's interventions of both the Fall of 1932 and January 1933 in Ukraine are paralleled only in the ethnically Ukrainian Kuban region of the North Caucasus.**
- 15) Attempts were made to prevent the starving from traveling to areas where food was more available.**
- 16) Joseph Stalin and those around him committed genocide against Ukrainians in 1932-1933.**

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Department at the State University of New York, 1986). Eve Soumerai, *The Ukrainian Terror-Famine: a Case Study in Stalinist Communism* (Hartford, Connecticut-Western Massachusetts Center for Human Relations of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1987).

- 17) The American government had ample and timely information about the Famine but failed to take any steps which might have ameliorated the situation. Instead, the Administration extended diplomatic recognition to the Soviet government in November 1933, immediately after the Famine.
- 18) During the Famine certain members of the American press corps cooperated with the Soviet government to deny the existence of the Ukrainian Famine.
- 19) Recently, scholarship in both the West and, to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union has made substantial progress in dealing with the Famine. Although official Soviet historians and spokesmen have never given a fully accurate or adequate account, significant progress has been made in recent months.

The Commission's reasoning is as follows:

1) *There is no doubt that large numbers of inhabitants of the Ukrainian SSR and the North Caucasus Territory starved to death in a man-made famine in 1932-1933, caused by the seizure of the 1932 crop by Soviet authorities.*

Hundreds of eyewitness accounts were published before the Commission ever came into existence, which were confirmed by both testimony heard at the Commission's hearings and hundreds of oral histories. They are in complete agreement on the fact that the Famine was caused by the extraction of produce from the farm population by the authorities.<sup>4</sup> Dispatches from the Royal Italian Consulate in Kharkiv, then capital of the Ukrainian SSR, provide an exceptionally detailed description of daily life there during the period in question.<sup>5</sup> Additional evidence supporting the Famine's historicity is found in Soviet Ukrainian *samvydav* (documents published without official sanction, *samizdat* in Russian) as well as in officially published historical fiction and, more recently, the press.<sup>6</sup> On Christmas Day, 1987, Volodymyr Shcherbytsky, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine, acknowledged that the "severe food supply difficulties" of 1932-1933 had included "famine in some localities."<sup>7</sup> Yet, although Soviet spokesmen have recently frankly admitted the existence of the Famine, attempts to distort its scope and cause continue.<sup>8</sup>

2) *The victims of the Ukrainian Famine numbered in the millions.*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> These are analyzed in chapter eight of this report.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix two below.

<sup>6</sup> See chapters three and four below.

<sup>7</sup> *Pravda Ukrainy* (Communist Party of Ukraine daily newspaper), December 26, 1987.

<sup>8</sup> See chapter two below.

<sup>9</sup> See chapters one and two below.

The Commission avoided detailed demographic research because of both the scantiness of the material revealed in the 1939 Soviet census and the suspicious circumstances surrounding such data. These two considerations would tend to preclude the attainment of results likely to go significantly beyond the current level of knowledge. Through the years various scholars have attempted to provide mortality figures, but the 1939 Soviet census—the basis for all such calculations—is untrustworthy. In 1937 the Soviet Union conducted a census which “after correction” counted just under 164 million people living in the Soviet Union. This was so far below the number anticipated that it could be explained only by millions of premature deaths. Consequently, the officials in charge of the census were arrested—many were shot—and the results of their work were suppressed.<sup>10</sup> Although some scholars believe that the census conducted at the beginning of 1939 was unaffected by political concerns, this particular conclusion is highly problematic, for if the top Soviet census officials were shot for not finding enough people in 1937, it is sensible to assume that their successors, who were not shot, did find enough people. Given the Stalinist propensity for inflating statistics in other realms, it is reasonable to assume that the officials in charge of the 1939 census followed suit.

Moreover, the natural rate of population growth in the Ukrainian SSR declined from 2.25% in 1927 to 1.45% in 1931 (the last year for which figures are available), the 1939 Soviet census showed 3.1 million (9.9%) fewer Ukrainian inhabitants of the Soviet Union than did the previous census of 1926.<sup>11</sup> This leaves little doubt that millions perished. Various scholars have given estimates ranging from three million to over 8,000,000 Ukrainians who perished in the Famine.

3) Official Soviet allegations of “kulak sabotage,” upon which all “difficulties” were blamed during the Famine, are false.<sup>12</sup>

If the term “kulak” is understood in its official Soviet meaning of a rural social stratum recognizably better off than other villagers, no kulaks existed by 1933. Wave after wave of the “liquidation of the kulaks as a class,” each one reaching poorer and poorer peasants, had destroyed any identifiable upper socio-economic stratum in the village. The state implicitly recognized as much by virtually halting dekulakization by 1932.<sup>13</sup> The official proclamation that the kulaks had been defeated but not yet eliminated thus can only be interpreted as an act of political

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<sup>10</sup> See Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 299-300. The issue was also recently discussed in the Soviet press by Mark Tol'ts, “Skol'ko zhe nas togda bylo?” (How Many of Us Were There?), *Ogon'ek* (a leading Soviet weekly), 1987, No. 51 (December 19-26), pp. 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> V. I. Naulko, *Etnichnyi sklad naselennia Ukraini'kot RSR: statystyko-kartohrafichne doslidzhennia* (Ethnic Composition of the Ukrainian SSR: a Statistical-Cartographic Inquiry) (Kiev, Naukova dumka, 1965), p. 84. V. I. Kozlov, *Natsional'nosti SSSR: etnodemograficheskii obzor* (Nationalities of the USSR: an Ethno-Demographic Survey) (Moscow, Finansy i Statistika, 1982), p. 285.

<sup>12</sup> See chapters two and three below.

<sup>13</sup> N. A. Ivitskii, *Klassovaia bor'ba v derevne i likvidatsiia kulachestva kak klassa (1929-1932 gg.)* (Class Struggle in the Countryside and the Liquidation of the Kulaks as a Class, 1929-1933) (Moscow, Nauka, 1972), p. 297. N. I. Nemaikov, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia—organizator massovogo kolkhoznoho dvizheniia* (The Communist Party, Organizer of the Mass Collective Farm Movement) (Moscow, Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1966), pp. 239-241.

cynicism, designed to justify repression against the peasantry as a whole.<sup>14</sup> This is even more evident in Stalin's infamous thesis of the intensification of the class struggle as the building of socialism progressed.<sup>15</sup>

Stalin also falsely alleged widespread sabotage of the state's procurements campaign, i.e., that large amounts of grain were being diverted to private channels or hoarded by peasant speculators. Were grain being diverted to the private market in any substantial quantities, it would have been more readily available for private purchase than in other years. Yet, the reverse was true. Had the peasants hoarded much grain, they would surely have eaten some of it, thereby preventing the mass starvation which, in fact, occurred. Subsequent Soviet historiography maintains the myth of "peasant sabotage" merely by repeating the charges made at the time in order to justify continued efforts to seize grain. Soviet authorities under Stalin deliberately inflated harvest figures as proof that non-existent grain was being hoarded. They suppressed accurate figures and replaced them with spurious calculations based on the "biological yield," i.e., replacing the actual amount of a given crop harvested with an arbitrary estimate of what was ostensibly in the field.<sup>16</sup>

4) *The Famine was not, as is often alleged, related to drought.*<sup>17</sup>

Shcherbytsky clings to the customary explanation that a drought in 1932 strongly contributed to the Famine, but Soviet historical meteorologists have never found such a drought. There were droughts in 1931 and in 1934 but not in 1932.<sup>18</sup> In February 1932 Molotov officially acknowledged that the 1931 drought in the Volga Basin, Western Siberia, and Kazakhstan had damaged the grain crop.<sup>19</sup> No such acknowledgement was made in connection with any drought that may have affected Ukraine in 1932. The closest allusion to a drought was Stalin's statement in January 1933:

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<sup>14</sup> The January 1933 Communist Party Joint Plenum and the Soviet government both officially adopted this formulation. I. E. Zelenin, "Kolkhoznoe stroitel'stvo v SSSR v 1931-1932 gg. (k itogam sploshnoi kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva)" (Collective Farm Construction in the USSR in 1931-1932: Concerning the Results of the Crash Collectivization of Agriculture), *Istoriia SSSR* (History of the USSR), 1960, No. 6, p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> This latter idea, which became an *idée fixe* of Stalinism, can be traced back to the initial wave of forced collectivization. See, for example, Stephen F. Cohen, "Bolshevism and Stalinism," *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York, Norton, 1977), p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> In December 1932 the actual measuring grain crops was proscribed, and a special government commission was set up to determine the "biological yield," which was the unmeasurable crop standing in the field. I. E. Zelenin, "Kolkhozy i sel'skoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1933-1935 gg." (Collective Farms and Agriculture in the USSR in 1933-1935), *Istoriia SSSR*, 1965, No. 5, p. 13. This meant institutionalizing the systematic overestimating of grain crops and was in 1958 denounced by Khrushchev as being fundamentally dishonest. Adam Ulam, *Stalin: the Man and His Era* (New York, Viking, 1974), p. 356.

<sup>17</sup> See chapter three below.

<sup>18</sup> A. I. Rudenko, ed., *Zasukhi v SSSR: ikh proiskhozhdenie, povtoriaemost' i vliianie na urozhai* (Droughts in the USSR: Their Causes, Recurrence, and Influence on the Harvest) (Leningrad, Gidrometeorologicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1958), p. 168.

<sup>19</sup> *Pravda* (All-Union Communist Party daily newspaper), February 6, 1932.



### Executive Summary

Of course, in 1932 we also had some harvest losses because of bad weather in the Kuban and the Terek regions and also in some districts in Ukraine. But there can be no doubt that these losses do not amount to even half of the losses which occurred in 1931 because of the drought in the Northeastern districts of the USSR.<sup>20</sup>

The losses allegedly related to inclement weather did not lead to a relaxation of grain seizures in the areas Stalin mentioned.

5) In 1931-1932, the official Soviet response to a drought-induced grain shortage outside Ukraine was to send aid to the areas affected and to make a series of concessions to the peasantry.<sup>21</sup>

After Molotov's February 1932 acknowledgement of drought related difficulties in the Transvolga areas, at least some aid was mobilized. In the second half of March *Pravda* announced that after the complete fulfillment of the procurements quota for the 1931-1932 crop year in the North Caucasus Territory, "shock work methods" had been employed to obtain an additional 40,000 tons of seed grain, which had been shipped to the regions affected by the drought.<sup>22</sup> In Kazakhstan, where mass starvation had begun as early as 1930 in connection with the forced "sedentarization" of nomadic herdsman, 2,000,000 *poods* of grain (72 million pounds) were also released from government stores in 1932 to nomads and semi-nomads as seed and food aid.<sup>23</sup>

The broader official response to the difficulties of the 1931-1932 crop year was a series of concessions known collectively as the "May Reforms." These included a decrease in the grain quotas to roughly what had actually been procured from the 1931 crop, the legalization of private grain trade after procurement quotas had been met (i.e., not before January 15, 1933) as an incentive to peasants, as well as a campaign "for socialist legality," which promised to end administrative abuses in dealing with peasants.<sup>24</sup>

6) In mid-1932, following complaints by officials in the Ukrainian SSR that excessive grain procurements had led to localized outbreaks of famine, Moscow reversed course and took an increasingly hard line toward the peasantry.<sup>25</sup>

At the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference in July 1932 virtually every one of Ukraine's top Communist officials cited "food supply difficulties" (still the major

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<sup>20</sup> I. V. Stalin, "O rabote v derevne" (On Work in the Countryside), *Sochineniia* (Works) (Moscow, Gosizdat, 1946-1952), vol. XIII, pp. 216-217.

<sup>21</sup> See chapter three below.

<sup>22</sup> *Pravda*, March 20, 1932.

<sup>23</sup> A. B. Tursunbaev, "Triumph of the Collective Farm Structure in Kazakhstan", *Ocherki istorii kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva v Soluznykh respublikakh* (Sketches of the History of the Collectivization of Agriculture in the Union Republics), ed. V. P. Danilov, (Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1963), p. 295.

<sup>24</sup> *Vazhneishie resheniia po sel'skomu khoziaistvu* (The Most Important Decisions on Agriculture) (Moscow, Sel'khozgiz, 1935), pp. 533-536. Simultaneously with the May decrees, *Pravda* blamed difficulties with the Spring sowing in Ukraine in part on the local authorities there, who had allegedly permitted "left-wing distortions" and excessive administrative force in the forcible procurement of grain. *Pravda*, May 18, 1932, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> See chapter three below.

euphemism for famine in the USSR) in various parts of the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>26</sup> However, Molotov, who, along with Kaganovich, represented Stalin at the conference, noted the necessity of sending aid to the Middle and Lower Volga, the Southern Urals, Western Siberia, and Kazakhstan as the reason why Moscow would permit no relaxation of its demands for grain from Ukraine. Meanwhile, Kaganovich made it clear that, "Above all, all forces must be devoted to bringing in the harvest successfully and to the total fulfillment of the grain procurements plan."<sup>27</sup> The resolution passed by the Conference adopted the grain procurements quota Moscow insisted on—356 million metric tons—and simultaneously called for an end to so-called leftist distortions.<sup>28</sup> Only the former would long remain a priority.

The late Summer and Fall witnessed a series of repressive measures. The most serious and best known was the law of August 7, 1932, "On Safeguarding Socialist Property," which authorized the use of the death penalty or ten-year imprisonment in cases where even an ear of wheat or a sugar beet root had been "stolen" from the crop grown by the peasants.<sup>29</sup> Though the law was in force for less than half of the year, fully 20% of all persons convicted in Soviet law courts in 1932 were sentenced under its provisions, and it was hailed as the basis of "socialist legality at the present moment."<sup>30</sup>

*7) The inability of Soviet authorities in Ukraine to meet the grain procurements quota forced them to introduce increasingly severe measures to extract the maximum quantity of grain from the peasants.*<sup>31</sup>

From the beginning of the 1932 grain procurements campaign, the Ukrainian SSR rapidly fell behind targets.<sup>32</sup> Local organizations were ordered to "take appropriate action" to ensure the immediate repayment of grain loaned to the collective farms for the previous Spring sowing. Simultaneously, the Party was told, "Every Party member, every member of the Communist Youth League, every collective farmer and every worker must be conscious of Ukraine's decisive role in the overall grain procurements plan of the USSR." "Right opportunism" was elevated to "the main danger at the present moment." The main thing was to "guarantee victory in the struggle for bread."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Visti VUTsVK* (Soviet Ukrainian government newspaper), July 11-17, 1932.

<sup>27</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, July 14, 1932.

<sup>28</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, July 11, 1932.

<sup>29</sup> Text in *Vazhneishie resheniia po sel'skomu khoziaistvu*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Conquest, ed., *Agricultural Workers in the USSR* (London, Bodley Head, 1968), pp. 24-25.

<sup>31</sup> See chapter three below.

<sup>32</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, August 3, 1932.

<sup>33</sup> "Za bil'shovyt's'ku organizatsiiu ta udarni tempy khlibozahotivel'" (For Bolshevik Organization and Shock Work Tempo of the Grain Procurements), *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy* (Communist Party of Ukraine journal), 1932, No. 15, pp. 9-11. Quotation from p. 11.

8) In the Fall of 1932, Stalin used the resulting "procurements crisis" in Ukraine as an excuse to tighten his control in Ukraine and to intensify grain seizures further.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout the preceding decade, the Ukrainian SSR had enjoyed greater relative autonomy than any other Soviet republic. Ukrainian communists openly called for Ukraine to further distance itself from Moscow in the realms of politics, culture, and economics.<sup>35</sup> In many ways this was merely a reflection of Ukraine's size and importance to the Soviet Union. Of 69 million non-Russians in the Soviet Union in 1926, 31 million were Ukrainians, and Ukrainians outnumbered the next largest non-Russian nation by over 6.5 to one.<sup>36</sup> In 1931, the Ukrainian SSR had 31.4 million inhabitants, while all the other non-Russian republics together had only 18.7 million inhabitants.<sup>37</sup> In both industry and agriculture, Ukraine was also the most economically productive part of the Soviet Union. Obviously, keeping such a large and powerful republic in line was no easy task for the Kremlin.

Ukrainian self-assertion was largely a function of Soviet nationality policy. Nationality policy (what to do about the USSR's non-Russian nations) reflected policy toward the countryside, and the "national question" was seen, as Stalin himself put it, as "essentially a problem of the peasantry."<sup>38</sup> Thus, crushing the Ukrainian peasantry made it possible for Stalin to curtail Ukrainian national self-assertion.

On October 12, 1932, the CP(b)U apparatus was "strengthened" by the transfer of Mendel' Khataevich from the Middle Volga *obkom* (regional party committee), where he had won a reputation for his brutality in combatting "*kulak* sabotage," to the post of second secretary of the Ukrainian Central Committee. Simultaneously, the first deputy head of the All-Union OGPU, Ivan Akulov, was made head of the Donbas *obkom*. The Ukrainian Central Committee ordered the immediate mobilization of the *aktyv* (the "active" element upon which the party relied to carry out its policies) "to liquidate the shameful breakdown in grain procurements," "to defeat utterly right opportunist (that is, pro-peasant) attitudes," and to fulfill the plan.<sup>39</sup>

In two identical speeches of November 2 and 3, Khataevich emphasized the problem, "At the present moment the task that is most important for the Ukrainian Party organization in all its work is the fulfillment of the grain

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<sup>34</sup> See chapter three below.

<sup>35</sup> James E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1933* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard, 1983).

<sup>36</sup> Kozlov, *Natsional'nosti SSSR*, p. 285.

<sup>37</sup> *Robotnicheskaiia gazeta* (a Soviet newspaper), October 1, 1931, as quoted in a dispatch of December 1, 1931, from the US Embassy in Warsaw to the Secretary of State, 860C.917/11; Records of the Department of State; National Archives; Washington, D.C.

<sup>38</sup> I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia* (Works) (Moscow, Gosizdat, 1946-52), VII, p. 72. This was true as early as 1919. See, Frantisek Silnický, *Natsional'naiia politika KPSS v period s 1917 po 1922 god* (CPSU Nationality Policy from 1917 through 1922) (Munich, Suchasnist', 1978), pp. 196-199.

<sup>39</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, October 15, 1932.

procurements plan.<sup>40</sup> Thereafter, the Soviet Ukrainian government increased pressure on the peasantry.

On November 20, the Ukrainian Soviet government ordered the verification of all bread resources on the collective farms and the immediate seizure of "stolen" bread. Collective farm board members were made responsible for the misappropriation of foodstuffs subject to the aforementioned law of August 7, 1932 on the inviolability of socialist property.<sup>41</sup>

On December 6, an initial six villages were placed on the "black board" (*chorna doshka*)<sup>42</sup> and subjected to an economic blockade.<sup>43</sup> On December 13, this measure was extended to 82 districts in the Ukrainian SSR, and the Ukrainian Central Committee ordered the Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv regional authorities to expropriate immediately the property of 1500 individual peasants who had not met their quotas.<sup>44</sup>

On December 10, the Ukrainian SSR State Secretariat declared that

The basic reason for the torpid course of the grain procurements lay in the fact that regional, district, and village organs of power have not mobilized social organizations, not organized Soviet society, and thus not assured that a decisive blow be struck against the sabotage of the grain procurements by the *kulaks* and their agents, the remnants of the Petliurists and Makhnovists.

The decree ordered district executive committees and village soviets:

- 1) To verify immediately with documentary data every collective farm's level of fulfillment of the grain procurements plan; to verify the existence of bread resources in collective farms which lag behind in the grain procurements, turning particular attention to the existence of hidden grain, especially in straw, chaff, sediments, and so forth; to organize immediately the return of illegally distributed bread and include it in the grain procurements; to organize the confiscation of bread stolen in the collective farms, above all from idlers and loafers who have bread without working.
- 2) To force the tight-fisted to surrender immediately their granaries of bread and apply them to their quotas; to demand from individual peasants the closest daily fulfillment of the grain procurements plan; to apply immediately and resolutely the measures outlined in the UkSSR decree of November 20, 1932, to those individual peasants who maliciously undermine the grain procurements.

The decree also called for speeding up the threshing under the strict supervision of the state, purging collective farms and their officials of so-called "*kulak*

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<sup>40</sup> M. Khataievych, "Zavdannia bil'shovykiv Ukraïny v borot'bi za khlib, za orhanizatsiino-hospodars'ke zmitsnennia kolhospiv i za pidnesennia sil's'koho gospodarstva" (The Task of Ukraine's Bolsheviks in the Struggle for Bread, for the Organizational and Economic Consolidation of the Collective Farms, and for Raising Agriculture), *Bil'shovyk Ukraïny*, 1932, No. 21-22, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, November 21, 1932.

<sup>42</sup> The "black board" and "red board" were initially placed in factories to list respectively, in public, the names of shirkers and exemplary workers.

<sup>43</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, December 8, 1932.

<sup>44</sup> I. I. Slyn'ko, *Sotsialistychna perebudova i tekhnichna rekonstruktsiia sil's'koho gospodarstva Ukraïny (1927-1932 rr.)* (The Socialist Transformation and Technical Reconstruction of Ukraine's Agriculture, 1927-1932) (Kiev, AN URSR, 1961), p. 298.

counterrevolutionary elements," and sending more people to the villages and collective farms to help procure grain.<sup>45</sup>

9) *The Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933 was caused by the extraction of agricultural produce from the rural population.*

The pursuit of the above-detailed policies at a time of agricultural scarcity could only lead to famine. That such a famine would not otherwise have occurred is demonstrated by official Soviet crop statistics for the period, which show that Soviet grain production in 1932 was no worse than in other years when no famine occurred.

10) *Officials in charge of grain seizures also lived in fear of punishment.*

On December 14, the newspaper *Visti VUTsVK* published a notice from the republic Justice Commissariat and General Prosecutor's office about trials of two cases of local officials who had allegedly gone over to the class enemies.<sup>46</sup> On December 21, the CP(b)U Central Committee removed ten leading district officials from their posts "for total inaction" and "failure to carry out measures to break the *kulak* sabotage of the grain procurements," while a joint Party-State decree ordered the expulsion from the Party and arrest of five state farm directors "for criminally frustrating the task of the Party and State in the grain deliveries."<sup>47</sup> A week later the entire leadership of Kobeliats'kyi District, Kharkiv Region, was given sentences of two to ten years imprisonment for allegedly organizing "the *kulak* sabotage of the grain procurements."<sup>48</sup> Similar cases were also reported.

11) *Stalin knew that people were starving to death in Ukraine by late 1932.*<sup>49</sup>

Any doubt that Stalin personally knew about the situation in Ukraine was dispelled in the 1960s when Roman Terekhov, a former *obkom* (regional party organization) secretary in Ukraine, announced in *Pravda* that he had told Stalin of the Famine in late 1932, appealed for aid, and was refused:

When in 1932, in connection with the poor harvest in Kharkiv region, it was necessary to tell Stalin about the grave situation in the villages and ask for bread to be sent to the districts, he listened and then sharply interrupted, "We are told that you, Comrade Terekhov, are a fine orator. It also seems that you're a fine storyteller. You spin this yarn about famine thinking that you'll intimidate us, but it won't work! Maybe it would be better if you stopped being a secretary of an *obkom* and of the CPU and went to work in the Union of Writers where you would write fairy tales for idiots to read..."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, December 11, 1932. Petliurists were followers of Symon Petliura, who as leader of the Ukrainian People's Republic in 1919-1921 led Ukrainian socialists in their war against the Bolsheviks. In pre-war Soviet usage, Petliurist was really a generic term for a Ukrainian nationalist. Makhnovists were followers of the the Ukrainian anarchist leader Nestor Makhno, who in 1919-1920 dominated large areas of eastern Ukraine. In this period, Makhnovist thus meant a peasant anarchist.

<sup>46</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, December 14, 1932.

<sup>47</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, December 23, 1932.

<sup>48</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, December 29, 1932.

<sup>49</sup> See chapters two and three below.

<sup>50</sup> *Pravda*, May 26, 1964.

Terekhov's co-authored account was couched in all the officially required euphemisms such as "harvest failure" and "grave situation." Had Stalin in fact disbelieved Terekhov, he certainly had ample means of independent verification at his disposal, such as the secret police. Thus, Stalin's professed disbelief of what Terekhov told him rings hollow. Stalin's failure to listen to Terekhov's appeal for relief, made by a man who was personally involved in the fatal procurements policy, indicates the degree to which Stalin was determined not to acknowledge or act to ameliorate what his policies had wrought.

12) In January 1933, Stalin used the "laxity" of the Ukrainian authorities in seizing grain to strengthen further his control over the Communist Party of Ukraine and mandated actions which worsened the situation and maximized the loss of life.<sup>51</sup>

At the beginning of 1933, Ukraine had fulfilled only 74.5% of its grain quota. None of Ukraine's regions had met their grain procurements quotas.<sup>52</sup> The Central Committee in Moscow censured the Communist Party of Ukraine for its failure to meet the targets set for state grain procurements and "strengthened" the Ukrainian apparatus by appointing Pavel Postyshev its Second Secretary and *de facto* ruler. Several other top officials were simultaneously replaced, and Stalin gained virtually direct control through his hand-picked representatives. A special Central Committee "instruction" of January 24, 1933, gave Stalin control of two of the three CP(b)U Central Committee secretaries and four of Ukraine's seven *obkoms*.<sup>53</sup>

Postyshev practically remolded the Ukrainian party and state apparatuses in his image. By October 15, 1933, in those regions where the ongoing 1933 purge had been completed, 27,500 of the CP(b)U's 120,000 members and candidates so far "verified" had been purged as "hostile class, vacillating, dissolute elements." At the same time, 237 district (*raion*) Party committee secretaries, 249 district executive committee chairmen, and 158 district control commission chairmen were replaced. In addition 3,000 "leading workers" had been sent to man the new Political Sections of Ukraine's Machine Tractor Stations, and 10,000 people had been sent to the collective farms, 3,000 of them for permanent work as farm chairmen or heads of primary party organizations.<sup>54</sup> This meant that nearly half of Ukraine's district Party secretaries, over half its district government heads, and a third of district control commission heads were replaced. About six political section workers were sent to each district. Another 10,000 "experienced Bolsheviks" were sent to the collective farms. Hryhory Kostiuk rightly described the total picture as "a wholesale occupation of key posts in the country by the staff of Stalin's satrap."<sup>55</sup>

Postyshev ruled out the possibility of seed grain being sent and ordered the immediate seizure of grain remaining in the countryside ostensibly for the

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<sup>51</sup> See chapter three below.

<sup>52</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, January 4, 1933.

<sup>53</sup> "Postanova TsK VKP(b) z 24 sichnia 1933 r. ta zavdannia bil'shovykiv Ukrainy" (The January 24, 1933 Decision of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party and the Task of Ukraine's Bolsheviks), *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, 1933, No. 3, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> *Pravda*, November 24, 1933.

<sup>55</sup> Hryhory Kostiuk, *Stalinist Rule in the Ukraine: a Study in the Decade of Mass Terror (1929-1939)* (London, Atlantic Books, 1960), p. 28.

upcoming sowing campaign.<sup>56</sup> At the same time he called for “substantial strengthening” of “repressive measures against *kulaks*, *subkulaks*, Petliurists, wreckers, and other anti-Soviet elements.”<sup>57</sup> These enemies were to be sought not only among the peasants, but also within the Party, and loyal Bolsheviks were obliged to be vigilant in rooting out “wreckers” and “saboteurs” who had wormed their way into Party posts.<sup>58</sup>

CP(b)U First Secretary Stanislav Kossior joined Postyshev in blaming all difficulties on “enemies”—now defined as anyone who dared to state the obvious fact that there was nothing left to take.<sup>59</sup> Even districts that had once been among Ukraine’s most disciplined had failed to notice that many collective farms had fallen “under the influence of *kulak*, Petliurist, Makhnovist, and other elements,” and that “as a result of our complacency and lack of Bolshevik vigilance, even in the best districts *kulaks* and wreckers have wormed their way into the leadership of many collective farms and organize there the sabotage of the grain procurements.”<sup>60</sup> Kossior also stressed the unacceptability of leaving grain for food or seed in the face of unfulfilled quotas, “A very large amount of grain was lost to so-called communal food consumption. In this connection, there was no serious struggle whatsoever against this evil until September.” Those who had diverted grain from procurement to seed reserves were also “opportunists” and “agents of the class enemies.” The policy was clear: “The state must be given grain first, and only later are reserves to be created...”<sup>61</sup> In other words, the greatest sin had consisted in leaving the peasants something to eat or to plant.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian Central Committee journal published a lead editorial, which called the breakdown of the grain procurements “shameful,” blamed it on the failure to “force” the peasants from the first days of the harvest to fulfill “the very first of their obligations—the obligation to the state in the matter of grain deliveries.” The editorial also specifically denounced the practice of leaving a seed reserve before the procurements target had been met.<sup>62</sup>

It soon became apparent that everything that could be taken had been. On February 25, 1933, this led to a seed loan from Union stockpiles of 20,300,000

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<sup>56</sup> P. P. Postyshev, “Pro zavdannia sivy ta postanovu TsK VKP(b) vid 24 sichnia 1933 r.” (On the Task of the Sowing and the All-Union Central Committee Decree of January 24, 1933), *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, 1933, No. 3, p. 73.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>59</sup> S. Kossior, “Pidsumky khlibozahotivel' i zavdannia KP(b)U v borot'bi za pidnesennia sil's'koho hospodarstva Ukrainy” (Results of the Grain Procurements and the CP(b)U’s Task in the Struggle to Raise Ukraine’s Agriculture), *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, 1933, No. 3, pp. 26-27.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 34.

<sup>62</sup> “Postanova TsK VKP(b) z 24 sichnia 1933 r. ta zavdannia bil'shovykiv Ukrainy” (The January 24, 1933 All-Union Central Committee Decree and the Task of Ukraine’s Bolsheviks), *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, 1933, No. 3, pp. 3-20.

*poods*<sup>63</sup> of grain to Ukraine and another 15,300,000 *poods* to the North Caucasus Territory, specifically to the Kuban. According to the resolution, the reason for the loan was unfavorable weather, which had led to harvest losses in the steppe regions. Part of the grain loaned was consumed as food, given out in the fields as an incentive for working on the Spring sowing.<sup>64</sup> It was this loan which made possible any crop at all in 1933.

Yet, the pressure on the countryside was not eased until after the 1933 harvest. As late as June 1, the Dnipropetrovsk regional committee announced a reduction of the customary 15% advance distributed to the collective farmers immediately after threshing, to 10%.<sup>65</sup>

The Famine ended as a result of the exceptionally good harvest of 1933 and because this time the state allowed the distribution of grain to the collective farmers. An order was given on September 27 to distribute 10-15% of the amount of grain threshed regardless of whether the given collective farm had met its grain deliveries quota.<sup>66</sup>

13) *Postyshev had a dual mandate from Moscow: To intensify the grain seizures (and therefore the Famine) in Ukraine and to eliminate such modest national self-assertion as Ukrainians had hitherto been allowed by the USSR.*<sup>67</sup>

On December 14, 1932, the All-Union Central Committee and *Sovnarkom* adopted an unpublished—indeed, never published—decision. Its existence is known only because in his speech before the November 1933 plenum of the Ukrainian Central Committee, Postyshev revealed that this “historic decision” had ordered the Ukrainian Central Committee and Soviet government:

To turn serious attention to the proper implementation of Ukrainization, to cease carrying it out mechanically, to disperse Petliurists and other bourgeois nationalist elements from the Party and Soviet organizations, to select painstakingly and educate Ukrainian Bolshevik cadres, and to safeguard the Party's systematic leadership and control over the way Ukrainization is carried out.<sup>68</sup>

Postyshev's order was carried out through the elimination of the nationally self-assertive wing of the Communist Party of Ukraine, led by Education Commissar Mykola Skrypnyk, and through the suppression of Ukrainian national self-assertion, labeled “bourgeois-nationalist deviation.” The weeks following Postyshev's arrival saw an extensive purge of Ukrainian cultural life.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> 1 *pood* = 36 lbs.

<sup>64</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, February 26, 1933.

<sup>65</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, June 1, 1933.

<sup>66</sup> *Istoriia kolektyvizatsii sil's'koho hospodarstva Ukraïns'koï RSR: zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv u tr'okh tomakh* (History of the Collectivization of Agriculture of the Ukrainian SSR: a Collection of Documents and Materials in Three Volumes) (Kiev, AN Ukraïns'koï RSR, 1961-1972), III, pp. 81-82, 93-97.

<sup>67</sup> See chapter three below.

<sup>68</sup> *Pravda*, December 6, 1933.

<sup>69</sup> See Kostyuk, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.



### *Executive Summary*

The final showdown between Postyshev and Skrypnyk came at the June plenum of the Ukrainian Central Committee. Postyshev accused Skrypnyk of being responsible for national deviations which had contributed to the procurements breakdown, thereby identifying every manifestation of Ukrainian national cultural self-assertion as one of the "machinations" of the class enemy.<sup>70</sup>

Skrypnyk's erstwhile comrades then competed in compiling vicious denunciations of every manifestation of Ukrainian national distinctiveness permitted during Skrypnyk's tenure at the Ukrainian Commissariat of Education. Even Skrypnyk's suicide in July failed to terminate the contest.<sup>71</sup>

Postyshev blamed "class enemies," especially those within the Party, for the "difficulties." He followed Stalin's example in ignoring the human suffering and massive loss of life caused by the Famine. He blamed the failure of the CP(b)U to seize enough agricultural produce on an impermissible lack of vigilance for the maneuvers of the so-called class enemies, and linked Skrypnyk's "national deviation" to the machinations of these class enemies. The supplanting of the hitherto dominant Skrypnyk wing by a new leadership sent directly from Moscow further underscores that the crucial policy initiatives came from Moscow and were imposed on Ukrainian authorities.

14) *While famine also took place during the 1932-1933 agricultural year in the Volga Basin and the North Caucasus Territory as a whole, the invasiveness of Stalin's interventions of both the Fall of 1932 and January 1933 in Ukraine are paralleled only in the ethnically Ukrainian Kuban region of the North Caucasus.*<sup>72</sup>

In the North Caucasus the 1932 grain procurements campaign fell below target just as it did in Ukraine. Yet, top party officials in these areas seem to have been more willing to go along with Moscow's policies than those in Ukraine. At least, the North Caucasus authorities seem not to have resisted the quotas as actively as did their counterparts in Ukraine in mid-1932. And, since the territorial authorities were more directly answerable to Moscow than their counterparts in the Ukrainian SSR, some repressions started even earlier. Entire districts were blacklisted as early as October, two months before such steps were taken in Ukraine.<sup>73</sup>

Central authorities intervened in the Kuban shortly after their October 1932 intervention in Ukraine. A top level commission from Moscow, consisting of Kaganovich, Supply Commissar Mikoian, Deputy Defense Commissar and the Red Army's Chief *Politruk* Gamarnik, Procurements Committee Vice-Chairman Chernov, *Sovkhoz* Commissar Iurkin, OGPU Vice-Chairman Iagoda, Shkiriakov of the Presidium of the Central Control Commission, and Communist Youth League head Kosarev, arrived in the North Caucasus on November 2 specifically to deal with the procurements "breakdown" in the Kuban. Meeting with the North Caucasus Territorial Committee, they immediately decided to reduce the quotas,

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<sup>70</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, June 22, 1933.

<sup>71</sup> See James E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1933* (Harvard, Cambridge, Mass., 1983), pp. 296-300.

<sup>72</sup> See chapter five below.

<sup>73</sup> Nobuo Shimotomai, "A Note on the Kuban Affair: the Crisis of Kolkhoz Agriculture in the North Caucasus," *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, I (1983), p. 44.

while stepping up efforts to meet it. The grain procurements quota was reduced from 136 million *poods*, the figure set in May,<sup>74</sup> to 97 million. Simultaneously, prominent officials of the territorial party and government were dispatched to the 31 districts most behind in their quotas to take ensure that grain seizures were intensified.<sup>75</sup>

The "concession" of a lower quota was by now clearly bogus. It represented only what party officials thought could be seized with maximum effort. As Yurko Stepovy, a former Soviet journalist, wrote:

before dawn on the day after the arrival of Kaganovich's mission, the newsboys shouted the horrible headlines: 'The Petliurist *kulak* saboteurs of Kuban must be finished off' and 'The Petliurist-Cossack counterrevolutionary work in Kuban must be uprooted'.<sup>76</sup>

On November 4 another decree ordered intensified repression in an effort to meet the quota:

the especially disgraceful failure of the grain procurements plan and Winter sowings in the Kuban places before the party organizations a fighting task — to smash the sabotage of the grain procurements and sowing which is organized by *kulak* counterrevolutionary elements; to destroy the opposition of a segment of the village communists who have become *de facto* leaders of the sabotage; and to liquidate the passivity and complacency toward sabotage that is incompatible with party membership.<sup>77</sup>

Specifically, three large Cossack settlements (*stanitsas*) were blacklisted, and their inhabitants were warned that "further sabotage" would compel district authorities to "raise before the government the question of their exile ... to the northern districts" of the Soviet Union and the resettlement of their homes by colonists from other territories. In 11 districts all delivery of goods to state and cooperative stores was halted; in ten others the goods already in the stores were seized and sent to other districts. Individual farmers who refused to plant were threatened with seizure of all property as well as deportation to the Far North. Immediate arrest was ordered for "criminal underfulfillers" and those failing to obey decrees on proper use of livestock. The decree also called for review of recent cases under the law of August 7 on socialist property and for prosecutions of new cases to be speeded up. Local Communist Party organizations were to be purged of members who had "united with the *kulak* organizers of the counterrevolutionary sabotage" and become "mouthpieces for the class enemy in the party," that is, those who had not been energetically enough in seizing food.<sup>78</sup> Simultaneously, Moscow appointed Shkiriatov to head the commission in charge of carrying out this purge.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Vazhneishie resheniia po sel'skomu khoziaistvu*, p. 534.

<sup>75</sup> *Slomit' sabotazh seva i khlebozagotovok, organizovanyi kulachestvom v raionakh Kubani* (Smash the Sabotage of the Grain Procurements Organized by the *Kulaks* in the Kuban Districts) (Rostov on the Don, Partizdat, 1932), pp. 16-17.

<sup>76</sup> Yurko Stepovy, "The Tragedy of Kuban," *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: a White Book*, ed. S. O. Pidhainy, et al. (Toronto-Detroit, DOBRUS, 1953-1955), vol. II, p. 554.

<sup>77</sup> *Slomit' sabotazh seva i khlebozagotovok*, p. 18.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-20.

On November 12, territorial party chief Boris Sheboldaev gave an extremely tough speech, in which he again raised the issue of exiling whole *stanitsas* from the Kuban.<sup>80</sup> The entire population of the Kuban *stanitsas* of Poltav's'ka, Medvidiv's'ka, and others were exiled to the North.<sup>81</sup> From a Western account we learn that a total of 13 *stanitsas* were exiled.<sup>82</sup> This was clearly a major operation; Poltav's'ka, which was ordered exiled on December 17, had a population of 27,000 and a Ukrainian pedagogical institute, while Umans'ka had 30,000 inhabitants.<sup>83</sup> An eyewitness recalled, "Farm implements and personal belongings which people had prepared to take along with them were taken away when they were loaded into trains. Departures were usually conducted with public shootings and bloodshed."<sup>84</sup>

Meanwhile, "massive repressions were carried out against Party, soviet, and collective farm officials, as well as against rank and file collective farmers" in the Kuban. Fifteen additional *stanitsas* were put on the "blacklist." In them the delivery of goods was stopped; collective farm trade was forbidden; credit and tax payments were immediately called due. About 45% of all party members were purged.<sup>85</sup> Three hundred and fifty-eight of the area's 716 party secretaries on collective farms and *stanitsas*—a majority—were purged, and a number of these organizations was disbanded.<sup>86</sup>

As in Ukraine, higher authorities threatened subordinates with severe punishment. In order to make their point, territorial authorities reopened the Kotov affair under the November 4 decree. Kotov, who had headed a *stanitsa* party committee in the Kuban and had secretly advanced the local Cossack farmers more food than the amount prescribed by law, was expelled from the party and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment in October 1932. When the case was reopened, however, 15 additional members of the party committee were purged, while Kotov was executed as a counterrevolutionary. Nobuo Shimotomai noted, "Such behavior on the part of local officials was so popular and prevalent that only such harsh measures (as executing local officials) could prevent them."<sup>87</sup> Kotov became a symbol of the "enemy with a party card in his pocket," the main target of the 1933 All-Union purge.

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>81</sup> V. P. Danilov, N. A. Ivitskii, "Leninskii kooperativnyi plan i ego osushchestvlenie v SSSR" (The Leninist Cooperative Plan and Its Realization in the USSR), *Ocherki istorii kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva v Soiuzykh respublikakh*, p. 55.

<sup>82</sup> *Black Deeds of the Kremlin*, vol. I, p. 441.

<sup>83</sup> Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, p. 277. The pedagogical institute is mentioned in *Black Deeds*, II, p. 555.

<sup>84</sup> *Black Deeds*, I, p. 441.

<sup>85</sup> V. P. Danilov, N. A. Ivitskii, "Leninskii kooperativnyi plan..." p. 55.

<sup>86</sup> Shimotomai, "A Note on the Kuban Affair," p. 47.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

Stalin's January 1933 intervention in Ukraine was also paralleled in the North Caucasus. As a result of the various repressive measures taken in late 1932, the revised procurements quota for the North Caucasus was actually fulfilled, albeit at tremendous human cost.<sup>88</sup> On January 23, 1933, the day before Stalin appointed Postyshev to take the reins in the Ukrainian capital of Kharkiv, a special Committee on the Conduct of the Sowing in the North Caucasus was appointed, and territorial party secretary Sheboldaev was named chairman. This special committee was given absolute power over all extant territorial authorities and represented a complete takeover of power by a body whose decisions were to be obeyed without question or appeal to higher authorities. It was responsible only to Moscow.<sup>89</sup>

The consequences of the policies carried out by Stalin's immediate subordinates in the Kuban *stanitsas* in 1933 were identical to those pursued in Ukraine as were eyewitness accounts, with two exceptions: The exile of entire Kuban *stanitsas* and the closing down there of all Ukrainian schools and institutions.<sup>90</sup> The latter policy was enunciated in a December 15, 1932 circular telegram from the All-Union Central Committee, which decreed the immediate Russification of all Ukrainian institutions in the USSR outside the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>91</sup>

Although starvation was also reported in the Don Cossack regions and the Crimea, the most direct interventions, of which the Commission is aware, occurred in ethnically Ukrainian areas. That the intervention of November 1932 specifically cited only the largely Ukrainian Kuban and not the Don, indicates a consciously anti-Ukrainian aspect of Stalin's policies during the famine.

15) *Attempts were made to prevent the starving from traveling to areas where food was more available.*<sup>92</sup>

The starving were left to their fate, and all traffic between Ukraine and areas immediately to the North was closely controlled. Famine victims were not allowed to travel to Russia where food was available, though some managed to do so by stealth. Legally purchased food was confiscated at the Russo-Ukrainian border.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>89</sup> *Pravda*, January 24, 1933.

<sup>90</sup> *Black Deeds*, vol. II, pp., 545, 554.; M. Verbyts'kyi (pseudonym), ed., *Naibil'shyi zlochyn Kremli: svidchennia pro stvorenyi soviet's'koiu Moskvoiu shtuchnyi holod v Ukraini 1932-33 r.* (The Kremlin's Greatest Crime: Testimonies on the Man-Made Famine Created by Soviet Moscow in Ukraine in 1932-33) (London, DOBRUS, 1951), p. 78.

<sup>91</sup> Semen Pidhainy, *Ukrains'ka inteligentsiia na Solovkakh* (The Ukrainian Intelligentsia in the Solovky) (n.p., Prometei, 1947), p. 22.

<sup>92</sup> See chapter one below.

<sup>93</sup> The British Embassy in Moscow heard of this policy, which is confirmed by a number of eyewitness accounts. See, for example, Marco Carynyk, "The Dogs that Did not Bark," *The Idler*, January 1985, p. 15; Leonid Plyushch, *History's Carnival: a Dissident's Autobiography* (New York and London, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p. 41; I. M(ajstren)ko, "Do 25-richchia holodu 1933 r." (On the 25th Anniversary of the Famine of 1933), *Vpered: ukrains'kyi robitnychi chasopys* (Munich-based monthly of the left wing of the Ukrainian Revolutionary Democratic Party), 1958, no. 7, pp. 1-2 (the author had been the editor of the Odessa state newspaper and during the famine was a Soviet Ukrainian professor of journalism); M. Verbyts'kyi, ed., *Naibil'shyi zlochyn Kremli*, pp. 89-90.

**16) *Joseph Stalin and those around him committed genocide against Ukrainians in 1932-1933.***

The Genocide Convention defines genocide as one or more specified actions committed with intent "to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group wholly or partially as such." Among actions defined as genocidal, if intended to destroy a protected group wholly or in part, are killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, and inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about total or partial destruction of the group.<sup>94</sup>

One or more of the actions specified in the Genocide Convention was taken against the Ukrainians in order to destroy a substantial part of the Ukrainian people and thus to neutralize them politically in the Soviet Union. Overwhelming evidence indicates that Stalin was warned of impending famine in Ukraine and pressed for measures that could only ensure its occurrence and exacerbate its effects. Such policies not only came into conflict with his response to food supply difficulties elsewhere in the preceding year, but some of them were implemented with greater vigor in ethnically Ukrainian areas than elsewhere and were utilized in order to eliminate any manifestation of Ukrainian national self-assertion.

Among those most clearly implicated in this act of genocide were Joseph Stalin, then General Secretary of the All-Union Communist Party, who exerted virtually complete control over the Communist Party and Soviet state in this period and who thus bore primary responsibility for its actions; Viacheslav Molotov, then head of the USSR government and during the Famine a frequent visitor to Ukraine, where he rigorously enforced Stalin's policies; Lazar Kaganovich, head of the agricultural section of the All-Union Central Committee during the Famine and, in November 1932, head of the special commission sent to the North Caucasus "to smash sabotage of the grain procurements" in the Kuban; and Pavel Postyshev, Stalin's *de facto* ruler of Ukraine from January 1933.

**17) *The American government had ample and timely information about the Famine but failed to take any steps which might have ameliorated the situation. Instead, the Administration extended diplomatic recognition to the Soviet government in November 1933, immediately after the Famine.***<sup>95</sup>

The State Department received information on the Famine as early as the Fall of 1932. Humanitarian appeals from relatives of the starving arrived at the White House within weeks of President Roosevelt's inauguration.<sup>96</sup> By mid-October of 1933, the existence of famine in Ukraine had been categorically confirmed by American diplomats in Riga, Latvia and Athens, Greece.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Text in Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, eds., *The Human Rights Reader* (New York, New American Library, 1979), pp. 201-202.

<sup>95</sup> See chapter six below.

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, Robert P. Skinner to Secretary of State, November 5, 1932; 861.6131/261; Anna Witkopp, Bay City, Michigan, to President Roosevelt, March 13, 1933; 861.48/2432; P. C. Hiebert, Chairman, Mennonite Central Committee, to President Roosevelt, April 7, 1933; 861.48/2433; T1249; Records of the Department of State; National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>97</sup> "Memorandum of a Conversation had by Mr. Cole and Mr. Lehrs with a Member of a Legation in Moscow," October 4, 1933; 961.48/2450; Lincoln MacVeath, American Minister, Athens, to Secretary of State, October 14, 1933; 861.48/2451; T1249; Records of the Department of State; NA.

The Commission has found no evidence that this knowledge played any role in the decision to normalize relations with the Soviet Union.

18) *During the Famine certain members of the American press corps cooperated with the Soviet government to deny the existence of the Ukrainian Famine.*<sup>98</sup>

The Soviet authorities denied that there was a famine when it was taking place, refused all offers of private aid. In May 1933 when at the Famine's height, the London *Daily Express* reported that the Soviet government had purchased 15,000 tons of wheat in order to alleviate the shortage of bread, *Pravda* published an indignant denial.<sup>99</sup> In the late Summer of 1933, French Premier Edouard Herriot was treated to a Potemkin village tour of the Soviet Union which seems to have left him quite convinced that there was no famine.<sup>100</sup>

As for the Western press corps, the central figure in concealing the famine was Walter Duranty, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1932 for his dispatches from Moscow. At the height of the Famine, he attacked an account by British journalist Gareth Jones in an article with the self-explanatory title, "Russians Hungry but not Starving."<sup>101</sup> A few months later Duranty told British diplomats confidentially that he thought it quite possible that as many "as ten million people may have died directly or indirectly because of lack of food in the Soviet Union during the past year."<sup>102</sup>

As early as 1931 an American diplomat in Berlin reported that Duranty told him, "That, 'in agreement with the *New York Times* and the Soviet authorities,' his official dispatches always reflect the official opinion of the Soviet government and not his own."<sup>103</sup> Such an admission must be viewed as a damning indictment of Duranty's professional integrity as a journalist and largely explains his role in spiking the story of the Famine.

19) *Recently, scholarship in both the West and, to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union has made substantial progress in dealing with the Famine. Although official Soviet historians and spokesmen have never given a fully accurate or adequate account, significant progress has been made in recent months.*<sup>104</sup>

Significant Western scholarship has appeared on the Ukrainian Famine. Especially noteworthy in this regard are Robert Conquest's *Harvest of Sorrow* and

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<sup>98</sup> See chapter six below.

<sup>99</sup> *Pravda*, May 27, 1933.

<sup>100</sup> Ewald Ammende, *Human Life in Russia*, pp. 223-257; (Yurko Stepovyi), "Herriot's 'Film Studio'," *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin*, II, pp. 696-698.

<sup>101</sup> *New York Times*, March 31, 1933.

<sup>102</sup> William Strang, British Embassy, Moscow, to Sir John Simon, September 30, 1933; Archive No. 8; FO7182/14/38; Public Records Office; London. I am indebted to the Ukrainian Famine Research Committee of Toronto for this reference.

<sup>103</sup> A. W. Klicfoth, US Embassy, Berlin, "Memorandum, June 4, 1931," p. 2; 861.5017-Living Conditions/268; T1249; Records of the Department of State, NA.

<sup>104</sup> See chapters one and two below.

the collection *Famine in Ukraine, 1932-1933*, edited by Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko.<sup>105</sup>

In the Soviet Union, largely because of the stimulus of scholarship in the West, modest progress has been made in coming to terms with the Famine. In January 1988, an article in *News from Ukraine*, published by the Soviet Ukrainian Society for Relations with Ukrainians Abroad, admitted that the Famine took place and placed much of the blame for it on Stalin. But the extent of the Famine was minimized, the Communist Party was portrayed as doing what it could to ameliorate the situation, and actions by the Communist Party and Soviet state which exacerbated the Famine were ignored.<sup>106</sup> At the same time, Communist spokesmen in Canada have begun a major campaign of disinformation and denial of the Famine's historicity by claiming that those who have studied it are either Ukrainian nationalist war criminals or their spokesmen.<sup>107</sup>

The Commission on the Ukraine Famine has sought to fulfill its legislative mandate by attempting to answer some of the questions arising from one of history's worst crimes against humanity. In so doing, it may well have helped to make such crimes less likely in the future by demonstrating that, though it may take more than half a century, the truth will come out. Yet, it is hoped that the lessons learned about collective victimization, the use of food as a weapon for political ends, and the concealment of criminal policies by those who perpetrate them, might provide insights which can be of use in confronting the challenges of similar events. Sadly, collective victimization, the use of food as a weapon, and disinformation campaigns by oppressive regimes are far from being a thing of the past. During the Commission's existence, the world has seen Marxist regimes carry out not dissimilar policies in Ethiopia and Afghanistan. Sadder still, it would be naïve to assume that these most recent instances are the last.

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<sup>105</sup> Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986); Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko, eds., *Famine in Ukraine, 1932-1933* (Edmonton, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986).

<sup>106</sup> Stanislav Kulchytsky, "Historical Experience: Vital Today," *News from Ukraine* 1988, No. 2, p. 7.

<sup>107</sup> Capitalizing on the fact that some Ukrainians have at times misattributed photographs of the 1921-1923 famine to 1932-1933, a Canadian communist from Winnipeg has argued that such "plagiarized" photos are the basis of a "Ukrainian genocide myth" and that those publicly bear witness to the Famine are former "Ukrainian Nazis" and that non-Ukrainians who have studied it are their front men. He concluded, "The 'Evil Empire' image rests—if only in small measure—on the interpretation of the 1932-1933 Famine as a deliberate, pre-planned genocide of millions of Ukrainians. Cold War confrontation, rather than historical truth and understanding, has motivated the famine-genocide campaign. Elements of fraud, anti-semitism, degenerate Nationalism, fascism and pseudo-scholarship revealed in this critical examination of certain key evidence presented in the campaign, of the political purpose and historical background of the campaign's promoters underlie this conclusion." Douglas Tottle, *Fraud, Famine and Fascism: the Ukrainian Genocide Myth from Hitler to Harvard* (Toronto, Progress Books, 1987), p. 133. Members of the Ukrainian community in Canada are currently attempting to have legal proceedings initiated under the Canadian law which bans "hate literature" in that country.

## Chapter 1

### NON-SOVIET SCHOLARSHIP ON THE UKRAINIAN FAMINE

In order to understand non-Soviet scholarship on the Great Famine of 1932-1933, a few observations about this literature are necessary. Despite a clear link in Soviet ideology under Lenin and Stalin between what was called “the nationality question” and “the peasant question,” Western scholarship has persisted in treating each separately.<sup>1</sup> This, to some extent, is the inevitable tendency of every academic field’s inclination to divide itself into rather loosely connected subdisciplines. Scholars whose research interests lie in the Soviet peasantry and agricultural policy often have little familiarity with Soviet nationality policy and fail to distinguish either between the Russian and non-Russian peasantries or differences in agricultural policies in Great Russia and in non-Russian territories. Similarly, scholars of Soviet nationality policy, either in general or in reference to one group, are often unfamiliar with works on the peasantry and agriculture.

Moreover, the main intellectual reservoirs from which Soviet history flows are Russian history and Soviet politics. Both developed a strong Russocentric bias, often ignoring issues of nationality policy. In the English-speaking world, the academic study of Russian history was founded by émigré Russian scholars like Sir Paul Vinogradoff and Michael Karpovich. Its practitioners tended to internalize the prejudices of prerevolutionary Russian opinion, which generally held that Ukrainians were not to be taken seriously or that they were “separatists” and traitors to the Russian motherland. The major exception among influential Russian historians in the United States before World War II was George Vernadsky. Vernadsky did write briefly on Ukrainian topics around 1940, but these writings lacked the influence of his other work.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A notable exception is the classic 1957 paper by V. P. Timoshenko, cited below. Timoshenko was best known as the author of the first detailed study of collectivized agriculture in the Soviet Union, *Agricultural Russia and the Wheat Problem* (Stanford, Food Research Institute and Hoover War Library, 1932), which was the standard work until Naum Jasny’s monograph appeared in 1949.

<sup>2</sup> The two works are George Vernadsky, *Bohdan: Hetman of Ukraine* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1941) and his preface to Michael Hrushevsky, *A History of Ukraine* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1941). The latter work is a translation of a book published at the turn of the century, written by an agrarian socialist who served as President of the Ukrainian Central Rada in 1917-1918, a member of both the All-Ukrainian and Soviet academies of sciences, and died under mysterious circumstances in the Soviet Union in 1934. Yet, the book was denounced in a report circulated to the FBI, State Department, and the US Army Military Intelligence Division as “an expression of Nazi propaganda” which supposedly praised “pro-German Ukrainian Fifth Columnists and presents Nazi racist myths about the Ukrainian people.” Decimal File 860E.20211/13; M1286; Records of the Department of State; National Archives; Washington, D.C. Circulation among government agencies of such disinformation indicates a climate of opinion in which it was difficult for works on Ukrainian topics to exert much influence.



The study of Soviet politics, on the other hand, was deeply influenced in the immediate postwar period by former Russian Mensheviks like Boris Nikolaevsky and Alexander Dallin, whose tendency to ignore the nationality question flowed from orthodox Marxism. Of today's major scholars of the Stalin period, Moshe Lewin is most directly heir to this Menshevik tradition.

Some historians, most notably Theodore von Laue in the 1980s, argued that the interests of peace and international understanding place a special obligation on specialists in Soviet studies to treat their subject "responsibly," that is, apologetically. Von Laue attempted to place Stalin's terror "into a context in which overweening ambition and vast human sacrifice for political ends have been accepted as legitimate policy." He argued that a full consideration of the factors that produced Stalinism would allow us to dismiss it "as an ominous symptom of an age" and that so doing "may help to change attitudes and even policies."<sup>3</sup> In von Laue's view, any expression of moral repugnance at what Stalin was forced to do because of "circumstances" becomes a sort of Western moral imperialism, an attempt to impose Western moral values upon a society where they were inappropriate. Von Laue, it seems, sought both to explain and excuse Stalin. His latest approach has found little echo in the field.

Far more influential was E. H. Carr, who emphasized the inevitability of the historical process and the need for a sympathetic understanding of those who made and implemented Soviet policy. Influenced by Carr, some Sovietologists, especially in Britain, have focused on the idealism of the implementors of Stalin's policies in the countryside rather than on the effects those policies had on the agricultural population.<sup>4</sup> A classic example of this view may be gleaned from the writings of Carr's close collaborator of many years, Professor R. W. Davies of the University of Birmingham, who remarked that:

The historian sympathetic to industrialization is almost tempted, as he turns these yellowing pages [of Soviet journals—JM], to forget elementary economics and common sense, and identify himself for the moment with these inexperienced urban enthusiasts in those grim January days of 1930, boldly dreaming about rapid progress towards giant mechanized factory farms, cajoling reluctant peasants into *kolkhozy* denouncing recalcitrants and driving them out of the villages into the endless snow.<sup>5</sup>

The reader will find little in Davies's work about those who were in fact driven "out of the villages into the endless snow."

A recent example of this preoccupation with the idealism of the thousands of urban workers recruited to carry out the crash collectivization of agriculture, is Lynne Viola's study of the "Twenty-Five Thousanders" campaign of 1929-1931.

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<sup>3</sup> Theodore H. von Laue, "Stalin in Focus," *Slavic Review*, XLII:3, 1983, p. 373.

<sup>4</sup> James Billington wrote of Carr's multivolume *History of Soviet Russia*, "The work is scrupulously honest and thorough in detail, but the perspective of the whole remains that of a restrained but admiring recording secretary of the Leninist Central Committee." James Billington, "Six Views of the Russian Revolution," *World Politics*, April 1966, p. 463; as cited by Walter Laqueur, *The Fate of the Revolution: Interpretations of Soviet History* (New York, Macmillan, 1967), p. 125.

<sup>5</sup> R. W. Davies, "The Soviet Rural Economy in 1929-1930: the Size of the *Kolkhoz*," *Essays in Honor of E. H. Carr*, ed. C. Abramsky and Beryl J. Williams (Hamden, CT, Archon Books, 1970), p. 268.

However, her portrayal of the latter is tempered by details of their growing disillusionment in the later stages of the campaign.<sup>6</sup> Viola has also pointed out elsewhere that the peasant opposition to collectivization, often led by women and dubbed *bab'i bunty* (women's riots) in Soviet discourse, actually constituted a politically conscious, effective, and organized defense of peasant interests.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to "mainstream" Sovietology, Ukrainian scholarship conducted outside the Soviet Union has gone its own way, making a contribution too often ignored. Ukrainian historiography is more closely related to East European than to Russian roots. It has shared most of the same strengths and weaknesses of, say, exile Polish, Czech, or Slovak scholarship. Non-Soviet Ukrainians who dedicate themselves to the history of their nation tend to be motivated, above all, by a deep love of their people, culture, and national past. Occasionally, national pride has stood in the way of an objective portrayal, but this is hardly a characteristic unique to any single people. Still, the very fact that the bias operating in some Ukrainian historiography is so very different from that of Sovietology makes it all the more valuable in a field where objectivity is the ultimate end.

Serious students of Soviet agriculture have long known that a famine occurred in the early 1930s. In the interwar period, the leadership in European studies of the Soviet Union first fell to *Ostforschung* (Eastern Studies) in Weimar Germany. The leading journal in this field was *Osteuropa* (Eastern Europe), edited for many years by Otto Hoetsch. This journal reported that a famine was taking place even before the newspapers picked up the story when its August 1932 issue carried an article by Otto Auhagen, former German agricultural attaché in Moscow. Auhagen wrote:

Famine in the full sense of the word rages in large sections of Ukraine, the Lower Volga Region, Western Siberia, and Kazakhstan. Reports come from many hunger areas that people in their great extremity are eating the cadavers of horses; because of this, in the Volga German Republic many have been infected with disease.<sup>8</sup>

This was written when the Famine was just beginning and before the 1932 harvest had even been collected. It indicates that those on the leading edge of Soviet studies were informed of the situation from its very beginnings. Auhagen's successor, Otto Schiller, also discussed the developing "crisis in Soviet agriculture" but seems to have stopped short of telling the worst of it.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the Soviets

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<sup>6</sup> Lynne Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization* (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> *Idem.*, "Bab'i bunty and Peasant Women's Protest during Collectivization," *Soviet Studies*, XLV, 1986, p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> Otto Auhagen, "Wirtschaftslage der Sowjetunion im Sommer 1932" (Economic Conditions in the USSR in the Summer of 1932), *Osteuropa* (Eastern Europe), VII, August 1932, p. 645.

<sup>9</sup> Otto Schiller, "Die Krise der sozialistischen Landwirtschaft in der Sowjetunion" (The Crisis of Socialist Agriculture in the Soviet Union), *Berichte über Landwirtschaft* (Review of Agriculture), 1933, No. 7. Not available to us.

protested vociferously to the German authorities demanding his recall, albeit unsuccessfully.<sup>10</sup> His full story was published only a decade later.<sup>11</sup>

Ewald Ammende, Secretary General of the European Congress of Nationalities, was tapped in 1933 by Cardinal Theodor Innitzer of Vienna to head an Interfaith Relief Committee to aid victims of the Famine. In 1935 he published a widely circulated book on the Famine in Vienna in 1935 and an English translation the following year. Ammende's book was not only the best survey of press accounts of the Famine ever to have been compiled, it was also virtually the only one immediately recognizing the link between the Famine and Soviet nationality policy. Ammende pointed out that any treatment of the Famine would be incomplete without understanding that "parallel to the fight for bread, a determined fight against the nationalities, their rights and their cultural individuality, has been carried on for some time." He explained that the regions drained of foodstuffs by the Soviet state were "largely inhabited not by Russians but by other peoples and races," and from this it followed "that, apart from the great human tragedy of the famine, all national movements of the local populations are mercilessly attacked."<sup>12</sup>

After briefly describing the national-cultural concessions made by the Soviets to the various non-Russians in the 1920s, Ammende explained:

The famine with all its attendant phenomena changed this position altogether. The local Communists resisted, as far as possible, the drastic measures for the collection of grain in their starving districts. And so, in due course, the "fight for bread" came to be accompanied by the "fight against local nationalist tendencies" as a real foundation of the machinations of all enemies of the state, *kulaks*, and grain saboteurs. A reckoning with the local Communists, to whom this development was due, though long avoided, had now become inevitable; and at last the Government proceeded to eliminate every stressing of local and national peculiarity as inimical to the State and the regime. Naturally, the fight was fiercest in the Ukraine, which next to Great Russia, is the biggest of the federative republics of the Soviet state.<sup>13</sup>

An interesting account of the Ukrainian Famine from a clinical standpoint appeared in *The British Medical Journal* in July 1936. The author, Professor William Horsley Gantt of Johns Hopkins University, first went to Russia as chief of the American Relief Administration's medical unit in Petrograd in 1922, met the famous Russian psychologist Ivan Pavlov, and remained as Pavlov's student until 1929. In the summer of 1933, Gantt returned to visit his aged mentor, and his wide contacts with Soviet public health officials allowed him to gain a measure of knowledge about conditions which few if any outsiders could rival.

Gantt considered himself a friend of the Soviet Union, and his observations contain accounts of Soviet achievements since the revolution. Indeed, he even praised the reintroduction of internal passports in 1932, crediting them with having

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<sup>10</sup> Ewald Ammende, *Muss Rußland hungern? Menschen- und Völkerschicksale in der Sowjetunion* (Vienna, Braumüller, 1935), p. 2n. See also the slightly abridged English translation: *Idem., Human Life in Russia* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1936; reprint: Cleveland, John Zupal, 1984), p. 30.

<sup>11</sup> Otto Schiller, *Die Landwirtschaftspolitik der Sowjets und ihre Ergebnisse* (Soviet Agricultural Policy and Its Results) (Berlin, Reichsnährstandsverlag, Berlin, 1943), pp. 74-79. This account concentrates upon the North Caucasus which Schiller visited during the Famine.

<sup>12</sup> Ewald Ammende, *Human Life in Russia*, p. 104.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

prevented the spread of epidemics being spread to the cities. Yet, this makes his revelations all the more devastating. The Five Year Plan had led to "a gradual reduction in the standard of living, culminating in the great epidemic and famine of 1932-3." He saw three causes for its occurrence, none of them having anything to do with crop failure:

The total of the harvests of 1930-3 was hardly below the harvest of three average years, although there was one bad year. However, a great famine occurred throughout Russia and Siberia, though chiefly in the Ukraine, owing to (1) the policy of the Government to conserve food for the Red Army under fear of a conflict with Japan and Germany, (2) to export more than it could afford in order to purchase heavy machinery and maintain its credit abroad, (3) its internal policy with the peasants.<sup>14</sup>

Whether or not one describes the situation in Russia in 1932-1933 as famine or general impoverishment is less important than the fact that it was worst in Ukraine and—though Gantt did not say so—the North Caucasus. More important than specific causes (Germany and the USSR were actually on rather good terms in 1932-1933) is that they all stem from government policy. This is also evident from the following:

During this period the cities were kept supplied with food by requisitions from the country, so that the exact opposite prevailed from the conditions of the 1920-21 famine where the city population made excursions into the countryside and returned with sacks of potatoes and corn. The following is indicative of the situation: One peasant asks another, "What is the difference between Bolshevism and Communism?" "Bolshevism," he replies, "is when there is no food in the cities, and Communism is when there is no food in the country."<sup>15</sup>

Gantt also confirmed that all the horrors of starvation, familiar from 1920-1922, had reemerged. He cited Soviet public health officials estimating mortality as high as fifteen million, the highest figure reported in any of the literature. In his view, what had taken place was a civil war between the authorities and the peasants:

The fact that the U.S.S.R. has, especially during the Five Year Plan, considered itself on a war basis—not only with the outside world., but also with the peasant—accounts for the second great famine and the epidemics during the Soviet regime, as well as for the difficulty of collecting any information that could reveal the economic condition of the country to its enemies. Publication of unfavourable facts was prohibited just as it was in the warring nations during the Great War. Foreign correspondents living in Moscow were discouraged or prohibited from touring outside the large cities when the famine and epidemics were at their height, so that the world did not realize the gravity of the situation until a year or more afterwards. Famine and epidemics were officially denied. Information had, therefore, to be collected by word of mouth as in the olden days of the early Tsars when the chroniclers wrote their accounts.<sup>16</sup>

As a result, he continued, there had been an epidemic of typhus which had taken millions of lives. Yet, "Accounts of the disease were prohibited, not only from the

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<sup>14</sup> W. Horsley Gantt, "A Medical Review of Soviet Russia: Results of the First Five Year Plan," *The British Medical Journal*, July 4, 1936, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

papers but in the medical journals, and officially it was reported as 'Form No. 2'.<sup>17</sup> After surveying the living conditions of health workers, improved financing for the public health system, scientific progress, and other achievements, Gantt wrote in his conclusion:

Since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 two severe famines and epidemics, taking an enormous toll of lives, have come and gone, the first in 1919-21 (*sic.*, 1921-1923—JM), the second in 1932-3. Though comparable to each other in size and extent, the first was characterized by chaos, the second by order; the first was more prevalent among the intelligentsia and in the cities, the latter among the peasants... Russia has lived through one of the hardest periods of its whole history.<sup>18</sup>

Gantt also reiterated the same points in his *History of Russian Medicine*, published the succeeding year.<sup>19</sup> Later, in private correspondence with Dana Dalrymple, Gantt confirmed that he "got the maximal figure of fifteen million" dead in the Famine privately from Soviet officials.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, Ukrainians outside the Soviet Union also wrote about the Famine, which at the time it happened had been extensively covered both in the daily press of Polish-ruled Western Ukraine and in emigration. One of the first important attempts to analyze the Famine was Mykola Kovalevsky's Ukrainian-language survey of Soviet rule in Ukraine, *Ukraine under the Red Yoke*, published in Warsaw and L'viv in 1936. Kovalevsky noted that in January 1933 Pavel Postyshev had been made Second Secretary and *de facto* dictator both to pacify Ukrainian national opposition and to requisition more grain, which was done on the pretext of collecting seed grain for the Spring sowing. He also showed that the grain seizures had a clearly political character, evidenced by frequent press denunciations of Communist Party personnel for allegedly harboring "kulak and Petliurist" elements, frequent blacklisting of villages, and various punishments meted out to "saboteurs" of the procurements.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, such works in Ukrainian remained virtually unknown to those unacquainted with the language.

Boris Souvarine's classic biography of Stalin appeared in English in 1939. Souvarine cited several estimates of the numbers of Famine victims which had appeared in press accounts, including those privately passed on from Soviet officials: Five million according to the French *Courrier socialiste*, 6,000,000 according to the estimate given American Jewish socialist Harry Lang by a high

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Idem.*, "A Medical Review of Soviet Russia," *The British Medical Journal*, July 18, 1934, pp. 130-131.

<sup>19</sup> *Idem.*, *Russian Medicine. Clio Medica: a Series of Primers on the History of Medicine*, vol. XX (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1937), pp. 149-162.

<sup>20</sup> W. Horsley Gantt to Dana Dalrymple, March 6, 1964; published as appendix to Jaroslaw Sawka, "American Psychiatrist: Fifteen Million Died in Thirties' Famine," *Ukrainian Quarterly*, XXXVIII:1, Spring 1982, p. 65.

<sup>21</sup> Mykola Kovalev's'kyi, *Ukraina pid chervonym iarmom: dokumenty i fakty* (Ukraine under the Red Yoke: Documents and Facts) (Warsaw-L'viv, "Skhid," 1937), pp. 128-131.

Soviet functionary, 8,000,000 in Ukraine alone according to what Adam Tawdul had been told by Mykola Skrypnyk and Vsevolod Balitsky.<sup>22</sup>

The earliest attempt to determine the demographic consequences of the Famine on the basis of census data was made in 1940, by the influential Russian émigré economist Sergei Prokopovich. Prokopovich calculated that in the 1933 famine about 9,000,000 lives were lost.<sup>23</sup> In 1946, Frank Lorimer's thorough study of the Soviet population, conducted under the auspices of the League of Nations, also mentioned the famine of 1933. Lorimer, however, did not attempt to calculate the number of deaths which it had caused.<sup>24</sup> One of the last works published under the auspices of the League of Nations, Lorimer's work is conservative in its 5.5 million estimate of Soviet "excess mortality" in 1926-1939.<sup>25</sup>

At about the same time, high ranking Soviet defector Victor Kravchenko gave a frank eyewitness account of the Famine in his best-seller, *I Chose Freedom*.<sup>26</sup> This book became a *cause célèbre* when the author sued a French communist periodical for challenging the book's authenticity and was awarded the symbolic franc. The book based upon the trial testimony, *I Chose Justice*, also contained material on the Famine.<sup>27</sup> Kravchenko, however, always adhered to the traditional Russian and Sovietological view that the catastrophe was due to the excesses of collectivization and just happened to focus upon Ukraine and the North Caucasus. Upon arriving in Paris for the trial, he immediately made it clear that he wanted to have nothing to do with those he called "Ukrainian Separatists" and weeded them out as "undesirables" whose testimony he would not use in the trial.<sup>28</sup>

One response of the Russian emigration to the Famine was a Russian language booklet, published circa 1947 by Posev in Munich, V. S. Mertsalov's *Tragedy of the Russian Peasantry*:

In 1933 and 1934 the Soviet countryside was struck by famine. The village population of Ukraine, the Central Agricultural Region, the Don, the North Caucasus, and several other of the country's most fertile regions were literally swollen by famine. The village inhabitants gathered and consumed as food goosefoot, nettles, and tree bark. Cats and dogs were not disdained. On the Don, in Ukraine, and in the Kuban not a few cases of cannibalism were observed... Hungry, ragged Ukrainians crowded Moscow and Leningrad train stations and streets; they had come to the capitals ... for bread. Whole families, with little children swathed in rags wandered along the streets of Moscow and Leningrad, begging alms throughout the

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<sup>22</sup> Boris Souvarine, *Stalin: a Critical Survey of Bolshevism* (New York, Longman Green, 1939), pp. 669-670.

<sup>23</sup> S. N. Prokopovich, "The Growth of the Population in the U.S.S.R.," *Quarterly Bulletin of Soviet-Russian Economics*, No. 4, April 1940, p. 110. This figure was repeated in his *Histoire économique de l'URSS* (Paris, Portulan, 1952), p. 66.

<sup>24</sup> Frank Lorimer, *The Population of the Soviet Union: History and Prospects* (Geneva, League of Nations, 1946), p. 121.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 133-137, 231-240.

<sup>26</sup> Victor Kravchenko, *I Chose Freedom: the Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official* (Garden City, New York, Garden City Publishing Co., 1946), pp. 110-131.

<sup>27</sup> *Idem.*, *I Chose Justice* (New York, Scribner's, 1950), pp. 59-108 *passim*.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 40.

winter of 1933-34. Each day in the Leningrad and Moscow train stations officers of the NKVD (secret police—JM) transport section gathered up the children who had arrived from the collective farms of Ukraine and the Central Agricultural Region in order to send them, obviously, to children's homes and orphanages where they were left to starve to death. The frightful picture drawn by V. Kravchenko in his widely acclaimed book *I Chose Freedom* is only a small illustration of the misery inflicted upon Russia's rural population in 1933 and 1934.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the Famine was misplaced temporally by a year and geographically to the Central Agricultural Region of Russia but, interestingly, not the Volga Basin. The tragedy was seen as a Russian tragedy, even though the majority of its victims were clearly recognized to have been Ukrainians. Still, Mertsalov gave a very sympathetic portrayal of the tremendous human suffering that took place.

Also in 1947, Semen Pidhainy published in Ukrainian his *Ukrainian Intelligentsia in the Solovky*.<sup>30</sup> A sort of brief predecessor to Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, Pidhainy's work deserves special mention among the memoirs of the period for the light it shed on the fate of formerly prominent figures in Soviet Ukrainian affairs who had vanished. Pidhainy mentioned the Famine as an integral part of the history of the Solovky:

*The third period in the history of the Solovetsky camps must begin from that time when, having liquidated those in the village who had initiative and national consciousness, Stalin decided to settle accounts with the rest of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and have done with all the "unspontaneous" elements in the CP(b)U.*

Precisely then Stalin set about liquidating all the miserable attributes of the appearance of the UkSSR's individuality. It began with the liquidation of the Ukrainian Military Region and its replacement by the Kharkiv and Kiev Regions. Later, like mushrooms after a rain, up sprang the Union Grain Trust instead of the Ukrainian Grain Trust, Union Coal instead of Ukrainian Coal, Union Salt instead of Ukrainian Salt, Union Sugar instead of Ukrainian Sugar, etc. Immediately, by decision of the All-Union Central Committee, a telegraphed order of December 15, 1932 directed the immediate Russification of all Ukrainian institutions in the USSR outside the UkSSR. P. Postyshev arrived in Ukraine with a special mandate from Stalin. *A second wave of terror began against the background of the terrible famine of 1933.* All the prisons and cellars overflowed with prisoners. Among those arrested we have, in addition to peasants, not a small sprinkling of industrial workers and those members of the intelligentsia who had only recently been loyal to the Soviet regime. In the casemates of the NKVD sat many communists accused of nationalism or Trotskyism.

Postyshev came with full powers to utterly destroy nationalism, which was no longer represented by Hrushevsky, Yefremov, and Nikovsky (leading noncommunist Ukrainian national cultural and political leaders—JM), but by Skrypnyk, Shumsky, Poloz, Prykhodko, Mykhailyk, and Khvytyovy—members of the CP(b)U, *Ukrainian communists*, some of whom in the years of NEP (i.e., the 1920s—JM) with all their strength had combatted any manifestation of Ukrainian autonomy and others of whom had fought for an independent socialist Ukraine. And for the Ukrainian communists, it turned out that the time came that had been predicted by the Ukrainian communist Ellan-Blakytny, who, dying, told his comrades, "Watch out, boys, because they'll soon start going after the *khakhol* (derogatory name for a Ukrainian—JM)! (*Sterezhit'sia, khloptsi, bo skoro khakhla khvatat' budut!*)"<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> V. S. Mertsalov, *Tragediia rossiiskogo krest'ianstva* (Tragedy of the Russian Peasantry) (Munich, Posev, n.d.), p. 77.

<sup>30</sup> Most of this work later appeared in English in *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin*, cited below.

<sup>31</sup> Semen Pidhainy, *Ukrains'ka inteligentsiia na Solovkakh* (Ukrainian Intelligentsia in the Solovky) (n.p., Prometei, 1947), pp. 22-23.

Pidhainy's most interesting contribution to our story, however, is his recollection of meeting Ivan Kozlov, a prisoner in the Solovky who had actually led a peasant revolt during the Famine. Pidhainy describes him as a village scribe who

for long years lived with illusions about the revolution until he saw the famine of 1932-1933. Then he decided to settle accounts with the Bolsheviks. Active, vigorous, and rather literate, he quickly created around himself a large underground peasant organization, which embraced several districts of Poltava and Sumy oblasts, and started an uprising on their own. The rebels seized wheat and distributed it to the starving. Kozlov was chieftain in those districts for two weeks, blocking any action by the Soviet authorities.

Of course, GPU troops put down the uprising, shot the participants, and burnt down the villages, but they caught Kozlov only a year later. Consequently, he excused himself with the lesson of Karl Marx, who taught that "it is better to die by the sword than from starvation," and therefore he had fought for himself and his peasants, because it was all the same: This or that, but you had to die. So, better to die in battle than as a starving slave.

Perhaps the GPU liked this argument, for he was not executed but instead was given ten years and sent to Solovky.<sup>32</sup>

While there is much information about resistance to forced collectivization during the years immediately preceding the Famine, there is very little information about resistance in the Ukrainian SSR during the Famine. Kozlov's revolt is the largest of which we have knowledge.

Naum Jasny's classic 1949 study of Soviet agriculture also mentioned the Famine of 1933, which it treated strictly as a symptom of the general breakdown of Soviet agriculture in consequence of collectivization. Jasny also estimated that at least five and a half million had perished.<sup>33</sup>

The few Western scholars who specialized in Ukraine were sometimes not much better informed than those who knew virtually nothing about the second largest Slavic nation. Writing in 1951, for example, Clarence Manning gave short shrift to the Famine, placed it a year early in 1931-32, and thought William Henry Chamberlin to be almost the only man to have reported it to the West.<sup>34</sup> Two years later, he belatedly got the date right and gave the Famine a bit more consideration but only in a more popular book, written without footnotes and obviously intended for the Ukrainian-American community.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, his assertion that "the famine of 1932-3 represented the use of new methods of terror as an instrument of national policy"<sup>36</sup> remained unsubstantiated.

Ukrainians, writing in their own language, were more serious scholars. In 1953 Dmytro Solovey, who had fled the Soviets during the War, published in Ukrainian *Golgotha of Ukraine*, only brief fragments of which were ever translated into English. Solovey was an indefatigable researcher, especially by the Sovietological standards of those days. He was shocked that even after the Second World War

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>33</sup> Naum Jasny, *The Socialized Agriculture of the USSR* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1949), p. 553.

<sup>34</sup> Clarence Manning, *Twentieth-Century Ukraine* (New York, Bookman Associates, 1951), pp. 92-93.

<sup>35</sup> *Idem.*, *Ukraine under the Soviets*, pp. 103-107.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.



writers could be found who either described the situation in 1933 as one of semi-starvation or dismissed the Famine altogether. He cited some of the more important non-Ukrainian accounts then available and cogently argued the basic points in order to show that the Famine had been initiated and organized by Stalin as a genocidal manifestation of nationality policy:

- 1) Even many Russian writers conceded that the Famine affected not Russia but areas peripheral to it such as Ukraine and the North Caucasus.
- 2) The majority of the victims were poor and middle peasants (*bedniaky* and *seredniaky*) who had already joined the collective farms.
- 3) Moscow made the crucial decisions responsible for the Famine—procurement quotas, the August 1932 law on protecting socialist property, the unprecedented guarding of grain stores—which were instituted for the first time at the very beginning of the 1932 harvest and never repeated.
- 4) Those farms in Ukraine which met their initial quota were merely assigned supplementary procurement quotas until there was nothing left.
- 5) No help was allowed the starving from any quarter, even when it would have cost the government nothing.
- 6) Every effort was made to conceal the existence of starvation from the outside world.
- 7) Simultaneously the Ukrainian intelligentsia underwent mass liquidation.<sup>37</sup>

While this does not necessarily prove the Famine was planned beforehand, it does indicate that one of the ends it served was that of nationality policy.

Solovey also deserves particular credit for compiling such sketchy information as does exist about incidents of rural resistance to the grain procurements that took place in 1932-1933:

Larger or smaller disturbances in response to the famine of 1932-33, as shall be seen, were numerous. Even in those years I myself could not avoid hearing from certain sources about the sacking of the grain depot at Sahaidak station (Poltava region) by the starving, who tore it apart. Quite recently I chanced upon a mention in the press of a similar destruction of a bread depot at Hoholeve station (Myrhorod region). A. S. Pidhainy recounts a real revolt of starving peasants in his account of the Solovetsky exile of Ivan Kozlov (see above—JM)...

Similarly Lev Orlyhora in his 1946 cycle *Na sud istorii* (Before the Court of History) writes that in the village of Klenove (Bobodukhy district, Kharkiv oblast) "swollen peasants (men, women, and children) armed with pitchforks, rakes, and iron hardware" nightly attacked a state distillery which had a large quantity of corn in storage which it systematically turned into spirits. And the factory was defended by 300 secret police troops. Yet, "every attack ended with killed and wounded on both sides."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Dmytro Solovei, *Holhota Ukrainy: moskovs'ko-bol'shevys'kyi okupatsiynyi teror v URSS mizh pershoiu i druhoiu svitovoiu viinoiu* (The Golgotha of Ukraine: Moscow's Bolshevik Occupation Terror in the Ukrainian SSR between the First and Second World Wars) (Winnipeg, Ukraina'kyi holos, 1954), pp. 174-243.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

Were Solovey's entire text ever translated into English, it would certainly be recognized as one of the major contributions to our understanding of the Famine.

In 1955 the Democratic Organization of Ukrainians Formerly Repressed by the Soviets (DOBRUS) published in often flawed English the second volume of *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: a White Book*, subtitled *The Great Famine in Ukraine in 1932-1933*. This volume constitutes the most extensive collection of eyewitness material and documents relating to the Famine ever published in any language. It was financed by nearly 100 individuals who contributed one or two hundred dollars each.<sup>39</sup> The volume also contained a long introductory essay, written by Professor T. Sosnovy under the pseudonym of Petro Dolyna, called "Famine as a Political Weapon."

Sosnovy-Dolyna saw the Famine as deliberately organized by the central Soviet authorities in Moscow to overcome a systematic refusal by the Ukrainian peasantry and that of the North Caucasus to carry out the government's orders in agriculture. It was, in short, an "anti-collective bread strike." These authorities responded by carrying out a "plan of starving the Ukrainian peasants, thus bringing them to their knees, and ending forever all ideas of small holdings and individual proprietorship."<sup>40</sup> According to Sosnovy-Dolyna,

In order to carry out the planned famine, as part of the campaign, a whole series of decrees and measures were put into effect in the latter part of 1932 and early 1933...

A series of laws enacted at that time were formally directed against the peasant class of the USSR as a whole. But in effect, as events progressed and showed, their point was directed against the Ukrainian peasants. This was a logical consequence not only of the new course set by Moscow against Ukraine in the 1930s in connection with the development of imperialist tendencies by Moscow, but also with the obviously tough opposition to collectivization by peasants of Ukraine, regardless of their territorial location.

Planning the famine, the government was well aware that starving peasants would in desperation, and in order to survive, go after collective property, mainly food products. Therefore, well in advance, on August 7, 1932, a decree was issued on the protection of socialist property.

The main idea of this decree was that "common property, i.e., government, collective or cooperative property is sacred and that people who are tempted to take such property are to be considered common enemies; therefore, it is the prime duty of the government organs of the Soviet authorities to lead in a firm fight against pilfering." (*Pravda*, August 8, 1932).

On the basis of these principles the Central Committee of the Party and the government decided: "To identify in point of importance collective property with government property and augment the protection of this property from malefactors. Applying different standards of court procedure and law against the theft of collective and cooperative property by reason of social necessity—execution by firing squad and confiscation of all property, with an alternative, under mitigating circumstances, of no less than 10 years penal servitude and confiscation of property. No amnesty would apply to felons convicted of theft of collective or cooperative property."

This decree raised the wave of terror to unheard of heights. Everyone fell under the persecution...

In order to expedite the fight against all enemies of the "collective order" and to combat theft of "socialist property," the Commissariat of Justice (Moscow) created the new post

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<sup>39</sup> S. O. Pidhainy, V. I. Hryshko, P. P. Pavlovysh, eds., *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: a White Book. Vol. II: The Great Famine in Ukraine in 1932-1933* (Toronto-Detroit, SUZERO-DOBRUS, 1955). This book was also issued in Spanish.

<sup>40</sup> Petro Dolyna (T. Sosnovy), "Famine as a Political Weapon," *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin*, vol. II, pp. 29-31.

(in June 1933 – JM) of Prosecutor of the USSR, “for the purpose of unification of the activities of the prosecutors of the union republics,” and with the object of “strengthening socialist justice and providing the proper protection for communal property in the USSR against the greed of anti-social elements.”

The issuance of this last decree was a manifestation of Moscow’s lack of confidence in local provincial functionaries, in this case the Union Republics’ Prosecutors’ Offices...

Among the measures enacted against the Ukrainian peasants, there is the significant decree of August 22, 1932, “On combatting speculation in goods for general consumption.” The importance of this measure lay in the fact that peasants living in the villages were permitted to purchase their essential necessities in official stores only on fulfillment of their full quotas of surrendered crops and produce... It was only natural that those who were not granted the privilege of trading with the official local store would absent themselves from work on the collective farms and walk to the cities in search of these goods. This decree classed them as speculators and provided sentences of from 5 to 10 years confinement in concentration camps, without the right to any amnesties.

A very large number of peasants working on collective farms were sentenced under the provisions of this decree.<sup>41</sup>

In fact, there is no evidence of discriminatory application to Ukrainians of the above All-Union anti-peasant measures, but they were adopted at a time when the focus of Soviet agricultural problems had shifted to Ukraine and the North Caucasus. The only measure of centralization cited, the creation of an All-Union Procurator (Prosecutor), was actually adopted only in June 1933, after the Famine and Pavel Postyshev had succeeded in breaking the Ukrainian Soviet government’s capability to stand up to central authorities. The author’s case could have been strengthened by citing other earlier measures of centralization. The fact that the anti-peasant measures were not applied in a discriminatory fashion does not necessarily mean that they were not directed at a specific area. The anti-peasant course adopted in mid-1932, when the central authorities were warned of impending famine in Ukraine, contrasts sharply with the earlier relative liberalism with which those same authorities responded to lesser problems in the Volga Basin and Western Siberia. This does not mean that Stalin necessarily had a preconceived plan to create a famine, as Sosnovy maintained, but it does provide strong evidence indicating that Stalin, upon learning that his policies would lead to famine in Ukraine, decided to refrain from measures which could have averted it, took measures to exacerbate it, and used it to neutralize Ukrainians and Cossacks as politically troublesome groups, thus making possible political centralization and Russian national primacy within the Soviet Union.

Sosnovy was on firmer ground in describing the situation in Ukraine after the harvest: The campaign of compulsory procurment of agricultural produce through house-to-house searches for food; the various editorials in the Moscow press in September and October 1932, demanding that Ukraine meet its grain quota; and the simultaneous visits from Moscow of leading figures to purge local Ukrainian authorities for their alleged laxity. No serious student of the period can quarrel with his finding that

The authorities and their local representatives knew that when they took food away from the peasants, they were condemning them to death by starvation. Towards the end of 1932 it was no longer a secret that there were many cases of death by starvation. But the collection of food

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-33.

proceeded regardless. The demands of the Ukrainian peasants that after complete or partial fulfillment of quotas they should be permitted to keep some part in order to survive, were deemed to be the opposition of class enemies to the government's task.<sup>42</sup>

Sosnovy described Moscow's political offensive in December 1932 and January 1933 which was based on charges against the Ukrainian leadership of "national deviations" and "inaction in carrying out the procurements." He also pointed out that Soviet sources confirm that the 1932 crop was neither exceptionally affected by weather, nor more than slightly below average.<sup>43</sup> The Famine may not have been created according to a preconceived plan, but it was clearly artificial. It would not have occurred were it not for the state's seizure of produce and could easily have been averted by moderating those seizures, instead of using them for political ends. One of the most influential books on collectivization for many years was also published in 1955. This was *The History of a Soviet Collective Farm*, a memoir by a Ukrainian former collective farm chairman given the Russian pseudonym of Fëdor Belov. In the autumn of 1932, he wrote,

the "red broom" (popular slang for agricultural procurement brigade, brought in from the outside to seize produce—JM) passed over the kolkhozes and the individual plots, sweeping the "surplus" from the state out of the barns and the corn-cribs. In the search for "surpluses," everything was collected. The farms were cleaned out even more thoroughly than the kulaks had been. As a result, famine, which was to become intense by the spring of 1933, already began to be felt in the fall of 1932.

The famine of 1932-1933 was the most terrible and destructive that the Ukrainian people have ever experienced. The peasants ate dogs, horses, rotten potatoes, the bark of trees, grass—anything they could find. Incidents of cannibalism were not uncommon. The people died like wild beasts, ready to devour one another. And no matter what they did, they went on dying, dying, dying.

They died singly and in families. They died everywhere—in the yards, on streetcars, and on trains. There was no one to bury the victims of the Stalinist famine. People travelled for thousands of kilometers in search of food—to Siberia, to the Caucasus. Many perished by the wayside or fell into the hands of the militia (police—JM). To protect what little grain they had from the raids of the militia, the peasants often banded together in groups of thirty or forty persons and defended their gleanings with sticks and knives.

I was thirteen years old then, and I shall never forget what I saw. One memory especially stands out: A baby lying at his mother's breast, trying to wake her.

A man is capable of forgetting a great deal, but these terrible scenes of starvation will be forgotten by no one who saw them.

He added that the peasants were unable to harvest the "bumper crop" of 1933, so that people had to be brought in from the cities to do this.<sup>44</sup>

Both the fact that the Ukrainian author was given a Russian pseudonym and no notice was taken of the national and geographical specificity of the events related only obscured the issue of whether the Famine also had a nationality aspect.

An important collection of district archival documents taken from Krynychiansk, near Dnipropetrovsk, were published in 1955. Strung together by a less than

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34-43. Quotation from pp. 41-42.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44-58, 62-65.

<sup>44</sup> Fedor Belov, *The History of a Soviet Collective Farm* (New York, Praeger, 1955), pp. 12-13.

inspired commentary, most related to collectivization and dekulakization, but the collection also contained a notebook listing deaths in one village during 1933.<sup>45</sup>

From 1955 to 1960 the Ukrainian section of the Institute for the Study of the USSR in Munich published a number of important works on the Famine in its organ *Ukrainian Review*.<sup>46</sup> Most important of these were documents from another district archive, this time from Chornukhy district, Poltava region published by P. S. Lykho (pseudonym).<sup>47</sup> As in the Krynychiansk collection, few documents bear directly on the Famine, possibly because Lykho already published several documents directly related to the Famine some years earlier. The first such document was a January 20, 1933 order from Moscow to the CP(b)U committees down to the district level in Ukraine, ordering that individuals guilty of theft, unnecessary expenditure or other malfeasance regarding collective farm grain be immediately brought to justice under the law of August 7, 1932.<sup>48</sup> The second, dated May 22, 1933, was sent by the Soviet Ukrainian procurator and the UkSSR vice commissar of the OGPU (secret police) to their district subordinates. It dealt with cannibalism and declared:

Whereas the present criminal code does not cover punishment of persons guilty of cannibalism, therefore all cases of those accused of cannibalism must immediately be transferred to the local branches of the OGPU. If cannibalism was preceded by murder, covered by article 142 of the Penal Code, these cases should be withdrawn from the courts and from the prosecution divisions of the Peoples Commissariat of Justice system and transferred for judgement to the Collegium of the OGPU in Moscow.<sup>49</sup>

The third document was a June 17 order signed by Stalin, forbidding local officials from using grain stored in state granaries to feed the population.<sup>50</sup>

Pavlo Lutarevych also made use of the Chornukhy documents in an article published by the Munich Institute in 1955. Criminal files showed that during the famine theft became so common that the authorities were virtually powerless to

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<sup>45</sup> Olexa Kalynyk, *Communism, the Enemy of Mankind: Documents and Comments* (London, Ukrainian Youth Association in Great Britain, 1955), pp. 111-116. This is actually only excerpts; the full notebook and related documents are available on microfilm at Columbia University as "Ukrainian Famine of 1933." The original documents are in the possession of the Shevchenko Scientific Society in New York and may be consulted with the society's permission.

<sup>46</sup> The Institute for the Study of the USSR existed in the 1950s as a clearinghouse for scholarship on the USSR carried out by those who had fled the Soviet Union. Like Radio Liberty, with which it was associated, it was discreetly subsidized by the US government but published any scholars formerly from the USSR who were not either members of the Communist Party or its sympathizers. Those who published monographs with the institute or in its various journals represented the entire spectrum of political opinion in emigration, including the noncommunist left.

<sup>47</sup> P. S. Lykho, " 'Sovetskaia vlast' na mestakh': robota komunistychnoi partii Chornus'koho raionu na Poltavshchyni (Soviet Power on the Local Level: the Work of the Communist Party of Chornukhy district, Poltava region)," *Ukrains'kyi zbirnyk* (Ukrainian Review), Book 8, 1957, pp. 99-172. Unlike the Krynychiansk documents, the fate of the original Chornukhy documents is unknown.

<sup>48</sup> *Idem*, "Soviet Documents on the Famine in the Ukraine," *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: a White Book*, S. O. Pidhainy et al., eds. (Toronto, SUZERO-DOBRUS, 1953), vol. I, p. 229.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.

stop it. They concentrated only on crimes involving the interests and property of the state. In desperation to get gold or silver to exchange for food at the *torgsins* (hard currency stores), grave robbing, especially involving the resting places of prominent citizens of the past who were likely to have been buried with jewelry, assumed a massive scale. Cases where activists beat “pilfering” peasants to death went unpunished. Thieves of farm animals were lynched.<sup>51</sup> Also given were figures on mortality (about 20%) in the district. Documents hitherto published in *The Black Deeds* were now rendered in the original language.<sup>52</sup>

Dmytro Solovey pointed out in the Institute’s *Ukrainian Review* in 1955 that famine broke out on a smaller scale in Ukraine in the 1931-1932 agricultural year, a crucial fact to be kept in mind when we later consider that at this time food difficulties were acknowledged by Moscow only in the Transvolga.<sup>53</sup> He later used the Munich journal to summarize and supplement his findings further, estimating that 4.8 million persons perished in the Famine in Ukraine. He also reiterated his earlier argument that the Famine was planned beforehand.<sup>54</sup>

The first real scholarly history of the Ukrainian SSR in English was published by Basil Dmytryshyn in 1956. Dmytryshyn’s work was based primarily upon a close reading of the Soviet Ukrainian press, especially the daily organ of the Soviet government, *Visti VUTsVK* (News of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee of Soviets). This enabled Dmytryshyn to cite chapter and verse concerning policy pronouncements. He was therefore on solid ground when he argued that during

the First Five Year Plan, the Ukraine, as one of the fundamental keys in the complexity of all these (i.e., the plan’s—JM) experiments, became the subject of utmost political and administrative attention. Any sign of improper functioning of this elaborate mechanism was immediately interpreted as sabotage, as a sign of counterrevolutionary moves; as a sign of an attempt to separate the Ukraine from the rest of the USSR; and as a sign of foreign conspiracy against the “citadel of the proletariat.” The defense of the USSR and of the Ukraine in particular became the everyday slogan, and toward that end the entire apparatus of the Comintern was organized. The Ukraine, in a word, became the region *sine qua non*. When, therefore, in this atmosphere of self-created fear and anxiety, a partial breakdown in agriculture occurred, a considerable number of the Ukrainian peasantry was exterminated, both as a class and as a national enemy. This was done in the most ruthless fashion of recorded history—by an intentionally created famine.

The most heinous feature of the 1932-3 famine in the Ukraine was the fact that it was politically inspired, and that it had the full blessing of the top leadership of the Party and of the Government of the USSR. That this cold-blooded massacre was deliberately engineered can be seen from the fact that every measure taken by the Government of the USSR during this period was intended to increase, rather than to alleviate the difficulties of the population. Thus, for example, the government, to finance industrialization and to feed the growing city

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<sup>51</sup> Pavlo Liutarevych, “Tsyfry i fakty pro holod v Ukraini (roky 1932-1933)” (Figures and Facts About the Famine in Ukraine: 1932-1933), *Ukrains’kyi zbiryk*, Book 2, pp. 82-83.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93, 96-98.

<sup>53</sup> Dmytro Solovey, “Ukrains’ke selo v rokakh 1931-1933” (The Ukrainian Village in 1931-1933), *Ukrains’kyi zbiryk*, Book 2, 1955, pp. 64-66.

<sup>54</sup> *Idem.*, “Holod u systemi kolonial’noho panuvannia TsK KPSS v Ukraini (Do 40-litn’oho iubilciu KP(b)U i 25-oi richyvtai holodu 1932-1933 rr. v Ukraini)” (Famine in the System of the CPSU Central Committee’s Colonial Rule in Ukraine: on the Fortieth Anniversary of the CP(b)U and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine), *Ukrains’kyi zbiryk*, Book 15, 1958, pp. 3-61.

population—though fully aware of the unfavorable climatic conditions in the Ukraine in 1931 and 1932, and though conscious of the decrease of the sowing area—not only forced the peasantry *en masse* into collective farms, but also, without defining what constituted “surplus,” arbitrarily intensified the requisitioning of foodstuffs and grain surplus from the peasants. At the same time, it fully enforced the August 7, 1932 decree for the protection of “socialist property.” As a result the entire peasantry—in addition to the *kulaks*—was left with no means of support.

Another factor which points vividly to the deliberate administering of the famine was the government’s prevention of all attempts and efforts on the part of Ukrainian as well as non-Ukrainian organizations and agencies abroad to aid the famine-stricken population, and its labelling of all references to the famine as “lies circulated by counterrevolutionary organizations abroad.” At the same time, however, the Government of the USSR barred all foreign newspaper correspondents from entering the famine-stricken Ukraine and Northern Caucasus until the harvest of 1933 was brought in. This was designed to prevent the spread of news to the outside world of this great human tragedy. If the famine were the result of climatic conditions, and not deliberately engineered, there would have been neither need nor cause to hide it from the outside world—especially since some charitable groups expressed their unconditional willingness and readiness to aid. However, since the famine was a man-made disaster to “teach the peasants a lesson,” the Government of the USSR was unwilling to let the truth become known.

The scope of that gigantic tragedy, which is today acknowledged by all observers, except Communists and their sympathizers, is beyond comprehension.<sup>55</sup>

That same year the Institute for the Study of the USSR also published in Ukrainian Fedir Pigido’s *Ukraine under Bolshevik Occupation: Materials on the History of the Struggle of the Ukrainian People in the 1920s and 1930s*.<sup>56</sup> Pigido wrote:

The famine of 1932-33 was not an isolated phenomenon, separate from the general policy of the occupying power in Ukraine. The famine of 1933 was only one stage in the struggle which Bolshevism carried out against the Ukrainian peasantry, the nationally conscious part of Ukrainian workers, the Ukrainian intelligentsia, and Ukrainian revolutionary youth, not excluding even a certain segment of nationally conscious Ukrainian communists, those whom Moscow called “counterrevolutionaries with party cards in their pockets.” What the Ukrainian peasants called Stalin’s famine was only the culmination point, the most dramatic act in the struggle of the Ukrainian people for the right to live freely in their own land, for the right to their mother tongue, for their national existence...<sup>57</sup>

Pigido also claimed that

In the Kremlin palaces was created the plan for the greatest terrorist act in the history of humanity—the plan to organize a massive, artificial famine throughout the entire Ukrainian SSR and in the Kuban, territories populated by Ukrainians.

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<sup>55</sup> Basil Dmytryshyn, *Moscow and the Ukraine, 1918-1953: a Study of Russian Bolshevik Nationality Policy* (New York, Bookman Associates, 1956), pp. 201-202.

<sup>56</sup> Some years earlier Pigido also published a memoir on the famine: F. Pravoberezhnyi (Pigido), *8,000,000: 1933-i rik na Ukraïni* (8,000,000: the Year 1933 in Ukraine) (Winnipeg, Kultura i osvita, 1951).

<sup>57</sup> Fedir Pigido, *Ukraina pid bol'shevyts'koiu okupatsiieiu* (*Materialy do istorii borot'by ukraïns'koho narodu v 1920-1930 rokakh*) (Ukraine under Bolshevik Occupation: Materials on the History of the Ukrainian People’s Struggle in the 1920s and 1930s) (Munich, Institute for the Study of the USSR, 1956), p. 103.

That which took place in the Ukrainian SSR in 1932-33 was the most terrible of all the acts of the Bolshevik occupation of Ukraine. Only later did it become clear that P. Postyshev, who unquestionably was familiar with the Kremlin's secret plans, had grounds to state at the November plenum of the Ukrainian Central Committee:

"The January 24, 1933 decision of the All-Union Central Committee was the decisive moment which opened up new vistas for the victorious struggle of Ukraine's Bolsheviks."

In 1932-33 relations between Moscow and the Ukrainian SSR were fundamentally altered. The unarticulated struggle that had gone on between them thus far finally exploded. Even the spurious independence of the Ukrainian SSR, which existed formally, was brutally stamped out by Muscovite bolshevism.<sup>58</sup>

Pigido traced a struggle by members of the Ukrainian Soviet government during the Spring of 1932. The rebellion was led by Premier Vlas Chubar and Education Commissar Mykola Skrypnyk who hoped to slow the rate of the forced collectivization of Ukrainian agriculture, lower the grain procurements to a more realistic level, and to distribute immediately much needed seed and food to the peasants. He interpreted the Drabove trial of June 1932, in which the leadership of an entire *raion* was convicted of abusing its authority over the peasantry, as part of this campaign. At the July 1932 Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference, held a week after the Drabove verdicts were handed down, the conflict came to a head, as Kaganovich and Molotov, Stalin's representatives in attendance, flatly refused any reduction of the quotas set in May. Pigido also maintained that the law of August 7, 1932, "On the Safeguarding of Socialist Property," which provided for the death penalty or ten years imprisonment for pilfering an ear of wheat, "was directed exclusively against Ukraine's starving population." The culmination of the struggle was, of course, the All-Union decision of January 24, 1933, by which the communist leadership in Ukraine was condemned for its inability to seize the requisite quantity of grain and placed under the authority of Pavel Postyshev, who ruled Ukraine essentially as Stalin's satrap with the help of thousands of new men brought from Moscow.<sup>59</sup>

Pigido cited two major pieces of evidence concerning recalcitrance of rank-and-file Ukrainian communists. A November 18, 1932 resolution of the Ukrainian Central Committee referred to "the intimate connection of whole groups of communists and individual heads of party circles with *kulaks* and Petliurists, as a result of which party organizations have become branch offices of the class enemies." A few days later, on November 24, the Ukrainian party daily, *Komunist*, denounced cases of local party organizations failing to accept the procurements quotas assigned them.<sup>60</sup>

Pigido overextended his evidence in an attempt to demonstrate that the Ukrainian Famine was planned beforehand. This, however, does not diminish his contribution in pointing out the measures taken by the Soviet state to exacerbate the situation and the fact that it fundamentally altered relations between Moscow and Ukraine.

Soon after Dmytryshyn's and Pigido's books appeared, Vladimir Timoshenko also pointed out the link between the Famine and nationality policy in Ukraine.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108. Original emphasis.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108-111.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.



Timoshenko, like Dmytryshyn and Pigido, was able to take a certain amount of knowledge about the Famine for granted. In fact, he was able to state in reference to the Famine and the state procurements which brought it about:

We all now know that this enforcement of grain collection resulted in the horrible famine in the Ukraine and North Caucasus which took the lives of millions of people. The crop yield was not large, according to official statistics, but, of course, it would have been sufficient to feed the local population had it not been for the excessive targets of grain deliveries mercilessly enforced on the hungry population.<sup>61</sup>

Timoshenko's rather unjustly ignored paper, "Soviet Agricultural Policy and the Nationalities Problem in the USSR," was read at the Seventh Conference of the now-defunct Institute for the Study of the USSR, held in New York on April 28-29, 1956. Timoshenko pointed out that the Soviet government's excessive demands on grain from Ukraine and the North Caucasus was "one of the principal causes of the conflicts between the Ukrainian peasantry and the Cossack groups in the South in 1927-1928, ending the NEP and bringing in its wake a new agrarian revolution in the 1930s."<sup>62</sup> Simultaneously, the "extraordinary measures" of seizing grain were first applied to these same groups, and even in the late 1920s Ukraine's share of the amount of grain taken by the government was of record size and far in excess of its share of the total Soviet harvest. It was also at this time that Moscow began its witch hunt for "national deviationists" in Ukraine.<sup>63</sup> As a result of the "violent forcing of collectivization in Ukraine" the Ukrainian steppe region completed collectivization in June 1931 and the Left Bank forest-steppe region in August. Particularly large amounts of grain were seized from Ukraine in 1931-32. In some areas 80% and in others all of the total crop was taken. "Collective farms which fulfilled their obligations received fresh orders for deliveries."<sup>64</sup>

Timoshenko related how Stalin overcame opposition within the Party to proclaim the establishment of *politotdely* (political sections) in all Machine Tractor Stations and state farms. These were staffed by 15,000 tried and true urban communists with a dual mandate: "To enforce the grain deliveries and to purge the membership of the collective farms of unreliable elements." The fact that the decision to create the *politotdely* in January 1933 was concomitant with the appointment of Postyshev as Ukraine's ruler indicated that "it was the stubborn resistance of the forcibly collectivized Ukrainian peasants to the excessive deliveries of grain required from the collective farms that was mainly responsible for the decision ... to create the *politotdely*."<sup>65</sup> The political sections were in turn

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<sup>61</sup> V. P. Timoshenko, "Soviet Agricultural Policy and the Nationalities Problem in the USSR," *Report on the Soviet Union in 1956: a Symposium of the Institute for the Study of the USSR (Based on the Seventh Institute Conference), April 28-29, 1956*, ed. Jaan Pennar (Munich, Institute for the Study of the USSR, 1956), p. 47. I am indebted to Dr. Lew Havryliv for this reference.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46. Quotation from p. 46.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

responsible for overseeing the grain procurements, and the procurements caused the Famine which resulted in a population deficit of 8,000,000.

A. P. Philipov accused Timoshenko of artificially linking agricultural policy to the nationality question. Yet, Philipov also conceded:

Unquestionably, there is some connection between the Soviet government's attitude towards the various nationalities and its agricultural policy. For example, it might be shown how enforced collectivization and excessive levies on the *kolkhozes* caused the terrible famine in the Ukraine, how the Soviet government gave absolutely no help to the starving peasants, with the result that several million died of hunger, and, finally how it resettled peasants from Great Russia in the depopulated Ukrainian villages. Only those who personally witnessed the dying off of the Ukrainian peasants can fully appreciate the disastrous consequences of forced collectivization. For one, I visited the Poltava region five years after the 1933 famine and saw many villages where, despite colonization from the north, not a soul was living.<sup>66</sup>

While denying that the Famine had anything to do with nationality policy, Philipov also criticized Timoshenko's claim that the Famine was responsible for a population deficit of 8,000,000. According to Philipov the figure was too low and ought to be between 14 and 15 million.<sup>67</sup>

Yet, despite this exchange, which reflected a joint acknowledgement of mortality in the millions because of the Man-Made Famine, Sovietologists published nothing more on the subject until 1964. No reference to this particular discussion is found in scholarly literature.

With Ukrainians it was a different matter. In 1958, Vsevolod Holubnychy also published an essay in Ukrainian on what had caused the Famine. Editor of *Vpered* (Forward), organ of the left wing of the Ukrainian Revolutionary Democratic Party, Holubnychy represented the farthest left current in the Ukrainian emigration of the day. His knowledge and ability to use Soviet sources critically was unrivaled, and his work has deeply influenced virtually all serious students of Soviet Ukrainian affairs. Anticipating much later work on the Stalin period, Holubnychy began by pointing out that the first Five Year Plan "was, in every respect, an improvisation." The Soviet planners of the period were obstinate and over-enthusiastic. There was an acute shortage of capital. Too many projects were begun simultaneously, and sufficient resources to finish them were lacking. The price of wheat, which the USSR exported in order to pay for its imports of foreign machinery, fell from 8.63 rubles per hundredweight in 1929 to 2.57 rubles in 1933, while prices for the machinery Stalin purchased rose by 55%. At the same time, Ukraine's agricultural burden was out of proportion to what it produced. Holubnychy wrote:

That Ukraine was being exploited directly at this time can be seen from the fact that, while the total grain harvest in Ukraine amounted to only 27% of the All-Union harvest in 1930, the consignment of grain in Ukraine accounted for 38% of the grain consigned in the entire Soviet Union in 1930.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> A. P. Philipov, "Comments on Professor Timoshenko's Report," *Report on the Soviet Union in 1956*, p. 209.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>68</sup> Vsevolod Holubnychy, "The Causes of the Famine of 1932-33," *Meta*, II:2, Winter 1979, pp. 22-23. The original appeared in *Vpered*, 1958, No. 10.

In 1930, which produced a bumper harvest of 23.1 million tons of Ukrainian grain, 7.7 million metric tons were extracted from the Ukrainian countryside – more grain than ever before or since. In order to meet this quota, state requisitioners sometimes took the seed grain and all the grain that had been stored in previous years. In 1931, at which time 71% of all Ukraine's peasant households had been collectivized, the same quota was to be extracted from a harvest officially reckoned at only 18.3 million tons, and 30% of this was lost during the harvest. In spite of the unprecedented pressure applied in the course of the 1931-1932 procurements campaign, only 7.0 million tons were actually collected, and in the Spring of 1932 even the Soviet Ukrainian press had to admit that there were outbreaks of hunger. Under pressure from officials in Ukraine, Stalin on May 6, 1932, lowered the quotas throughout the Soviet Union, reducing Ukraine's to 6.6 million tons.<sup>69</sup>

The Ukrainian communists continued to press for further concessions. A major fight took place at the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference in July 1932. The Ukrainian officials argued that the quotas were too high, that the Ukrainian peasants were starving, and that the agricultural crisis was "objective." Molotov and Kaganovich, Stalin's representatives, blamed the Ukrainians for the crisis, ruled out any further concessions, and ordered the plan be fulfilled unconditionally by January 1, 1933. The resultant "struggle for bread" was one of life and death. One hundred and twelve thousand communists were sent to the villages, as opposed to 40,000 in 1930. The membership of the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine dropped from 520,000 in June 1932 to 470,000 in October 1933; that of the Ukrainian Communist Youth League (*Komsomol*) from 1.3 million in 1932 to 450,000 in 1934. In February 1933 alone, 23.5% of all party and 27% of all *Komsomol* members in Ukraine were purged for violating party discipline and arrested.<sup>70</sup>

Holubnychy pointed out that the 1932 Ukrainian grain harvest was officially estimated at between 13.4 and 14.6 million tons, with 40% being lost during harvesting. In spite of every effort to seize everything possible the 6.6 million ton quota could not be met. As of December 27, 1932, only 4.7 million tons were procured. Because of a lack of draught power and lack of working hands, the sugar beet crop also failed, producing only 4.3 million tons instead of the planned 16.8 million. The Famine now assumed massive proportions, but the press was forbidden to make any mention of it. Holubnychy gave the exceedingly conservative estimate of 3,000,000 victims. He also pointed out that, since three-fourths of all Ukrainian peasants had already been collectivized when the Famine began, it was not organized in order to drive peasants into the collective farms. He saw no evidence either that Stalin specifically planned the Famine or that Pavel Postyshev, who was appointed *de facto* dictator of Ukraine in January 1933, i.e., after it began, was its organizer. It was artificial in the sense that it could have been avoided by lowering the quotas and slowing down Soviet plans for industrialization. Both Stalin and Postyshev bore personal responsibility for their failure to do so. But it was *caused*, in Holubnychy's view, by "external and internal economic factors and the situation in which the USSR found itself."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24. Quotation from p. 24.

Holubnychy's argument remains an outstanding attempt to come to grips with basic issues necessary for an understanding of the Famine and must be considered seriously. However, it is difficult to agree with his analysis that it was caused merely by the circumstances existing at the time. In fact, the May reforms of 1932 came about not, as Holubnychy would have it, because of Ukrainian pressure on Stalin, but—as we shall see—because of difficulties in the Transvolga. Thus, Stalin responded differently when Volga Russians were threatened with starvation in early 1932 than he did when Ukrainians were starving only months later. This is a key to any understanding of the political reason why millions of Ukrainians were allowed to starve to death. While it is quite true that there is no evidence to assert that the Famine was caused because Stalin “planned” it, both the situation in the Volga in early 1932 and in Ukraine later that same year allowed him to decide who would be requisitioned into extinction and who would not.

During this same year, the Institute for the Study of the USSR in Munich published the collection *Genocide in the U.S.S.R.: Studies in Group Destruction* in English. None of the members of the institute's Ukrainian section who had written on the Famine were asked to contribute, and the article on the Ukrainians made no mention of the issue.<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, however, Wassili Glaskow's contribution on the Cossacks treated the Famine as a major episode in Soviet attempts to destroy the Cossacks.<sup>73</sup>

Roy Laird's 1958 study, *Collective Farming in Russia*, mentioned the Famine only briefly, quoting Belov.<sup>74</sup> There is no evidence that he was acquainted with either Dmytryshyn's book, Timoshenko's paper, or the issues that they raised. Indeed, the next book-length study of Soviet Ukraine and the first ever to be published by a major university press, Robert Sullivant's 1962 monograph, was in many ways a step backward from Dmytryshyn's work. Although Sullivant dealt in some detail with the official Soviet sources which mentioned the “breakdown” of grain procurements and agriculture and the official measures taken in response, there is no evidence in his book that he was even so much as aware that anyone had actually starved to death.<sup>75</sup>

Merle Fainsod's 1958 classic, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule*, is a book which no Sovietologist would ever admit to not having read. Based upon the Smolensk Oblast' Communist Party archive, which was captured by the Germans and then fell into American hands, it portrayed the impoverishment of the collective farmers in the region east of Byelorussia but gave the Famine in Ukraine only passing mention.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Alexander V. Yurchenko, “The Ukrainians,” *Genocide in the U.S.S.R.: Studies in Group Destruction* (Munich, Institute for the Study of the USSR), pp. 138-146.

<sup>73</sup> W. G. Glaskow, “The Cossacks as a Group,” *Genocide in the U.S.S.R.*, pp. 242-252.

<sup>74</sup> Roy D. Laird, *Collective Farming in Russia* (Lawrence, University of Kansas Press, 1958), p. 64.

<sup>75</sup> Robert S. Sullivant, *Soviet Politics and the Ukraine, 1917-1957* (New York and London, Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 187-195 *et passim*.

<sup>76</sup> Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule* (New York, Knopf, 1958), pp. 267, 444. The former reference is to a police report of a peasant stating that he had seen Ukrainian peasants begging in Moscow; the latter to an order to recruit local Jews to repopulate Jewish collective farms in Ukraine which had become “depopulated” during the famine.

Fainsod's book is rivaled only by Leonard Shapiro's 1960 masterpiece, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, and Robert Conquest's 1968 study of Stalin's purge of the later 1930s, *The Great Terror*. Neither had much to do with the Famine, and Shapiro gave it but a passing mention.<sup>77</sup> Conquest, who later turned his full attention to the Famine, devoted a few pages to the issue in *The Great Terror*, calling it "perhaps the only case in history of a purely man-made famine."<sup>78</sup>

Hryhory Kostiuk's 1960 monograph, *Stalinist Rule in the Ukraine*, by far the most rigorous study of the period up to that time, relied almost exclusively upon the Soviet press of the period in order to reconstruct the political struggle within the context of which the Famine took place. Kostiuk introduced the issue by reminding his readers "that in seven years the question of Ukrainian national opposition was discussed five times by the leaders of the Comintern."<sup>79</sup> Kostiuk attempted to assess Stalin's motives:

The consolidation of absolute power in the Kremlin resulted in the gradual transformation of the non-Russian republics into administrative and economic provinces of Russia. Therefore the destruction of all national opposition in local Party organizations was conducted simultaneously with the liquidation of the inner opposition within the CPSU... In subduing the various opposition movements (within the Communist Party—JM) by terror and by use of the Party apparatus, Stalin must have realized that in order to maintain his position and to carry out his further plans, he must transform the Party into his tool. This was difficult as long as the old cadres, familiar with Stalin's insignificant role in the early history of the Party, were still alive. The relations between the Soviet republics and Moscow also had to be altered and the entire structure of the Soviet state had to be drastically changed. In order to fulfill Stalin's objectives, three conditions had to be met:

- 1) Centralization of the Party apparatus and elimination from it of the Bolshevik "Old Guard."

- 2) Complete subordination of the State administration to the Party.

- 3) Economic unification of all the national republics and their subordination to the Kremlin.

The Soviet history of the thirties bears witness to the execution of these plans. The resistance which arose was ruthlessly crushed. The Bolshevik "Old Guard" was exterminated in Russia and the national republics, all traces of national autonomy were wiped out and those who could not or would not comply with Stalin's policies were branded as "enemies of the people," "spies," "saboteurs" or "foreign agents" and were subsequently dispatched to oblivion by the GPU-NKVD.

While still further concentrating all power in his hands, Stalin embarked on the industrialization of the country in order to bolster its economic strength and defensive capacity. To achieve this, it was necessary to "find the means." The means, indeed, were crucial. They had to be sought "only within the country itself." Workers and peasants alike were asked to sacrifice all their efforts, and often their lives, to enable Stalin to fulfill his dream.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> "As the years wore on, to an ever-mounting crescendo of self-congratulation from the party leaders, exaggerated claims of success, faked statistics and exhortation to yet greater efforts, the more sober realities of the situation produced a corresponding depression. In place of the promised plenty, there was food shortage, accompanied by strict rationing, especially marked during the famine year of 1932-3." Leonard Shapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York, Random House, 1971), pp. 391-392.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* (New York, Collier, 1971), p. 45.

<sup>79</sup> Hryhory Kostiuk, *Stalinist Rule in the Ukraine: a Study of the Decade of Mass Terror (1929-1939)* (London, Atlantic Books, 1960), p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

Kostiuk described the intense struggle which accompanied collectivization in Ukraine, the breakdown of agriculture which led to outbreaks of hunger in the early months of 1932, and the confrontation between the Ukrainian party leadership and Stalin's representatives at the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference in July 1932. Kostiuk pointed also to a series of political events in 1932 which showed the growing tension between Moscow and the Ukrainian Communists. Some of the most important on the side of self-assertion were the following:

- 1) The triumphant (January–JM) celebration of the sixtieth birthday of Skrypnyk, “the undying Bolshevik, one of the best representatives of the old Leninist guard, one of the best fighters and builders of the Soviet Socialist Ukraine.” All this—with no mention of Stalin.
- 2) The clearly demonstrative decision of the Ukrainian Economic Council on July 14, 1932 (six days after the Third Party Conference), modifying the decree of the Soviet of People's Commissars of the USSR dated June 29, 1932, concerning the deliveries of butter in the Ukraine. According to this modification, the original target of 16,400 tons of butter was reduced to 11,214 tons.
- 3) Chubar's (September–JM) speech at the *Komsomol* conference in Kharkov, pleading for more freedom and decentralization.
- 4) The surge of local pride in the construction in Ukraine of Dniprelstan—the first giant power station in the USSR.<sup>81</sup>

On the other hand, CP(b)U compliance with Moscow's orders for drastic measures to fulfill the quota is shown by

- 1) The (November–JM) directive “to organize immediately the return of grain distributed (to the peasants), and to direct it toward the fulfillment of grain deliveries.”
- 2) The (December–JM) sanctioning of the complete surrender of the seed supplies of the *kolkhozes*.
- 3) Threats to arrest and liquidate lower officials of the *kolkhozes*.<sup>82</sup>

The struggle reached a major turning point in January with Stalin's appointment of Postyshev as CP(b)U Second Secretary and his virtual occupation of Ukraine with thousands of new men sent by Moscow. Kostiuk wrote:

The purpose of Stalin's offensive against the Ukraine was not only to force collectivization upon the recalcitrant and stubborn peasants. His plan was grand and far-reaching in scope. It was to destroy the spiritual and cultural backbone of the entire nation, as well as to terrorize the peasantry. Without this complete annihilation of spiritual resources and cultural achievements, Stalin's victory in Ukraine could never be complete. Realizing this, he decided to unleash all the forces of devastation at his disposal against those who stood for an independent Ukrainian culture, tradition and consciousness, even though they were devoted Communists.<sup>83</sup>

Kostiuk refrained from arguing the existence of a pre-conceived plan to create a famine, while also avoiding the trap into which Holubnychy and so many non-Ukrainian scholars fell—dealing with the Famine apart from Soviet nationality policy. His strict adherence to the evidence serves as a model for subsequent work.

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Wasył Hryshko's *Moscow Does not Believe in Tears*, first published in Ukrainian in 1963, was revised and expanded over the years and finally appeared in English in 1983 as *The Ukrainian Holocaust of 1933*. According to Hryshko, the forced collectivization of agriculture entailed a national aspect from the initial wave of dekulakization, which he called the first act of the Ukrainian tragedy:

Here lies the essential difference between Ukraine and Russia during the liquidation of the *kulaks*. Although the campaign claimed many Russian peasants as victims, the implementation of the campaign was less severe in Russia than in Ukraine (since Russia proper, with the exception of the non-Russian regions adjacent to Ukraine, was not considered to be a "crucial grain growing region") [the author is here referring to the fact that in collectivization the main grain producing regions were given priority—JM], and the campaign had different national consequences. There was less dekulakization and deportation in Russia in proportion to the peasant population, and the peasants were deported within the boundaries of Russia. The Ukrainian peasants, however, were deported *en masse* to a foreign land, where they were assimilated and lost to the Ukrainian nation. Thus, from its very beginnings collectivization had in Ukraine a national aspect that was not found anywhere in Russia.<sup>84</sup>

Citing the figures given earlier by Holubnychy, Hryshko pointed out that the main cause of the Famine

was not the chaotic and hasty collectivization ordered by Moscow, but the deliberate policy of plundering Ukraine by ordering excessively high grain deliveries... What is most striking here ... is that Ukraine had to deliver a much larger percentage of its harvests than any other republic...<sup>85</sup>

Hryshko, with some reason, blames the communist leadership in Ukraine for its acquiescence in carrying out Moscow's disastrous peasant policies until early 1932, when those same Ukrainian authorities unsuccessfully attempted to get Moscow to lower the quotas.

This was the beginning of what Hryshko called the second act of the tragedy. Moscow responded by proclaiming policies which were designed to kill as many peasants as possible. One of the most notorious was the infamous law of August 7, 1932 on socialist property. Others were the November 20, 1932 Ukrainian decree canceling the distribution of food advances to collective farmers where the state procurement quotas had not been fulfilled; the November 17 Ukrainian resolution denouncing recalcitrant local organizations for being "agents of the *kulaks* and Petliurists," i.e., of Ukrainian nationalists abroad; the December 6 Ukrainian decree imposing an economic blockade upon villages which had "criminally sabotaged" the procurements; and demands in December in *Pravda* that "Ukraine's shameful lagging behind this year" be overcome by the "application of more severe methods" and the implementation of "a decisive struggle against remnants of the *kulaks*, especially in Ukraine."<sup>86</sup> All this was justified by Stalin himself, who declared in the All-Union Central Executive Committee on November 27 that among the collectivized peasantry there were

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<sup>84</sup> Wasył Hryshko, *The Ukrainian Holocaust of 1933*, trans. Marco Carynyk (Toronto, Bahriany Foundation, 1983), pp. 77-78.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79-85.

individual detachments which are going against the Soviet power and are supporting the sabotage of grain deliveries. It would be foolish if Communists assumed that the collective farm is a socialist form of economy and therefore did not respond to this blow by individual collective farmers and collective farms with a decisive blow.<sup>87</sup>

What Hryshko called the third act came at the turn of the new year. With nothing left to seize, procurements fell off, and Moscow responded by using this as an excuse to accuse the Ukrainian authorities of "criminal laxity." Stalin intervened, appointing Pavel Postyshev the *de facto* dictator of Ukraine on January 24, 1933. In a passage found only in the 1983 edition, Hryshko explained Postyshev's appointment:

Although Postyshev assumed power when the famine was already underway, he was the real commander of the famine and the physical personification of Moscow's anti-Ukrainian policy. Moscow prepared the famine with the aid of Ukrainian Communists who were blinded by their faith in "class struggle" and "internationalism," but it was able to realize its genocidal intention only with non-Ukrainian hands, because even the Ukrainian Communists, if they still thought of themselves as Ukrainians, were marked for extinction. Thus, to carry out the final decisive phase of the genocide—genocide in its pure form—Moscow had to send the Russian Postyshev, accompanied by a handpicked staff that included such prominent members of the Moscow Party center as M. Khatayevich, Ye. Veger, and others.<sup>88</sup>

Hryshko also pointed out that Postyshev fulfilled a dual mandate:

As for the famine, Postyshev not only failed to prevent the catastrophe, but in his first speech immediately after assuming his duties in Ukraine announced that there could be no talk of issuing grain to the Ukrainian collective farmers to stave off famine or of issuing seed to the collective farms... Realizing later that given this attitude there would be no Spring sowing and no harvest to expropriate, Moscow made Ukraine a loan of its own grain, exploiting this opportunity to make cynical propaganda about its own charity. But no relief was ever issued to the starving peasants. Only during the Spring sowing, to force the collective farmers to work, was some food given them, although only in the fields, during work.

Postyshev's particular mission in Ukraine was to use the famine, which had paralyzed the Ukrainian peasantry and excluded it from the political struggle, as a basis for a purge of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and the Ukrainian elements in the Communist Party, which had been reborn during the period of Ukrainization, and to liquidate the consequences of Ukrainization. It was with a dismantling of the Ukrainization program that Postyshev began his work in 1933, quickly letting Ukrainians understand that he had arrived not to save Ukraine from the famine, which he refused to notice, but to save Ukrainians from the Ukrainian language, which supposedly had begun to diverge from the Russian language because of "wrecking" by imaginary Ukrainian nationalists and "mistakes" by the Ukrainian Communists, who had supposedly permitted a dangerous "national deviation."<sup>89</sup>

All in all, a very good summary of what actually happened.

In 1964 the prestigious British journal *Soviet Studies* published an article that for two decades remained the standard English language work on the Famine, "The Soviet Famine of 1932-1934" by Dana Dalrymple.

Dalrymple began by observing that

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.



The disruptions growing out of collectivization led to the famine and the death of millions of peasants. Obviously this is not a point that the Soviet leaders would wish to emphasize. And, in fact, they did such a good job of suppressing knowledge of it that few today know of the famine, and even some otherwise well-informed students of the Soviet Union suggest that the famine was of little consequence.

He then set out "to clarify the record by presenting a comprehensive, documented view of the man-made famine of 1932-1934."<sup>90</sup>

Dalrymple surveyed in concise and readable fashion the various press accounts, Western scholarly literature, mortality estimates which averaged out to 5.5 million, and some of the more vivid eyewitness accounts. By examining crop and procurement figures it was rather easy to show that the Famine had been caused by the state's seizure of the crop and its refusal to allow relief into the stricken areas. Dalrymple did not examine the issue of nationality policy, and he seems to have given rather excessive credence to reports which indicated that the Famine continued into 1934 and perhaps even later.<sup>91</sup>

Perhaps Dalrymple's most original contribution was his analysis of the reasons behind official efforts to conceal the Famine:

Why did the Soviets choose to hide the famine of 1932-1934? Was it because they thought they might be under some pressure to cut off exports if they admitted the famine and invited relief? Not likely. In the autumn of 1922 '...Moscow authorities announced their intention of exporting food and at the same time asked foreign relief for four million Russians.' The purpose—as ten years later—was to buy machinery for industrialization. And even then the policy was not new: Food had been exported, and relief accepted during the famines of 1911, 1906, and 1891.

Were the Soviets afraid of the disruptive influence of foreigners...? Again the answer is probably no. There were a number of Americans already in the country doing technical assistance work, and there were a number of foreign agricultural concessions; all, it would seem, without any particular disruptive influence...

The reasons for the Soviets' desire to hide the famine must lie elsewhere. One possibility has already been suggested: The Soviet desire to beat the last of the resistance out of the peasants and to complete the drive into the socialized farms. If the government were to acknowledge the famine and accept relief (it could not very well admit famine and refuse famine aid at the same time) it would mean in effect a concession to the peasants. But since the government was effectively at war with the peasants, this was a compromise that they would not readily make.

Another, and perhaps equally important reason may center about the matter of keeping face. The Soviets had been trying to spread the story of the economic and social triumph of the first Soviet five-year plan. To admit the presence of a terrible famine at the conclusion of the plan would have hardly been the sort of triumphal conclusion that the leaders might have desired...

But more than prestige may have been involved. The Soviets at about this time were working for (a) diplomatic recognition by the United States, (b) admission into the League of Nations, and (c) 'non-aggression' agreements with various European nations. If the story of the famine were made better known, Russia's cause would not have been enhanced—both because the famine was essentially man-made, and because the Russians had done practically nothing to alleviate it.<sup>92</sup>

Relying mainly upon the accounts published by Malcolm Muggeridge and Eugene Lyons, Dalrymple described how the Soviets were able to suppress the

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<sup>90</sup> Dana Dalrymple, "The Soviet Famine of 1932-1934," *Soviet Studies*, XV:3, January 1964, p. 250.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 250-284.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 277-278.

story by controlling the Western press. Lastly, he mentioned the treatment of the Famine by the Soviet writer Ivan Stadniuk.<sup>93</sup> A year later Dalrymple supplemented his original article with a number of additional references, most notably the above-cited account by Dr. William Horsley Gantt.<sup>94</sup>

Dalrymple's work was extremely influential in the field of Soviet studies, and after its appearance it was virtually impossible for any reputable scholar in the field to deny or minimize the fact that a famine had taken place in the early 1930s at the cost of millions of lives. His causal explanation for the Famine, relying on economic imperatives and the desire to punish and complete the collectivization of a recalcitrant peasantry, became standard, as did his figure of 5.5 million victims, based solely on averaging the figures found in various accounts. Virtually no official Soviet sources were used. Yet, it is to Dalrymple's credit that the Famine was rescued from relative obscurity. Dalrymple collected as many scraps of information about the Famine as he could find and published them in a format easily available to scholars. In so doing, he performed a valuable service, and for two decades his article was considered the standard work on the topic.

Only in 1968 was the first serious effort made to gauge foreign response to the Famine. In that year Roman Serbyn wrote an article based on published British Foreign Office documents, Parliamentary debates, and the press. Serbyn demonstrated that at least in Great Britain both the government and newspaper readers knew that the Famine was purely artificial, affected only certain parts of the Soviet Union, and that it "was seen as a weapon against ... the peasants and the non-Russians."<sup>95</sup>

In 1969 Alec Nove, Great Britain's leading economic historian of the Soviet Union first published *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.*, which devoted five pages to the economic crisis of 1932-1933. Nove saw the promulgation of the law of August 7, 1932 on socialist property as evidence that Stalin considered himself at war with the peasantry:

Even Stalin did not do such things without good reason. The fact that such laws were passed in peacetime show that he, at least, knew he was at war. His letter to Sholokhov, which Khrushchev cited thirty years later, showed what he thought.<sup>96</sup>

Stalin's reasoning, Nove continued, was that the peasants were making a "war of starvation" against the Soviet state. He gave the outline of the story as follows:

The essential problem was all too simple. Harvests were poor. The peasants were demoralized. Collective farms were inefficient, the horses slaughtered or starving, tractors as yet too few and poorly maintained, transport facilities inadequate, the retail distribution system (especially in rural areas) utterly disorganized by an overprecipitate abolition of private trade. Soviet sources speak of appallingly low standards of husbandry... Very high exports in 1930 and 1931 depleted

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 279-281.

<sup>94</sup> *Idem.*, "The Soviet Famine of 1932-1934: Some Further References," *Soviet Studies*, XVI:4, April 1965, pp. 471-474.

<sup>95</sup> R. Serbyn, "British Public Opinion and the Famine in Ukraine," *The New Review: a Journal of East European History*, VIII:3, September 1968, pp. 89-101. Quotation from p. 93.

<sup>96</sup> Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.* (Baltimore, Penguin, 1972), p. 176.

reserves, and the rapid growth of the urban population led to a sharp increase in food requirements in towns, while livestock products declined precipitately with the disappearance of so high a proportion of the animals. The government tried to take more out of a smaller crop... Procurements in 1931 left many peasants and their animals with too little to eat. The Ukraine and North Caucasus suffered particularly severely. Collectivized peasants relied almost exclusively on grain distribution by *kolkhozes* for their bread, since money was virtually useless in this period; bread was rationed in towns and unobtainable in the country save at astronomical "free" prices. These excessive procurements threatened the very existence of the peasantry in some areas...

All this led in 1932 to trouble, pilfering, indiscipline, concealment of crops. As a result, Stalin evidently decided to relax the procurements pressure somewhat, and the procurements plan for 1932, which had originally been fixed at an impossible 29.5 million tons, was reduced to 18.1 millions, while greater freedom was offered to *kolkhozes* and remaining individual peasants to sell on the free market, providing the delivery plan was fulfilled first.

However, conditions grew more chaotic. Procurement organs relaxed their pressure, and ... grain flowed into unofficial channels, and in particular into the peasants' own storehouses, since the harvest was not a good one and the food shortages of the previous winter were vividly recalled. Discipline collapsed in some areas. The reduced state procurement plan was threatened. In the North Caucasus the harvest was particularly poor, a mere 4.4-5.9 quintals per hectare, a miserable crop on the best land in the USSR...

This led to state countermeasures, which in turn led to the great tragedy: The famine of 1933. 'All forces were directed to procurements.' ... Somewhere along the way over 10 million people 'demographically' disappeared. (Some, of course, were never born.) Many died in the terrible early thirties, and I myself spoke to Ukrainians who remember these horrors. Yet neither the local nor the national press ever mentioned a famine... Clearly, historians who believe that there is no fact without documentary proof would be hard put to it to describe the events of the period.<sup>97</sup>

Nove's account deservedly became a standard one, but based on what we already know and on what we will see below, it requires modification. It is not known whether the food crisis of 1931 was, in fact, worse in Ukraine and the North Caucasus than elsewhere, but we do know that in early 1932 central authorities acknowledged difficulties only in other areas. Indeed, grain over and above the 1931 quota was seized from the North Caucasus and transported as aid to the east, while in July 1932 the authorities in Ukraine were bluntly told that the necessity of aiding other areas took precedence over Ukraine's difficulties. As for the 1932 May Reforms, the quotas were lowered only to the level of what was actually procured from the 1931 harvest. Moreover, the promised freer trade was to be allowed only after all state quotas had been met at the official end of the procurements campaign, that is, no earlier than January 15, 1933. In reality, then, these reforms represented little in the way of either lessening the burden on the peasants or giving them an incentive to produce. In addition, we shall see that there is a great deal more documentary evidence for what happened than was known in 1969 and that it indicates that Stalin's "war of starvation" was waged primarily against the peasants in certain specific territories.

Moshe Lewin dealt with an issue closely connected with the Famine in his 1974 article, "Taking Grain": Soviet Policies of Agricultural Procurements before the War."<sup>98</sup> His analysis of the Famine deserves to be quoted at length. In the Fall of 1932, he wrote:

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177-181.

<sup>98</sup> Moshe Lewin, "Taking Grain": Soviet Policies of Agricultural Procurements before the War," *Essays in Honour of E. H. Carr* (Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1974), pp. 281-323.

A new offensive was launched—and first of all a terroristic wave against agencies and local authorities still too reluctant to re-engage in excesses. Thanks to powerful ‘stimulants’, new records of anti-peasant repression were to be beaten. The local authorities had no other way out than to return the pressure downwards. Formerly attacked for their ruthlessness, they now saw themselves attacked for their ‘rotten liberalism’ towards the laggards, especially in the three principal granaries, the Ukraine, the North Caucasus and the lower Volga (responsible for some 60 per cent of all *zagotovki* [state grain procurements—JM]). Officials understood well the meanings of the calls addressed to them to engage in a ‘truly Bolshevik struggle for grain’, to ‘carry blows’ against the squandering of grain (this aimed at ... unauthorized distributions to field workers and *kolkhoz* funds), and finally, to get the grain ‘at any price’ (*vo chto by to ni stalo*)—another of those vague directives with a clear meaning, but still easily disowned by the leadership when necessary.

Spurred by a flood of orders and pressures, the local agencies now veered sharply from their alleged ‘rotten liberalism’ into another batch of ‘sharp measures of repression’, as our source put it. Though the physical limits of an exhausted countryside and low crops forced the Government to lower its demands in many regions (the Ukraine and the Northern Caucasus had their quotas lowered consecutively four times), it still needed a big battle for the rest. The Ukraine, the North Caucasus, the two Volga regions, and other grain producing areas, according to archives quoted by a modern author, ‘dropped out of the organised influence of Party and Government’, and the Government responded by transforming these areas into a vast arena of an unprecedented repressive operation. Stalin, who took over personal command and shaped these policies, called for ‘a smashing blow’ to be dealt on *kolkhozniki* [collective farmers—JM], because ‘whole squads of them’, as he saw it, ‘turned against the Soviet state’. A special Central Committee meeting was held in January 1933 to endorse some of the old and to adopt new, severe measures to keep the countryside under control.

Some of the actions taken before and after this plenum can be mentioned here. An unspecified but large number of peasants were arrested, and often, especially in the Kuban district (Northern Caucasus), were deprived of most of their belongings and deported to the North. Mass arrests, purges and dismissals struck many party members for having engaged in ‘defending kulaks’ and in ‘anti-state sabotage of the *zagotovki*’. In many places the squads of the *zagotoviteli* [persons engaged in forcibly procuring grain for the state—JM] went berserk (with an unmistakable blessing from above: Stalin, Kaganovich, Molotov, and other top leaders were on the spot) and stripped the recalcitrant villages of any grain they could lay their hands on. This included the grain the peasants had legitimately earned and been paid for their *trudodni* [labor days, a complex calculation of the quantity and quality of labor a given collective farmer had expended on the collective farm, used to calculate the members’ share of what remained of the harvest after obligations to the state and *kolkhoz* management were taken out—JM]. This was an obvious sentence to death by starvation, though an unknown number of straight shootings also probably took place.

As these events were unfolding, the grain-producing areas were by now, in the Winter and Spring of 1932-3, in the throes of a terrible famine. The Soviet government never officially acknowledged this fact, though the woolly formula used by the Ukrainian C[entral] C[ommittee] (‘the critical food situation in many *kolkhozy*’) was the nearest to the mark. But publications in the post-Stalin period, especially *belles lettres*, said much more, though without giving estimates of the scope of the disaster.

Many factors contributed to the famine. The vagaries of climate and crops were not this time the central cause. The crops in 1931 and 1932, though poor, were not catastrophic. Collectivisation which played havoc with agricultural production was even more of a factor. The slaughter of stock dealt a shattering blow to Soviet agriculture, and the retreat the Government operated by allowing *kolkhozniki* to have a private plot and a family cow came too late to avoid the damage. As to the surviving herds, the newly founded and hastily organised *kolkhozy* did not know how to cope with them—and the hæmorrhage continued for quite a time.

But the squeeze operated on the rural economy by the *zagotovki* was probably the main factor. Thirty-two per cent from the 1931 crop (and an even higher percentage from *kolkhozy*) was a blood-letting. And this was the national average. In some regions—the Kiev district, for example—no more than one-fifth of the crop was left to the *kolkhozniki*. Facing the dwindling

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cattle and the disappearing grain, the newly organised *kolkhozy*, caught in the *zagotovki* clutches, lacked both experience and interest in doing a proper job for ensuring the next crop.

Moreover, as if the cup was not yet full enough, the Government, fascinated by its heavy industry targets and mindless of minimal precautions, embarked upon an ambitious grain exportation policy. During the N.E.P. only relatively modest amounts were exported, but in 1930 a massive 4.8 million tons, and the next year another huge 5.2 million tons, were shipped abroad. This turned out to be folly. In the Spring of 1932 the situation in the countryside was so bad that the Government even had to import some grain, though it was a trickle which could not do much to alleviate the situation. Prestige was probably the reason why more was not imported to help out the starving.<sup>99</sup>

Until recently, this was about as good a brief summary of what took place as one could find in Sovietological literature. It is not, however, the whole picture. Lewin omitted any mention of the fact that Stalin and Molotov had officially acknowledged the difficulties arising from drought in the Volga Basin during the 1931-1932 crop year. He also ignored the fact that they had loosened somewhat the reins of repression in the countryside. Also interesting is the fact that Lewin has been quoted as denouncing subsequent work as something that should not be pursued:

"This is crap, rubbish," said Moshe Lewin (of Robert Conquest's *Harvest of Sorrow*)... "I am an anti-Stalinist, but I don't see how this campaign adds to our knowledge. Its adding horrors, adding horrors, until it becomes a pathology."<sup>100</sup>

As Robert Conquest has rightly pointed out, Lewin's position seems to be "not that it didn't happen, but that I ought not write about it: odd for a scholar."<sup>101</sup>

An attempt to place Russian and Soviet famines in a historical and geographical context appeared in 1976. This was an article by William Dando, "Man-Made Famines: Some Geographical Insights from an Exploratory Study of a Millennium of Russian Famines." On the basis of secondary historical literature, Dando argued that since A.D. 971, the time of the earliest recorded famine on the territory of what is now the USSR, most famines there had been man-made.<sup>102</sup> By this, he did not mean that they were intentional, merely that they stemmed from social factors such as transportation breakdowns, cultural factors, overpopulation, and sometimes political errors or designs. On the famine of 1933, he noted merely that various observers had attributed it "largely to the loss of individual initiative and the unexampled pauperization of the peasants by collectivization."<sup>103</sup>

The next significant work on the topic was an article on the Soviet historiography of collectivization, written by Poland's leading historian of Ukrainian Communism, Janusz Radziejowski. This was a survey of some of the more important Soviet

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 294-296.

<sup>100</sup> As quoted by Jeff Coplon, "In Search of a Soviet Holocaust: a 55-Year-Old Famine Feeds the Right," *Village Voice*, XXXIII:2, January 12, 1988, p. 31.

<sup>101</sup> *Village Voice*, XXXIII:5, February 2, 1988, p. 4.

<sup>102</sup> W. A. Dando, "Man-Made Famines: Some Geographical Insights from an Exploratory Study of a Millennium of Russian Famines," *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*, IV, 1976, pp. 219-234.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

historiography of the collectivization of Ukrainian agriculture.<sup>104</sup> Most significant was Radziejowski's calculation of a "demographic loss" of 9,263,000 Ukrainians between 1926 and 1939. He explained:

The demographic loss consists of those who died prematurely (that is, were killed), the children not born to persons prematurely dead or to persons unable to marry or remain married owing to external factors, and those consciously or unconsciously assimilated to another nationality...

A closer determination of the relative proportions among these three types of loss does not seem possible on the basis of present data. But in any case, it is impossible to agree with the notion that this decrease in population (after five years of normal reproduction, 1934-9) can be attributed solely to the assimilation of Ukrainians by Russians. The later demographic history of this people precludes the likelihood of such an explanation.<sup>105</sup>

Radziejowski also deserves a great deal of credit for pointing out something that ought to be obvious but has been all too often overlooked, "the purchasing agencies (to which those who seized the grain were obliged to deliver it—JM) were organized centrally and operated independently of the local authorities. The later development of agrarian relations constantly strengthened this centralization."<sup>106</sup>

Radziejowski's article elevated the scholarly discussion of the Famine beyond the limits established by Dalrymple. He did this by pointing out that Soviet historiography was both available and indispensable for understanding the Famine which the Soviets themselves had never fully admitted.

A major landmark in continuing research on the Famine was a special project initiated by Harvard University's Ukrainian Research Institute in 1981 with financial support from the Ukrainian Studies Fund and the Ukrainian National Association. The most important work produced by the project was Robert Conquest's *Harvest of Sorrow*, which won immediate recognition as the definitive treatment of the Famine.<sup>107</sup>

During the course of this project, Conquest worked with James Mace, who also produced a number of publications, focusing in particular on the nationality policy aspect of the Famine.<sup>108</sup> Mace's book, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation*, is the standard work on trends within the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine that were condemned as "bourgeois-nationalist deviations," before and during the Famine. It explores how the Ukrainization policy of the 1920s was adopted by a Soviet government which had been imposed on Ukraine from Russia in an attempt to placate the Ukrainian national intelligentsia and its

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<sup>104</sup> Janusz Radziejowski, "Collectivization in Ukraine in Light of Soviet Historiography," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, V:2(9), Fall 1980, pp. 3-17.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>108</sup> See, for example, James E. Mace, "The 'Ukrainian Problem' and How Stalin Tried to Solve It," *Russia*, No. 5-6, 1982, pp. 15-34; *idem.*, "The Man-Made Famine of 1933 in Soviet Ukraine," *Toward the Understanding and Prevention of Genocide: Proceedings of the International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide*, ed. Israel Charny (Boulder, Westview Press, 1984), pp. 67-83; *idem.*, "Famine and Nationalism in Soviet Ukraine," *Problems of Communism*, May-June 1984, pp. 37-50.

mass constituency in the countryside. The co-opting of the left wing of Ukrainian revolutionary socialism by the Soviets led to the expression of Ukrainian aspirations by those whom their fellow Ukrainians viewed as traitors to the national cause—the Ukrainian communists. Meanwhile, the concessions made to the Ukrainians in the 1920s tended to legitimize a measure of Ukrainian identity and self-assertion within the party. This led to the evolution of a relatively autonomous Soviet Ukraine which promoted the cultural and social development of the Ukrainian nation within the Soviet framework. Such a course, however, was seen as a threat to the unity of the Soviet Union and to Russian hegemony in Ukraine. The central Soviet authorities in Moscow gained the opportunity to alter radically its nationality policy in Ukraine with the forced collectivization of agriculture. Collectivization, in turn, alienated the peasant constituency of Ukrainian nationalism to the point that no national concessions could ever hope to reconcile them to Soviet rule. The collectivization of agriculture required breaking the peasantry throughout the Soviet Union, and in Ukraine this meant breaking the basic constituency of Ukrainian nationalism. As collectivization progressed, so did crop seizures. In 1932 warnings of impending disaster by Ukrainian authorities were ignored by Moscow, and, once famine began to rage, Moscow took measures deliberately calculated to maximize the resultant loss of life. It is clear that from December 1932 the Famine was connected with a campaign against Ukrainian “bourgeois-nationalism” that practically destroyed Ukrainian elites, while the geography of the Famine shows that it was deliberately focused upon territories containing peoples that Stalin found particularly troublesome at a time of transition in nationality policy.<sup>109</sup>

In the same year that Mace’s book was published, Sergei Maksudov (pseudonym) published a study tracing the geography of the Famine by examining the age structure of the rural female population in 1959. Since famine causes lower birthrates and higher infant mortality, famine also influences the age structure of those areas where it occurs. This can best be seen by examining the least geographically mobile section of the population—rural women. The Soviet census of 1959 was the first since 1926 to give rural-urban and male-female population breakdowns by age and region. This census, however, only gave age data in five-year age groups, so it can only reveal evidence of low fertility and high infant mortality for the years 1929-33. An abnormally low number of rural females born in 1929-1933 resided in 1959 in Ukraine, the North Caucasus Territory, Kazakhstan, some parts of the Volga Basin, and parts of Western Siberia. These then, are the areas of the Soviet Union which suffered most during the forced collectivization of agriculture and subsequent famine.<sup>110</sup>

In 1983 the world’s first international scholarly conference on the Ukrainian Famine was held in Montreal. Selected papers from this conference later appeared in book form.<sup>111</sup> Almost every contributor broke some new ground, but most

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<sup>109</sup> James E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1933* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard, 1983), *passim*.

<sup>110</sup> S. Maksudov, “Geografii goloda 1933 goda” (Geography of the Famine of 1933), *SSSR: vnutrennia protivorechie* (USSR: Internal Contradictions), No. 7, 1983, pp. 5-17.

<sup>111</sup> Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko, eds., *Famine in Ukraine, 1932-1933* (Edmonton, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986). It contained the following: James E. Mace,

significant were probably the papers by Bohdan Krawchenko and Sergei Maksudov. Krawchenko amply documented the chaos accompanying collectivization in Ukraine. Maksudov showed that even if one assumes that the 1939 Soviet census—which was taken shortly after a census was withdrawn for “diminishing the population”—were absolutely accurate and the mass resettlement of Russian peasants in Ukraine after the Famine had no effect on its population, Ukraine lost at least four and a half million people between the 1926 and 1939 Soviet censuses, an exceedingly conservative estimate.

Despite such evidence, certain scholars still wrote on the Famine without taking into account the role of state grain seizures even as one of several contributing factors. One of R. W. Davies's most prominent students, S. G. Wheatcroft, presented a paper at the March 1985 annual conference of the British National Association of Soviet and East European Studies entitled “The Soviet Economic Crisis of 1932: the Crisis in Agriculture,” which depicted the Famine merely as a crisis in agriculture. He shifted the focus from the peasantry to the state's difficulty in finding the desired quantity of grain to seize. Wheatcroft stated that

While not dismissing the significance of peasant volition and the lack of material incentives, or the effect of the weather, I conclude that by 1932 it was the very critical shortage of traction power, particularly in the Ukraine and the Southern Production Region [The North Caucasus, Volga Basin], that was of most significance. Given this shortage of draft power, particularly in the Southern Production Region, there were bound to be delays in carrying out the major harvesting, winter harvesting, and winter sowing campaigns upon which the fate of arable production was highly dependent.<sup>112</sup>

The rather obvious fact that the state had bled the countryside dry in the Ukrainian and Cossack regions was not even worthy of mention. Such a gross misstatement of the historical problem is analogous to studying the problem of theft from the standpoint of the thief who has trouble finding enough to steal.

It was Conquest who in the following year became the first scholar to document thoroughly what he appropriately called the terror-famine. Conquest placed the famine firmly within its dual context of the forced collectivization of agriculture and the assault on Ukrainians as a nation. He was able to do this by tracing the two interwoven threads of Bolshevik policy toward non-Russians, particularly Ukrainians, and toward the peasantry from the revolution. He followed these threads through the period of concessions to both peasants and Ukrainians in the 1920s, through collectivization and dekulakization, to the assault on Ukrainian national self-assertion and the Famine. Particularly noteworthy is his detailed use of

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“The Famine of 1933: a Survey of the Sources;” Bohdan Krawchenko, “The Man-Made Famine of 1932-1933 and Collectivization in Soviet Ukraine;” M. Maksudov, “Ukraine's Demographic Losses 1927-1938;” James E. Mace, “The Famine of 1933: a Survey of the Sources;” Marco Carynnyk, “Making the News Fit to Print: Walter Duranty, the *New York Times* and the Ukrainian Famine of 1933;” André Liebich, “Russian Mensheviks and the Famine of 1933;” Marco Carynnyk, “Blind Eye to Murder: Britain, the United States and the Ukrainian Famine of 1933;” Wsevolod Isajiw, “The Impact of the Man-Made Famine on the Structure of Ukrainian Society;” Roman Serbyn, “The Famine of 1921-1923: a Model for 1933?” Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, “Conceptualizations of Genocide and Ethnocide.”

<sup>112</sup> S. G. Wheatcroft, “The Soviet Economic Crisis of 1932: the Crisis in Agriculture,” unpublished paper presented to the Annual Conference of the National Association of Soviet and East European Studies of Great Britain, March 23-25, 1985, pp. 12-13.



Ukrainian eyewitness accounts published in the West in the 1950s and hitherto virtually untapped by Sovietologists. He demonstrated their veracity by comparing them with fictionalized Soviet accounts from the Khrushchev era. Conquest showed that in 1932 and 1933 an artificially created famine made the Ukrainian SSR, the contiguous and largely Ukrainian North Caucasus Territory to its east, and the largely German and Tatar regions of the Volga Basin,

like one vast Belsen. A quarter of the rural population, men, women, and children, lay dead or dying, the rest in various stages of debilitation with no strength to bury their families or neighbors. At the same time (as at Belsen), well-fed squads of police or party officials supervised the victims.<sup>113</sup>

Especially appalling was the fate of children during the famine. "A whole generation of rural children, in the USSR as a whole but especially in the Ukraine, was destroyed or maimed."<sup>114</sup> Conquest calculated the mortality due to the Famine of 1932-1933 at 7,000,000—5,000,000 in Ukraine, 1,000,000 in the North Caucasus Territory, and another million elsewhere.<sup>115</sup> Conquest summarized his findings as follows:

1. the cause of the famine was the setting of highly excessive grain requisition targets by Stalin and his associates.
2. Ukrainian party leaders made it clear at the start to Stalin and his associates that these targets were highly excessive.
3. the targets were nevertheless enforced until starvation began.
4. Ukrainian leaders pointed this out to Stalin and his associates and the truth was also made known to him and them by others.
5. the requisitions nevertheless continued.

Such are the major points. We may add as subsidiary evidence:

6. bread rations, even though low ones, were established in the cities, but no such minimum food allowance was made available in the villages.
7. grain was available in store in the famine area, but was not released to the peasants in their extremity.
8. orders were given, and enforced as far as possible, to prevent peasants entering the towns, and to expel them when they did.
9. orders were given, and enforced, to prevent food, legally obtained, being brought over the republican borders from Russia to the Ukraine.
10. the fact of famine, and a particularly frightful famine at that, is fully established by witnesses...

When it comes to motive, the special measures against the Ukraine and the Kuban were specifically linked with, and were contemporaneous with, a public campaign against their nationalism. In these, and the other areas affected, the apparent concern in the agrarian sphere proper was to break the spirit of the most recalcitrant regions of peasant resentment at collectivization. And when it came to the Party itself the result, and presumable intention, was to eliminate those elements insufficiently disciplined in the suppression of bourgeois-humanitarian feelings.

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<sup>113</sup> Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, p. 3.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306.

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Thus, the facts are firmly established; the motives are consistent with all that is known of Stalinist attitudes; and the verdict of history cannot be other than one of criminal responsibility.<sup>116</sup>

Such a conclusion combines the best of “mainstream” Sovietological research with the best of non-Soviet Ukrainian scholarship. From the evidence to be examined below, we will see that, while this may be supplemented, there is little in it that must be changed.

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 329-330.

## Chapter 2

### POST-STALINIST SOVIET HISTORIOGRAPHY ON THE FAMINE

A surprising number of works published in the Soviet Union have in one way or another touched on issues intimately connected with the Famine of 1932-33. Indeed, two articles have been published dealing with these works—a survey of the Soviet historiography of collectivization in Ukraine by Janusz Radziejowski and a brief survey of Soviet Russian belletristic literature by Boris Vail'.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, all Soviet historiography is subject to the dictates of *partiinost'* (party-mindedness), especially when dealing with the Soviet period. Those who control the Soviet present also control the official past, and the Soviet Clio is ever the servant of politics. When exposing Stalinist excesses was the official watchword, there were times when the "excesses" were allowed to include not only the violence committed against members of the elite, but also against broader segments of society. But this was always the exception.

Soon after the XXth CPSU Congress and Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's "cult of personality," historians began to rediscover that all had not been well in the Ukrainian countryside in 1932-1933. As early as 1957, V. V. Bondarenko wrote:

In 1932 indications of significant backwardness in the republic's agriculture appeared. This was explained partially by the fact that in the Summer of 1932 in many parts of the steppe area unfavorable climatic conditions arose. But the main cause of the backwardness of agriculture was the inadequate leadership of the collective farms by local party and Soviet organs. As a result of the backwardness of agriculture in Ukraine in 1932, there was a substantial decrease in the grain procurements. If by December 1930, 400 million *poods* (1 *pood* = 36 lbs.) had been procured, and in 1931, 380 million *poods*, then by December 1932 the procurements constituted only 195 million *poods*.<sup>2</sup>

When, however, a new textbook, *History of the Ukrainian SSR*, appeared (the first since World War II) in 1958, it included a fairly lengthy discussion of the shortcomings which had led to lower agricultural productivity in the early 1930s: Lack of experience in managing large-scale collectivized agriculture, a decline in labor discipline, the low level of agricultural technology, large losses at harvest time, a large decline in the number of draught animals, and so forth. "In addition to this, in Ukraine serious distortions in carrying out the grain procurements were observed: Collective farms which were able to fulfill the procurements plan were given supplementary plans in order to make up for the shortcomings of other

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<sup>1</sup> Janusz Radziejowski, "Collectivization in Ukraine in Light of Soviet Historiography," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, V:2(9), p. 3-17; Boris Borisovich Vail', "Golod 1933 goda i sovetskaia literatura" (The Famine of 1933 and Soviet Literature), *Obzrenie* (Review), No. 4 (April 1983), pp. 35-36.

<sup>2</sup> V. V. Bondarenko, *Razvitie obshchestvennogo khoziaistva kolkhozov Ukrainy v gody dovoennykh piatiletok* (The Development of the Socialized Economy of Ukraine's Collective Farms during the Prewar Five Year Plans) (Kiev, Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk Ukrainsoi SSR, 1957), p. 179.

collective farms.”<sup>3</sup> After discussing each of these factors, the textbook told its readers, “All this could not help but affect the level of the harvest: The 1932 sowing plan for grain crops was not met in 1932, which resulted in the creation of considerable food supply difficulties.”<sup>4</sup>

The first real sign of freer discussion on the issue of collectivization appeared only in the early 1960s. In 1960, P. S. Zahors’kyi and P. K. Stoian were able to make one of the earliest detailed surveys of the policies which had led to disaster during the total collectivization of agriculture and the early procurement campaigns. In their *Sketches of the History of the Committees of Non-Wealthy Peasants*, they wrote:

Serious distortions were permitted in carrying out the grain procurements. Alongside collective farms which did not fulfill the grain procurements plan, there were collective farms in which all the grain was taken away, supplemental tasks imposed, middle-peasant farms were treated like *kulak* farms, and so forth.

Such distortions along with “*kulak* wrecking” had led Ukrainian agriculture to difficult circumstances in 1931-32, they added.<sup>5</sup> On the Famine itself, however, the authors were silent, thus ending on a positive note—they concentrated on the achievements of the *komnezamy*, which ostensibly facilitated their abolition in the Spring of 1933.

The following year, one of the most interesting neglected works of the entire Khrushchev period appeared—I. I. Slyn’ko’s monograph on the early years of the Machine Tractor Stations in Ukraine: *The Socialist Transformation and Technical Reconstruction of Ukraine’s Agriculture (1927-1932)*. What is particularly interesting is Slyn’ko’s treatment of both the MTS role in procurements campaigns and the campaigns themselves.

Slyn’ko gave one of the best blow-by-blow accounts of the various measures undertaken by Soviet authorities in Ukraine to overcome the “sabotage” by “*kulaks* and hostile elements” of the 1932 grain procurement campaign. “What,” he asked, “were the main reasons for this difficult situation of agriculture in the UkSSR in 1932?” His answer was complex. The class struggle had been extraordinarily intense and the *kulaks* and other hostile elements had strengthened their resistance. The availability of machinery had lagged behind the rate of collectivization. The new collective farms and the distribution of its fruits to its members were poorly organized, such that “the principle of the material interests of the collective farmers” was ignored. The procurements campaign had been planned incorrectly. The number of Communist organizations in the countryside was small and their influence weak, which led to weak organizational and mass agitation work by the party. Moreover, the village remained culturally backward and petty proprietary instincts tenacious among the peasantry and especially in its middle stratum.

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<sup>3</sup> *Istoriia Ukraïns’koï RSR (History of the Ukrainian SSR)* (Kiev, Vydavnytstvo Akademii Nauk Ukraïns’koï RSR, 1958), vol. II, p. 371.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

<sup>5</sup> P. S. Zahors’kyi, P. K. Stoian, *Narysy istorii komitetiv nezamozhnykh selian (Sketches of the History of the Committees of Non-Wealthy Peasants)* (Kiev, Vydavnytstvo Akademii Nauk Ukraïns’koï RSR, 1960), p. 145.

Experienced collective farm managers and qualified technical cadres were in short supply.<sup>6</sup>

The difficulty of the situation lay not in the fact that people were starving to death, but rather that the sowing, harvest, and procurement targets were not met. However, the author's allusion to the lack of consideration paid to the material interests of the peasants and the incorrect planning of the grain procurements alerted knowledgeable readers to what was left unsaid.

How difficult the state found the situation is clear from the author's account of how the procurements were carried out. In 1930, which produced an all time record harvest of 1,355 million *poods* of grain, the procurement quota was raised twice, from an initial 440 million *poods* to 472.3 million, then to 490 million, which produced "great confusion and also created resentment among a substantial segment of the peasantry and thereby complicated the carrying out of the grain procurement campaign."<sup>7</sup> By June 1, 1931, only 447 million *poods* of grain had been procured in Ukraine basically because private farmers, particularly the more affluent stratum bearing the heaviest burden, fell short of their assigned tasks. For this reason, 22,000 so-called expert farms were fined, 23,000 were expropriated, and 5100 persons were taken to court. While most collective farms met or overfulfilled their quotas, the author finds cases of "petty proprietary tendencies." These consisted in giving preference to the needs of the farmers over the needs of the state and even in some cases distributing food to collective farmers before all obligations to the state had been met.<sup>8</sup>

In 1931 the procurement quota was raised to 510 million *poods*, but the harvest was only 845.4 million. The party mobilized for the struggle as never before, and within days of the harvest every village and district (*raion*) had its procurements commission. These were for the most part made up of party and Communist Youth League members, along with *komnezam* and collective farm activists. Thousands of such brigades were set up and 4500 leading party workers were sent to the villages to help local authorities meet their planned targets. As of January 10, 1932, 14,200 collective farms had overfulfilled, 4,042 had met, and 3,346 failed to fulfill their quota. Some regions and districts were in such dire straits that official protests were made. For example, on August 4, 1931, the secretary of the Teplyts'kyi district party committee wrote a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine protesting the fact that the district's quota had been raised by 65% over the previous year, while the harvest was substantially lower. The district's quota amounted to between 70 and 80% of the entire grain crop, with the result that in one village only 136 *poods* of grain were left for distribution to 1230 collective farmers to serve as their food for an entire year. Cases of collective farms underfulfilling their quotas were widespread even in areas serviced by Machine Tractor Stations, which were usually most effective in making certain that obligations to the state were met. Those farms which fulfilled the quota were given supplementary tasks to make up for those which had failed to do so, and the

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<sup>6</sup> I. I. Slyn'ko, *Sotsialistychna perebudova i tekhnichna rekonstruktsiia sil's'koho hospodarstva Ukrainy (1927-1932 rr.)* (The Socialist Transformation and Technical Reconstruction of Ukraine's Agriculture) (Kiev, Vydavnytstvo AN URSR, 1961), pp. 278-279.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 282-284.

planning organs failed to see the “negative side” of the practice. The struggle for grain became, in Slyn’ko’s words, “particularly intense.”<sup>9</sup>

In October 1931 All-Union authorities decreed a complete ban on any distribution of produce to members of collective farms which had not completely fulfilled all quotas. The following month an order was issued to dissolve immediately the collective farm board and bring its members to court if any trade in bread were permitted before the complete fulfillment of the plan. In October the Ukrainian Central Committee removed from their posts and purged the party and state leaders of five districts for delaying or “sabotaging” the grain procurements. Directors and senior agronomists were fired from 23 MTS’s for “right-wing opportunist practice” and “inaction” in the procurement campaign. In figures for only 146 districts, as of January 10, 1932, 220 collective farm boards had been dissolved, out of which 345 members had been brought to court; 355 collective farm chairmen had been dismissed, of whom 304 were arrested; 943 collective farm chairmen and board members were subjected to party penalties. Still, at the end of 1931, only 395.9 million *poods* of grain had been procured.<sup>10</sup>

On January 8, 1932, the Ukrainian Central Committee complained that the situation remained “extraordinarily disturbed” and decreed that January be a “shock month” in hopes of fulfilling the grain quota. Substantial numbers of workers were sent to the districts from the central organs, the government, and even Central Committee members. Seventy million rubles’ worth of industrial goods were sent to the Ukrainian countryside to help stimulate the procurements. But, Slyn’ko wrote:

The struggle to fulfill the grain procurements plan and to overcome *kulak* opposition in the village was also accompanied by negative phenomena. Many active workers were carried away by administrative measures, violating revolutionary legality.

The majority of the collective farms did not pay the collective farmers for their labor until after the 1932 Spring sowing campaign. There were a number of collective farms in which the minimum necessary was not set aside for consumption, forage, emergencies, or even the Spring sowing.

Such “distortions,” he added, inevitably led to flight from the collective farms in some districts.<sup>11</sup>

On March 28, 1932, the Ukrainian Central Committee summed up the results of the 1931 grain procurements plan in a special decree. It stated that many districts had not done their jobs in politically and economically strengthening the collective farms, that they had been unable to create a strong collective farm *aktiv* or organize a final offensive to vanquish petty proprietary instincts among the collective farmers. There had also been many cases of poor economic management, while the liquidation of the *okrug* (a level of administration between the *oblast’* and *raion*) and the large number of districts (494) had made it impossible for regional (*oblast’*) and republic level authorities to oversee work on the local level, as the old *okrug* had done. This had resulted in disorderly planning of the procurements. Some collective farms had fulfilled their quotas several times over by leaving less for investment than those which had not fulfilled the plan. Pay for collective farmers

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 285-289.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 289-291.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

was low. Collective farm administrations arbitrarily disposed of resources needed to pay the collective farmers for their labor days.<sup>12</sup> District organs, Machine Tractor Stations, and banks often illegally disposed of collective farm monies and other resources, spending them without the knowledge or consent of the members. Lower compensation caused much resentment among collective farmers. The Central Committee recommended only that "backward" collective farms take "outstanding" ones as their models. Another decree ordered local party and state organs to respect the principle of safeguarding the material interests of the peasantry, to complete the distribution of harvest proceeds to the collective farmers even before the end of the Spring sowing campaign. The decree forbade arbitrary disposal of collective farm resources from above and the dissolution of collective farm boards by administrative fiat.<sup>13</sup>

Slyn'ko described substantial aid sent to the Ukrainian countryside during the 1932 Spring sowing campaign. Sixty thousand tons of corn were sent to the Moldavian ASSR (then part of the UkSSR), 60,000 tons to the Dnipropetrovsk region, 150,000 to Odessa, 120,000 to Kharkiv, and 210,000 tons to Kiev region. In May the sugar beet producing region received 800,000 *poods* of corn and millet, 75 boxcars of fish, and 36,000 *poods* of baked bread. According to a May 14 letter of the Central Committee to all district committees, 8.5 million *poods* had been distributed to the population for consumption and sowing. Thanks to this aid, the Spring sowing campaign came close to meeting its goal. "Great difficulties," he wrote, were "overcome."<sup>14</sup>

Slyn'ko was not completely forthcoming in detailing what took place at the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference in July 1932. He quoted Kossior on how past difficulties had been overcome, how the 1932 quota of 356 million *poods* of grain was 18.1% lower than the previous year, and the then obligatory denunciations of "distortions." In terms of the human suffering that accompanied the harvest and its aftermath, Slyn'ko wrote only that "in 1932 a situation arose such that the grain procurements were carried out with greater difficulties than in any preceding year." Because of poor labor organization, "the principle of the material interests of the peasants was violated." Pilfering was widespread, leading to the promulgation of the August 7, 1932 law on safeguarding socialist property.

The plan was not met. As of October 5, only 1,403 of Ukraine's 23,270 collective farms had met their annual quota. By November 7, the plan was only 55% fulfilled. The "most decisive measures" were adopted. The party mobilized all its resources to help carry out the procurements and combat "sabotage."<sup>15</sup>

On November 1 the Soviet Ukrainian authorities ordered that those who "sabotage" the procurements be handed over to the courts. A November 20 decree banned bread sale in collectives which had not fulfilled the plan and forbade the establishment of any natural reserves (i.e., the retention of a portion of the crop by

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<sup>12</sup> *Trudodni*, abstract units of account based on the notion that more complex tasks were convertible to "simple labor time," such that a day's unskilled labor on the collective farm might be worth 1/2 a labor day, while a day worked by a tractor driver might earn him two labor days.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 291-292.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 294-297.

the collective farm). It also forbade the distribution of any food to the peasants before complete plan fulfillment. The "extreme struggle" with which the procurement campaign was carried out "further intensified" in December. The Ukrainian Central Committee ordered the establishment of special committees in every region (*oblast'*) to examine the reasons for the procurements collapse and authorized further legal repressions against "saboteurs," simultaneously warning against errors and the wanton dismissal of *kolkhoz* administrators, since in some regions as many as 15-20% of all collective farm administrators had been repressed. On December 13 a complete economic blockade, the *chorna dashka*, (blacklist) was imposed on 82 districts. Party organizations in several districts underwent extensive purges to strengthen procurements there. The Central Committee ordered the Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv *obkoms* (regional party committees) to expropriate 1500 private farmers who had not fulfilled their quotas. Their property was sold, their land and buildings seized. The Central Committee sent special letters to the *obkoms* ordering the complete fulfillment of the procurements goal by January 1. Soon thereafter another 112 responsible workers were dismissed from the regional party and state organs. Slyn'ko then halted his narrative, stating only that the party continued to "strengthen the struggle for bread significantly," with the result that some areas actually did fulfill their quotas.<sup>16</sup>

One does not have to be a master of Æsopian language to learn a great deal from Slyn'ko's work. Outwardly he focused on the great difficulties the state faced in extracting produce from the villagers and only occasionally mentioned "negative phenomena." But his description left little to the imagination when he cited the example of a village which in early August 1931 had been left with less than four pounds of grain to support each person for an entire year, that collective farmers were often left with nothing for their labors until the state once again needed them to plant the next crop, the economic blacklisting of one sixth of all districts in Ukraine in December 1932, the wholesale arrests of collective farm officials—15-20% in some areas. He thus told us much about what led to the catastrophe of 1933, even if he had to stop short of describing the catastrophe itself.

Slyn'ko's Ukrainian language work becomes all the more remarkable if we contrast it with works in the Russian language being published in Moscow at the same time. For example, V. M. Selunskaiia, in her lecture course on *The Struggle of the CPSU for the Socialist Transformation of Agriculture (October 1917-1934)*, stated that

The main question in the history of collective farm construction in 1932-1934 was the most acute question of the class struggle. In these years the remnants of the defeated but not yet eliminated *kulak* class concentrated their counterrevolutionary activities upon creating and supporting anti-state activities in the collective farms. This was concretely manifested in their attempts to spread lies among the collective farmers about the firmness of the law on firm grain obligations, confident that, the more the grain the collective farmers kept back the higher the state quotas would be...

She added that the class enemies also agitated against the Machine Tractor Stations and against the way in which advances were made to collective farmers, but did not

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 297-299.



say one word about the hardships actually suffered by the agricultural population or about the official measures contributing to them.<sup>17</sup>

Iu. A. Moshkov, whose work on the "grain problem" in the early years of collectivization has been extensively used by such Western scholars as R. W. Davies and S. G. Wheatcroft, was also not very forthcoming on this issue. While Moshkov's monograph of the grain problem does not encompass the Famine, a paper delivered in 1961 and published in 1963 does. His view on 1932-1933 is that, while the preceding year's drought related difficulties had been overcome in most parts of the Soviet Union:

in a number of places matters did not go so well. The legalization of collective farm trade and the existence alongside the fixed state prices of substantially higher free market prices reinforced the determination of a certain part of the collective farmers and individual farmers to avoid delivering grain to the state. Particularly serious was the situation in the country's southern grain regions (the North Caucasus, Ukraine, and the Lower Volga), where party organizations were weak in supervising the collective farms and grain procurements. ...here there were among the collective farm members not a few former *kulaks* and their relations, former White Guards, who sometimes wormed their way into leadership positions and organized sabotage of the grain procurements.

In January 1933 the Joint Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee and Central Control Commission, exposed the shortcomings of work in the countryside and worked out a series of measures for politically and organizationally-economically strengthening them.<sup>18</sup>

Clearly, the only "grain problem" of interest to Moshkov was the state's not the peasants'.

Contrary to what one might expect, S. A. Iudachev's 1962 monograph, *The Struggle of the CPSU for the Organizational-Economic Strengthening of the Collective Farms (1933-1934)*, mentions less about the situation than Slyn'ko's work. Rather, Iudachev adopted wholly the explanation of events given in the official public statements of the period. He accepted without comment the Central Committee's criticisms of the Ukrainian, Volga Basin, and North Caucasus authorities in January 1933 for their laxity in carrying out the grain procurements. He practically quoted Stalin's plenum speech verbatim, and credited the measures taken by the party immediately thereafter as being responsible for overcoming the shortcomings and errors exposed at that plenum.<sup>19</sup> The only culprits were the class enemies. According to Iudachev,

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<sup>17</sup> V. M. Selunskaiia, *Bor'ba Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuzza za sotsialisticheskoe pereobrazovanie sel'skogo khoziaistva (oktiabr' 1917-1934 gg.): kurs leksii, pročitannykh na istoricheskom fakul'tete MGU* (The Struggle of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for the Socialist Transformation of Agriculture, October 1917-1934: a Course of Lectures Delivered in the History Department of Moscow State University) (Moscow, Vyshaia shkola, 1961), p. 182.

<sup>18</sup> Iu. A. Moshkov, "Zernovaia problema v gody kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva" (The Grain Problem during the Collectivization of Agriculture), *Istoriia Sovetskogo krest'ianstva i kolhoznoho stroitel'stva v SSSR: materialy nauchnoi sessii, sostoiavshcheisia 18-21 apreliia 1961 g. v Moskve* (History of the Soviet Peasantry and Collective Farm Construction in the USSR, Materials of a Scholarly Session, Taking Place on April 18-21, 1961 in Moscow) (Moscow, Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1963), p. 269.

<sup>19</sup> S. A. Iudachev, *Bor'ba KPSS za organizatsionno-khoziaistvennoe ukreplenie kolhozov (1933-1934 gg.)* (Struggle of the CPSU for the Organizational-Economic Strengthening of the Collective Farms, 1933-1934) (Moscow, Vyshaia shkola, 1962), pp. 19-29 *et passim*.

## Chapter 2

A particularly acute class struggle surrounded the grain procurements. Playing on the petty proprietary vestiges of some backward collective farms, the *kulak* elements attempted to avoid giving the Soviet state any bread. In order to achieve their ends, the *kulaks* carried out counterrevolutionary agitation against the grain procurements and in every possible way tried to pilfer bread. In only one 20-day period in December 1932 in Ukraine, for example, about 700,000 *poods* of bread, which had been hidden by enemies of the Soviet state were uncovered.<sup>20</sup>

Soviet fiction writers are often allowed to go farther than historians. In this connection, the publication of the novel *People Are not Angels* by Ivan Stadniuk, one of the most orthodox of Soviet writers, first in Russian in the December 1962 issue of the Leningrad literary journal *Neva* and soon thereafter in Ukrainian and English translations, was a milestone. Stadniuk's description of the Famine was stark and moving, despite the fact that it was attributed to crop failure, set in one village, and no indication was given of its larger geographical and political context. Nevertheless, few readers could fail to comprehend the meaning of its descriptive passages.<sup>21</sup> Just as the publication of Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was a signal to Russian historians to go farther in portraying the "excesses" of the Great Purge and the Gulag, Stadniuk's book indicated that they could be more frank about 1933.

In Kiev, however, also in 1963, there appeared an article by N. I. Tkach on collectivization during the period immediately following the Famine. Of the Famine he wrote:

However, the agriculture of that time was negatively impacted by numerous difficulties of the early stage of collective farm construction. It was difficult to free immediately the former individual farmers from the psychology of private property and attach them to collective effort. This was used by the enemy—the *kulaks* and the bourgeois-nationalist elements who, having changed their tactic of struggle, inflamed the collective farmers and individual farmers against collective farm construction, infiltrated the collective farms, and tried to undermine them from within.<sup>22</sup>

The next noteworthy scholarly work to deal with the topic was published in Moscow in 1963, *Outlines of the History of the Collectivization of Agriculture in the Union Republics*, edited by V. P. Danilov. The introductory article by Danilov and N. A. Ivnitskii offered a strong condemnation of Stalin's and Kaganovich's role in connection with what took place in 1932-1933. For the first time the extent of the mass deportations and blacklisting of Cossack settlements (*stanitsas*) in the largely Ukrainian Kuban area in the North Caucasus Territory was admitted:

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>21</sup> Ivan Stadniuk, *People Are not Angels* (London, Mono Press, 1963). This work will be analyzed more fully in chapter four.

<sup>22</sup> N. I. Tkach, "Borot'ba partiinykh orhanizatsii Ukraïny za pidnesennia kolhospnoho vyrobnytstva v period mizh XVII i XVIII z'izdamy VKP(b) (1934-1938 rr.)" (The Struggle of Ukraine's Party Organizations in Raising Collective Farm Construction in the Period between the XVIIth and XVIIIth Party Congresses, 1934-1938), *Z istorii sotsialistynoho i komunistynoho budivnytstva na Ukraïni (1934-1938)* (From the History of Socialist and Communist Construction in Ukraine, 1934-1938) (Kiev, AN URSR, 1963), p. 5

the Kuban where, on his orders and with his personal participation, massive repressions were carried out against party, state, and collective farm workers as well as against rank and file collective farmers. Fifteen Kuban *stanitsas* were put on the "blacklist." In them the delivery of goods was stopped; collective farm trade was forbidden; credit and tax payments were immediately called due. The entire population of a number of Kuban *stanitsas* (Poltavskaia, Medvedovskaia, and some others) were exiled to the Northern regions. All Kuban party organizations were purged, resulting in the expulsion of around 45% of the membership. Mass repressions in the Kuban were among Kaganovich's worst crimes.

Similar methods of work were carried out not only in the Kuban but also in other regions of the country—in Ukraine and the Don Region. Stalin not only knew of this but even approved of these methods and essentially encouraged lawlessness in dealing with the peasants.<sup>23</sup>

Those left to deal with the situation in Ukraine were more timid than Danilov or Slyn'ko on some subjects and went farther on others. I. F. Hanzha, Slyn'ko, and P. V. Shostak, contributed "The Ukrainian Village on the Paths to Socialism." The article noted that there had been "great difficulties" brought about by a number of factors in 1932-1933. Collectivized agriculture was still disorganized. The Leninist principle of the material interest of the collective farmers in socialized production" was often ignored. Experience in large-scale collectivized agriculture was inadequate. The draft animals were in poor shape. The campaigns to bring in the harvest were carried out in a disorganized manner, and there were large declines in the amount of grain actually harvested. The authors also maintained that *kulaks* had destroyed machinery and livestock, falsified accounts, and sold off collective farm property. Yet, in addition to all this, "great errors and excesses were permitted in the carrying out of a number of politico-economic campaigns and especially that of the grain procurements."<sup>24</sup>

A number of regions and districts, they added, had taken "the route of naked administrative measures and mass repressions." The description of the July 1932 Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference was more frank than Slyn'ko's earlier one, and it was now admitted that prominent party leaders had stated that in some districts even the seed had been seized from the collective farms. Also mentioned was the Drabove affair of June 1932, in which a whole district leadership was dismissed and publicly tried for crimes against the local population. The authors stated for the first time that 25-30% of the leading cadre personnel on the district level throughout Ukraine were removed. Again, in line with Khrushchev's policies in the early 1960s, Stalin, Kaganovich, and Molotov were blamed as the leading culprits, which made a great deal of sense in view of the fact that the latter two did visit Ukraine repeatedly in 1931-33. Molotov in particular had visited the Novomoskovs'kyi and Ielyzavethrad districts in 1932 and dismissed the entire leadership of both. The authors added understatedly, "Extreme difficulties and breakdowns in Ukraine's agriculture lasted even into the middle of 1933." Little was left to the imagination when they stated that as of February 1, 1933, proceeds from the harvest had been distributed on only 22.7% of Ukraine's collective farms

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<sup>23</sup> V. P. Danilov, N. A. Ivitskii, "Leninskii kooperativnyi plan i ego osushchestvlenie v SSSR" (The Leninist Cooperative Plan and Its Realization in the USSR) *Ocherki istorii kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva v Soiuznykh respublikakh* (Sketches in the History of the Collectivization of Agriculture in the Union Republics), ed. V. P. Danilov (Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1962), pp. 54-55.

<sup>24</sup> I. F. Hanzha, I. I. Slyn'ko, P. V. Shostak, "Ukrainakoe selo na puti k sotsializmu" (The Ukrainian Village on the Road to Socialism), *Ocherki istorii kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva v Soiuznykh respublikakh*, ed. Danilov, p. 199.

from the harvest had been distributed on only 22.7% of Ukraine's collective farms (meaning 77.3% of the collective farms gave the peasants nothing for their labor from harvest time almost up to the Spring sowing, if then).<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps the apex of official revelations about the Famine came in 1964 when *Pravda* published an article co-authored by Roman Terekhov, who had served as Postyshev's predecessor as Secretary of the Kharkiv *Obkom* in the early 1930s. Near the end of an otherwise uninspired article commemorating the 40th anniversary of the XIIIth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, Terekhov inserted an extremely revealing episode, ostensibly as an example of the difference between Stalin and Lenin:

Here is only one small episode. When in 1932, in connection with the poor harvest in Kharkiv region, it was necessary to tell Stalin about the grave situation in the villages and ask for bread to be sent to the districts, he listened and then sharply interrupted, "We are told that you, Comrade Terekhov, are a fine orator. It also seems that you're a fine storyteller. You spin this yarn about famine thinking that you'll intimidate us, but it won't work! Maybe it would be better if you stopped being a Secretary of an *obkom* and of the CPU and went to work in the Writers' Union where you would write fairy tales for idiots to read..."<sup>26</sup>

The mid-sixties constituted the high point of Soviet historiography about the Famine, euphemistically called the "difficulties" of 1932-33. Even then the majority of Soviet historians took the politically safe route of mentioning "distortions" and "abuses" only in connection with the initial wave of collectivization, which had, after all, been denounced by Stalin himself in his March 10, 1930 "Dizziness from Success" speech.<sup>27</sup> With the fall of Khrushchev, it gradually became less fashionable to write about the "excesses" committed by the man who had led the CPSU for a quarter of a century.

In 1965 S. P. Trapeznikov, the leading officially sanctioned conservative Russian Soviet historian of collectivization, still wrote that "serious errors were permitted" in 1932 in "the clearly erroneous line which was revived in the carrying out of grain procurements."<sup>28</sup> He went on to give at least a brief mention of the fact that the zeal accompanying the crop seizures in 1932 had created problems:

In many collective farms all the food supplies and even domestic stocks of grain were taken and the distribution of proceeds among the collective farmers was not carried out. As a result labor discipline began to decline...<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 200-202. Quotation from p. 201.

<sup>26</sup> K. Kuznetsov and R. Terekhov, "Vazhnaia vekha v zhizni leninskoi partii: k 40-letiiu XIII s"ezda RKP(b)" (An Important Landmark in the Life of the Leninist Party: Concerning the 40th Anniversary of the XIIIth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (bolshevik)), *Pravda*, May 26, 1964, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> I. V. Stalin, "Golovokruzhenie ot uspekhev" (Dizziness from Success), *Sochineniia* (Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1946-1951), XII, pp. 191-199.

<sup>28</sup> S. P. Trapeznikov, *Istoricheskiĭ opyt KPSS v osushchestvlenii leninskogo kooperativnogo plana* (The Historical Experience of the CPSU in the Realization of the Leninist Cooperative Plan) (Moscow, Mysl', 1965), p. 398.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 400.

Not exactly a ringing condemnation of abuses or their results. Nor did he provide as many details on these errors as his Ukrainian predecessors had done.

A 1965 Russian-language article by I. E. Zelenin revealed a significant detail—how those who had already fulfilled the quota had to make up for those who had not:

The dimension of the grain deliveries in 1931-1932 was no longer set by contract, but by state plans, which were determined by sown area and the harvest's prospects and which were often altered during the procurements campaign. In hopes of fulfilling the procurements plan the procurement organs reassigned to collective farms part of the quota for individual farms and used the so-called supplemental plans to force the farmers to give up all their surplus grain.<sup>30</sup>

In Ukraine M. T. Kuts published a monograph on collectivization, in which he dealt with the Famine as follows:

In Ukraine in 1930 close to 34% of the total harvest was delivered (to the state), but in 1931, because of unfavorable meteorological conditions, the harvest fell substantially below the 1930 level, and, in keeping with enunciated principles, it was impossible to fulfill the grain procurements plan. At the beginning of 1932 and in the Spring, grain procurements difficulties in Ukraine attained particular acuteness, many of the republic's collective farms did not pay the collective farmers for their labor, and sufficient food-supply, forage, contingency, and seed reserves were not created.<sup>31</sup>

Kuts also pointed out that in 1932 the total grain harvest in the USSR was substantially below that of 1930, and the "food-supply difficulties" were aggravated by several factors. Explanatory work among the peasants was inadequate. Administrative measures (i.e., unbridled force) was overused. Quotas were assigned to districts and collective farms without regard for their capacity to meet them. Frequently altered quotas sowed disorganization and confusion. According to Kuts, the CP(b)U "did much" to overcome these problems and was helped by the loan from Moscow of seed, livestock and machinery, which helped it get through until the 1933 harvest of almost 1.2 billion *poods* of grain.<sup>32</sup>

Kuts did not, of course, give the full story. Not only did the collective farmers receive no payment for their labor; what they and what farmers outside the collective farm possessed was seized. The problem was less in the failure to create reserves than in the seizure of existing reserves. Kuts also skirted the facts that the greatest hardship was in the Spring of 1933, that the CP(b)U under direct supervision in Moscow intensified the bread seizures in early 1933, and that the February 1933 loan was granted only after it became apparent that without it no crop was possible.

Nevertheless, in the 1960s there were signs of movement in treating the Famine. Even standard survey histories of Ukraine began to insert passages to cover this previously unmentionable issue. For example, the first edition of Oleksander Kasymenko's *History of the Ukrainian SSR: a Popular Outline*, published

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<sup>30</sup> I. E. Zelenin, "Kolkhozy i sel'skie khoziaistva SSSR v 1933-1935 gg." (The USSR's Collective Farms and Agriculture in 1933-1935), *Istoriia SSSR* (History of the USSR), 1965, No. 5, p. 18a.

<sup>31</sup> M. T. Kuts, *Pytannia kolhosnogo budivnytstva na Ukraini, 1929-1941 rr.* (Questions of Collective Farm Construction in Ukraine, 1929-1941) (L'viv, Vydavnytstvo L'vivs'koho universytetu, 1965), p. 72.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

in Ukrainian by the UkSSR Academy of Sciences in 1960 for a mass audience in an edition of 100,000 copies, made no allusion to the “food supply difficulties.” But five years later, with the release of a Russian “translation,” of which 25,000 copies were published, the following paragraph was added:

The harmful effects of errors, which had been permitted during collective farm construction, manifested themselves particularly acutely in the incorrect way in which the grain procurements were carried out. The grain procurements plans were frequently altered such that they were increased. The best collective farms, after fulfilling their assigned grain procurements plan, were given supplementary tasks. The Leninist principle of the collective farmers' material interest (*zainteresovannost'*) in the results of his labor was ignored. All this led to the fact that in Ukraine in the Spring of 1933 acute food-supply difficulties arose.<sup>33</sup>

Also in 1965 the second volume of the collection of documents, *History of the Collectivization of Agriculture of the Ukrainian SSR*, appeared, covering the period through the end of 1932. Many documents cited by earlier authors were not included, but at least a few documents indicating the difficult situation in agriculture found their way into the collection. Most notable among them are the early 1931 introduction of the *plan na dvir* (quotas for individual peasant families), the March 1932 Ukrainian Central Committee resolution on the 1931 grain procurements and the resolution of the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference on Agriculture. One September 1932 report from Ielyzavethrad district is particularly revealing. In this district as of September 15 only 30% of the harvest had been threshed and only 14.4% of the assigned quota had been procured. This was followed by the usual pledges to make good these shortcomings.<sup>34</sup>

Another noteworthy piece of information was provided by the ethnodemographer V. I. Naulko, who for the first time since the early 1930s cited annual figures for births, deaths, and the natural rate of population growth in the Ukrainian SSR in 1927-31. Using figures published by the Ukrainian Central Statistical Administration immediately before the Famine, Naulko published the table on the following page.

Throughout the 1960s the issue of whether “abuses” of the peasants had continued after Stalin's official acknowledgment of them in the Spring of 1930 remained controversial. For example, in 1966 N. I. Nemaikov took to task a more conservative historian who maintained that after Stalin denounced the practice of forcing peasants into collective farms in 1930, “the further development of the collective farms movement proceeded on the basis of the Leninist principle of voluntarism” [i. e., that peasants were not forced to join collective farms – JM].<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> A. S. Kasimenko, *Istoriia Ukrainkoï SSR: populiarnyi ocherk* (History of the Ukrainian SSR: a Popular Sketch) (Kiev, AN USSR, 1965), p. 331. Compare with O. S. Kasymenko, *Istoriia Ukrainkoï RSR: populiarnyi narys* (History of the Ukrainian SSR: a Popular Sketch) (Kiev, AN URSR, 1960), p. 292.

<sup>34</sup> *Istoriia kolektyvizatsii sil's'koho hospodarstva Ukrainkoï RSR, 1917-1937 rr.: zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv u tr'okh tomakh* (The History of the Collectivization of the Ukrainian SSR's Agriculture, 1917-1937: a Collection of Documents and Materials in Three Volumes) (Kiev, AN URSR-Naukova dumka, 1962, 1965, 1971), vol. II, pp. 321-324, 595-597, 603-616, 744-746.

<sup>35</sup> A. S. Smirnov, “Kommunisticheskaia partiia v bor'be za osushchestvlenie leninskogo postroeniia v SSSR (1925-1937)” (The Communist Party in the Struggle for the Realization of the Leninist Plan of Construction, 1925-1937), *Voprosy istorii KPSS* (Problems of CPSU History), 1964, No. 6, p. 60.

**NATURAL RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH IN THE UKRAINIAN SSR  
1927-1931  
(per 1000)**

Year	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931
Birth Rate	40.3	38.0	35.3	32.9	30.5
Mortality Rate	17.8	16.5	17.6	17.3	16.0
Natural Growth	22.5	21.5	17.7	15.6	14.5 <sup>36</sup>

Nemakov replied, "In fact, the use of administrative measures (*administrirovanie*), violation of the Leninist principle of voluntarism, and a system of punishments and repressions against collective farmers continued both in 1932 and 1933. A clear case of this is the forced socialization of cattle in the collective farms, which was widely practiced in 1932."<sup>37</sup> Such open polemics on issues of collectivization, however, would become less frequent in the next few years.

In 1967, *The History of the Peasantry of the Ukrainian SSR* also referred to the difficulties of 1932-33. It cited three reasons why the rural population declined in the 1930s: Migration from the Ukrainian countryside to the cities and to the Urals, the exile of 60,000 *kulak* families outside the UkSSR and:

Finally, the lower number of the rural population is connected with the severe shortfall of edible produce in 1931, 1932, and the first half of 1933, which was caused by a poor harvest and the incorrect planning of the grain procurements campaign.<sup>38</sup>

A couple of pages later, it added:

Therefore, in the Winter and particularly the Spring of 1933, conditions in the village were difficult, due to a number of objective and subjective causes.

On the one hand, there were the still inadequate material-technical basis of agriculture, the inhospitable climatic conditions of 1931-32, the shortage of collective farm leadership cadres which had to be prepared hastily, and obstacles created by the *kulaks* who were slated for extinction. On the other hand, there were also excesses in carrying out collectivization and the grain procurements, the political-education work by the party and Communist Youth League organizations was not always on an adequate level, there were defects in the organization of labor, and labor discipline in the collective farms was still weak.

For all these reasons, there was a shortfall in many parts of Ukraine, the sowing had been inadequate, and many collective farms received little bread for their labor days. Here and there, *kulak*-Petliurist elements slipped into the collective farm leadership and damaged

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<sup>36</sup> V. I. Naulko, *Etnichniy sklad naselennia Ukraini'koï RSR: statystyko-kartohrafichne doslidzhennia* (Ethnic Composition of the Ukrainian SSR: a Statistical-Cartographic Inquiry) (Kiev, Naukova dumka, 1965), p. 84.

<sup>37</sup> N. I. Nemakov, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia—organizator massovogo kolkhoznogo dvizheniia (1929-1932 gg.)* (The Communist Party, the Organizer of the Mass Collective Farm Movement, 1929-1932) (Moscow, Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1966), p. 20.

<sup>38</sup> *Istoriia selianstva Ukraini'koï RSR* (History of the Peasantry of the Ukrainian SSR) (Kiev, Naukova dumka, 1967), vol. II, p. 175.

machinery, killed livestock, and stole public property, causing the collective farm to be broken up.<sup>39</sup>

Whether called famine or “a severe shortfall in edible produce,” which amounted to the same thing, Soviet Ukrainian historians recognized that it had to be explained.

Another notable work published in Kiev in 1967 was *The Socialist Transformation and Development of the Agriculture of the Ukrainian SSR*, which was a major attempt to produce an officially sanctioned history of collectivization in Ukraine. This work introduced the subject of “difficulties” by noting:

The socialist transformation of small scale peasant agriculture was a very complex and serious matter. For the first time in human history, the path to the free and prosperous life of the toiling peasantry was set forth. Experience, qualified cadres, material resources and finances were lacking, and (the collective farms) became immersed in the most acute class. The class enemy used every error, even the smallest in his interests, that is, against the collective farms.<sup>40</sup>

To this situation was attributed the campaign of the organizational-economic strengthening of the collective farms, enunciated in a February 4, 1932, All-Union Central Committee decree. The campaign included organizing permanent production brigades in all collective farms, strengthening collective farm cadres, expanding the role of the MTS in supervising the collective farms, and adopting a uniform system of compensation for collective farmers on the basis of their labor days (*trudodni*). The book also noted that at the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference the various leaders of the CP(b)U frankly stated that the situation in agriculture was serious: 4.5% less acreage was sown than in 1931 and even the collective farms had sown only 91% of what had been mandated by the plan. It did not, however, mention the fact that virtually every speaker had alluded to “food supply difficulties” in various districts. It did cite archives noting that at the end of November 1932 the Ukrainian SSR had been able to procure only 57.9% of the amount of grain mandated by the plan, that the amount of grain harvested per hectare was lower than average, and that the number of draft and productive livestock was down.<sup>41</sup>

The main cause of this situation in Ukraine's agriculture was weak leadership by party and state organizations in the village. Especially inadequate were the organization and compensation of labor in the collective farms. In practice, collective farm construction in that period for the most part ignored the demands of the economic laws of socialism. The backwardness of many collective farms was explained by the underestimation of the economic law of the division of labor and the violation of the principle of the material interests of the collective farmers in the results of their labor. CP(b)U Central Committee materials concerning the XIIth CP(b)U Congress state that in 1932 32.4% of the republic's collective farms distributed less than one kilogram of grain per labor day to the collective farmers. In the CP(b)U Central Committee decree (confirmed by the CP(b)U Politburo on November 5, 1932) “On Facts of Distortions of the Party's Directives in the Distribution of Proceeds in the Collective Farms,” it was noted that

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>40</sup> *Sotsialistychna perebudova i rozvytok sil's'koho gospodarstva Ukraïns'koï RSR* (The Socialist Reconstruction and Development of the Ukrainian SSR's Agriculture (Kiev, Vydavnytstvo Kyïvs'koho universytetu, 1967), p. 458.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 459-460.



in the distribution of natural proceeds (i.e., payment in kind—JM) local party organizations, district collective farm associations, and collective farm boards permitted the grossest violations of the party's repeated directives. This sharply reduced the natural reserves for distribution to the collective farmers, who were engaged in production, and greatly harmed both the economy as a whole and the material interests of the collective farmer.

The result of the shortcomings and errors permitted during the grain procurements campaign and the ignoring of the principle of the material interests (of the collective farmers—JM) in Ukraine created a serious food supply situation.

All the shortcomings and errors, which took place in the Summer of 1932 in a series of localities caused peasants to leave the collective farms...<sup>42</sup>

Some hint was even provided of the virtual panic that ensued in the CP(b)U ranks in November and December 1932 as Moscow exerted increasing pressure on Ukraine to collect more grain. The book cited an interesting unpublished decree of November 1932, "On the Mobilization of Communist Workers for the Grain Procurements Campaign," which called for the mobilization of 600 Communists, experienced in mass party work, from the industrial centers. These consisted largely of leaders of party circles, factory organizations, propagandists, and trade union figures, who were mobilized into three- or four-man brigades. Two to four brigades would then be assigned to districts considered decisive for the procurements campaign and concentrate their efforts "in villages where *kulak* sabotage had assumed the most acute character and where party organizations had been inadequate in their work." Simultaneously, the Ukrainian Central Committee ordered that by December 1, 1932, village party organizations organize special brigades, consisting of members of collective farms which had already met their quotas or were close to doing so, to "help" individual farmers meet their quotas. Immediately after the January 1933 Moscow Plenum, the Ukrainian Central Committee mobilized another 1300 Communists to take over more than half of Ukraine's rural districts. Measures such as these were credited with overcoming the "breakdown" of Ukraine's agriculture.<sup>43</sup>

The simultaneously published two-volume *History of the National Economy of the Ukrainian SSR, 1917-1967* was on the whole less informative but did acknowledge, for example, that real wages during the First Five-Year Plan were inadequate to support workers and their families, and that the latter consequently faced "food supply difficulties." These "difficulties," however, were blamed on remaining capitalist elements in the countryside and nonfulfillment of procurements quotas.<sup>44</sup> Mention was also made of the 1932 "breakdown" of Ukraine's agriculture, manifested in the failure to meet the procurements quota, and of the various efforts to liquidate it, but not of any human costs paid in so doing. The passage is a good illustration of what might be called the traditional Soviet view of the period and how this and similarly inconvenient episodes have been handled by more orthodox historians:

The process of the total (*sutsil'na*) collectivization of agriculture in our country constituted a revolutionary turning point in productive relations in the village. New socialist relations of

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 460-461.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 462-463.

<sup>44</sup> *Rozvytok narodnoho hospodarstva ukrains'koj RSR, 1917-1967* (Kiev, Naukova dumka, 1967), vol I, p. 361.

production arose on the basis of socialized cooperative collective farm property. In the process of the revolutionary transformation of the rural economy, there was some temporary lowering of the level of agricultural production. This is why one of the most important tasks of the Second Five-Year Plan was the liquidation of the breakdown which had been created in agriculture and also the raising of the organizational and economic strengthening of the collective farms. The mobilization of all resources for this task was called for so that already during the Second Five-Year Plan the collective farms began to play a great economic role in the country.<sup>45</sup>

Legal historians are part of a separate *apparat* (administrative apparatus or jurisdiction) from other historians and are often able to say things which other historians cannot. In 1968 one of them, D. Suslo, was able to write one of the most daring statements found in all Soviet literature. In the text of *The History of Criminal Justice in Soviet Ukraine*, he wrote, "At the beginning of 1933 in the UkSSR, considerable food supply difficulties began. In many districts, including fundamental grain-producing ones, the population was left without bread. This led to a marked increase in crime." In his footnote to this passage, he continued:

An inquiry into what caused the food supply difficulties has not yet been done. There is some basis for stating that party and state organs on the local level, with the connivance of certain leading workers of the UkSSR (the Commissariats of Agriculture, State Planning, etc.) by setting the 1932 harvest level so as to embellish the results of the first year of total collectivization, knowingly raised the indices of the harvest and from these careerist considerations, by raising (through their figures) the grain procurements plan, left in the collective farms only seed reserves. The hypothesis that within the CC CP(b)U and the UkSSR government enemies of the people were in control and tried to undermine the construction of socialism does not correspond to reality.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, hidden away in the footnote, Suslo was able to chide other Soviet historians for their timidity in approaching the problem.

Soon those who felt that the pendulum had swung too far counterattacked. In 1969 the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow published *The Leninist Cooperative Plan and the Struggle for its Implementation*. In it we read:

One cannot but be amazed at the fact that some authors present the issue as though the errors and excesses of the collective farm movement, in essence, are only now being made known, as if these authors are the only ones capable of revealing what really took place. But this contradicts reality and is inconsistent with scholarly truth. Such authors are usually silent about the fact that the errors were immediately revealed and with all possible resoluteness thoroughly criticized by the party itself and by its Central Committee. The Central Committee itself pinpointed the character and causes of the errors and pointed out the ways by which they were overcome. The Central Committee carried out a merciless struggle against the errors and excesses, made titanic efforts to liquidate distortions of the party line, reaffirmed the Leninist principle of voluntarism of cooperation, and by its deeds showed the entire peasantry that leftist distortions in collective farm construction have nothing in common with the party's policies. Such an approach in illuminating the most important questions in the history of collectivization has principled (*printsipial'noe*) political and methodological significance.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 411-412.

<sup>46</sup> *Istoriia sudu Radians'koï Ukraïny* (History of Law Courts in Soviet Ukraine) (Kiev, Naukova dumka, 1968), p. 126. I am indebted to Dr. Steven Velychenko for pointing out this reference.

<sup>47</sup> *Leninskii kooperativnyi plan i bor'ba za ego osushchestvlenie* (The Leninist Cooperative Plan and the Struggle for its Realization) (Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1969), p. 111.

Raising the treatment of collectivization to the level of political principle meant that too much attention to what happened to the peasantry could be equated with political disloyalty.

In November 1969 this view was endorsed by Brezhnev himself, when he declared at the Third All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers:

In the process of collective farm construction, we were not free from known errors, but these were the errors of feeling our way, errors caused by lack of experience. The party itself uncovered these errors, spoke openly about them to the people, and corrected them. Unfortunately, to this day one can find those who love to play up the costs of this great revolutionary event. In their view of the collective farm system, the Communist Party and the Soviet people are one. (Applause). The collective farm system is our great historical achievement. (Enthusiastic applause).<sup>48</sup>

After this, references to the Famine became somewhat scarcer in Soviet works, though it took some time for even Brezhnev's pronouncement to affect materials already in press. For example, an article by V. P. Danilov, which appeared in 1970 but had been written earlier, made clear the demographic catastrophe of the early 1930s. Danilov pointed out that during the late 1920s and the late 1930s the USSR had a natural rate of population growth over two per cent (virtually no population figures are available even to Soviet scholars for the period 1931-36) and during the 1930s official population projections had been based on the continuation of such a growth rate. But the actual number of people counted in the (suppressed) Soviet census of January 1937 was 15-16 million less than would have been expected by such a rate of annual population growth.<sup>49</sup> This implied that the Soviet Union had a population deficit (i.e., excess deaths and less births than would be expected) of 15-16 million *before* the Great Purge of the late 1930s claimed most of its victims.

There were also a few Russian writers like Mikhail Alekseev, whose parents died in 1933 in the Volga Basin, who were still able to write about the Famine outside Ukraine in the official Russian nationalist organs like *Nash sovremennik* (Our Contemporary).<sup>50</sup>

The third volume of the collection, *History of the Collectivization of Agriculture of the Ukrainian SSR* appeared in 1971 and covered the years 1933 through 1937. This volume contained not a single document reflecting the hardships suffered by the villagers in 1933, only the belated distribution of the small 1932 proceeds and the sending of seed and some food for the 1933 Spring planting.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> L. I. Brezhnev, *Rech' na tret'em vsesoiuznom s'ezde kolkhoznikov: 25 noiabria 1969* (Speech at the Third All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers, November 25, 1969) (Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1969), p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> V. P. Danilov, "Dinamika naseleniia SSSR za 1917-1929 gg. (Opyt arkhograficheskogo i istochnikovedcheskogo otbora dannykh dlia rekonstruktsii demograficheskogo protsesssa)" (The USSR's Population Dynamics in 1917-1929: an Attempt at an Archeographic and Source-Evaluation Survey of Data for Reconstructing the Demographic Process), *Arkhograficheskii ezhegodnik za 1968 god* (Archeographic Yearbook for 1968) (Moscow, Nauka, 1970), pp. 248-249.

<sup>50</sup> See chapter four below.

<sup>51</sup> *Istoriia kolektyvizatsii sil's'koho hospodarstva Ukrainy'koï RSR*, vol. III, pp. 59-60, 81-82, 93-97, 241-243, 251-252.

In general, it became difficult to find more than a passing reference to the Famine when an author mentioned it in order to explain something else. For example, the Russian Soviet ethno-demographer, V. I. Kozlov, explained the fact that the number of Ukrainians and Kazakhs in the USSR declined precipitously in the period between 1926 and 1939:

Judging by certain isolated bits of data, the lowering of the mortality rate in the period of reconstruction of the people's economy slackened a bit and in some regions of the country proceeded according to an uneven tempo. Thus, the loss of cattle in Kazakhstan in 1930 and the harvest failure of 1932 in Ukraine probably even caused a very temporary rise in mortality.<sup>52</sup>

At another point, however, he added:

The lower rate of growth of Ukrainians could be explained by the lowering of its natural growth rate (especially in Ukraine in the early 1930s); the decline in their number was obviously caused by the fact that significant population groups in the South and in other districts of the European RSFSR, who declared themselves to be Ukrainians at the time of the 1926 census, were actually in a condition of ethnic transition and identified themselves as Russians in the 1939 census.<sup>53</sup>

Kozlov made no attempt to differentiate between these two factors governing the number of Ukrainians in the Soviet Union in 1926-1939.

Thereafter, when Soviet historiography cited errors and excesses, it was usually only in reference to the initial phase of collectivization, with the explanation to the effect that the party itself exposed and overcame the errors in the aftermath of Stalin's March 1930 denunciation of distortions.

In the 1980s, however, Western research made it impossible for the Soviets to ignore the Famine. It was first revived in the consciousness of Soviet diplomats. Soviet representatives in the West, who periodically were confronted with the issue, felt obliged to answer questions raised by Western scholars. On April 28, 1983, the Soviet Embassy in Canada issued a press release, "On the So-Called 'Famine' in the Ukraine," which denied that there had been a famine, only difficulties, mainly because of drought. Despite the fact that the majority of Ukrainian peasants had enthusiastically supported collectivization, the embassy claimed, wealthy peasants called *kulaks* had opposed it and committed acts of terrorism and sabotage. Yet, "Of course, many families were badly affected, some did suffer, especially those whose villages or sons were murdered by *kulak* bandits. Some villages felt a terrible strain after their grain reserves were burned, or cattle poisoned. Nevertheless, the whole picture in the Ukraine was not that of a nearly complete collapse with a smell of a nationwide tragedy as it is portrayed by the most zealous of the anti-Soviet writers in the media in Canada. On the contrary, the atmosphere of vigorous work and unparalleled enthusiasm prevailed as the nation embarked on great economic and social programs"<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> V. I. Kozlov, *Natsional'nosti SSSR: etnodemograficheskii obzor* (The Nationalities of the USSR: an Ethno-Demographic Survey) (Moscow, Statistika, 1975), p. 153.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>54</sup> Press Office of the USSR Embassy in Canada, "On the So-Called 'Famine' in the Ukraine," News Release No. 60, April 28, 1983, pp. 2-3.

In October of that year at the United Nations, Ivan Khmil' of the Ukrainian SSR's UN delegation, referred to the Famine as an "alleged famine which was supposed to have occurred in the Ukrainian SSR fifty years ago" and dismissed it as a "slander" perpetrated by "Ukrainian bourgeois-nationalists" who had served Hitler in World War II, then came to the United States, and "in order to justify their presence in that country, had circulated the lie about the famine." Khmil' also intimated that the United States still had a major problem with famine.<sup>55</sup>

In November 1983, *Komunist Ukraïny* (Ukraine's Communist) published an article by V. P. Bashtannyk, "Contrary to the Facts (Concerning the Fabrications of Bourgeois Propaganda about Agriculture in the USSR)." Without directly mentioning the Famine, the author complained that "bourgeois propaganda" was being used in "psychological warfare" by defaming the collectivization of agriculture in the USSR. This was being done through the use of "dishonest ways and means, manipulation and falsification of the facts, and by using the 'memoirs' of all sorts of renegades and traitors to the fatherland."<sup>56</sup> He also virtually quoted Brezhnev, stating:

Certainly, the birth of the collective farm system did not pass without difficulties. With the transition to total collectivization the *kulaks* and other hostile elements took the path of bitter struggle against Soviet power. Not a few of the fighters for a socialist village perished at their hands. There were also blunders and mistakes. They manifested themselves, as is known, in the violation—in certain circumstances—of the principle of voluntarism and in the hasty implementation of collectivization. These were, however, mistakes of experimentation, and they were made, in the main, because of the lack of experience. The party boldly exposed them, openly told the people about them, and showed the Leninist determination to correct them.

This is the historical truth. No one can conceal this.<sup>57</sup>

This statement in the monthly journal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine was less a statement of fact than a directive. Soviet Ukrainian scholars were apprised of the perils inherent in any other approach.

Then came the turn of the so-called "anti-anti-soviet falsification *apparat*," in the Ukrainian case, the Institute for the Study of the History and Socio-Economic Problems of Foreign Countries of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR. Since works in this genre must respond to the Western "falsifiers," they have to state the nature of the "anti-Soviet falsification" and formulate a response. Such a work published in 1984 provided the official Soviet Ukrainian response to Western scholarship on the Famine, *Nationalism in the Guise of Sovietology (A Critique of Contemporary Bourgeois Historiography of Ukraine)*, by N. N. Varvartsev, who wrote:

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<sup>55</sup> *United Nations General Assembly, Thirty-Eighth Session, A/C.3/38/SR.17, for October 19, 1983.*

<sup>56</sup> V. S. Bashtannyk, "Vsuperech istyni (Z pryvodu vypadok burzhuaznoi propahandy pro sil's'ke hospodarstvo SRSR)" (Contrary to Facts: Concerning Incidents of Bourgeois Propaganda about the USSR's Agriculture), *Komunist Ukraïny* (The Communist of Ukraine), 1983, No. 10, p. 85. Summarized and analyzed by Roman Solchanyk, "Ukrainian Party Journal Defends 'Socialist Transformation of Agriculture'," *RFE/RL Research Report*, RL 393/83, October 24, 1983.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

In reactionary historiography no little effort is made in giving battle to Soviet scholarship on the results of collectivization. Foreign "spetsy" (specialists) do not take the trouble to analyze statistical and factual data on the Ukrainian village objectively, but take as their main subjects the difficulties and errors which arose during the practical carrying out of collectivization. A significant place here is held by speculations, in particular, about the food supply difficulties which arose in a number of districts of Ukraine in 1932-1933. The real causes—lack of experience in organizing production in most of the collective farms, undermining activities of remnants of the *kulaks*, drought in some districts—are all dropped from their calculations. From time to time individual factors which hindered the successful construction of the collective farm system are mentioned. Thus, R. Sullivant's monograph mentions the influence of unfavorable climatic conditions on the level of the harvest and also the undermining activities of bourgeois-nationalists on the collective farms.

However, bourgeois "Ukrainianists" do not eschew their main tendency—to allege a "man-made" character of the food supply difficulties, created by some sort of "center." Contrary to the facts, D. Dalrymple, G. Hudson, and others state that the peasants were left without any help whatsoever.<sup>58</sup>

Varvartsev saw the February 25, 1933 seed and fodder loan to Ukraine and the North Caucasus, some of which was belatedly used for food, as evidence that help was extended to the starving. He also claimed that remnants of the *kulak* class sabotaged the procurements and took over collective farms where they allegedly destroyed food:

If one talks about premeditated actions intended to leave the toilers without food supplies, then such things really happened. Those who organized and made use of these activities were the remnants of the defeated exploiting classes, primarily former *kulaks*, who resorted to using new methods of struggle against the socialist order by worming their way into the collective farms and in some cases even occupying key positions in them... Taking advantage of the lack of experience in supervising large scale agriculture, they resorted to provocations in questions of supply deliveries and undermined enterprises connected with supplying the rural population with produce.<sup>59</sup>

Varvartsev also claimed that these difficulties had not encompassed the entire Ukrainian SSR, but he neglected to tell the reader which areas were unaffected.

One of Varvartsev's main theses—one common to the genre—is the notion that Soviet studies were developed in the West after World War II as a weapon of psychological warfare against the Soviet Union. This notion was also used by B. Babii, Director of the Institute of Law in the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR. His article, "The Anatomy of Anticommunism: against the Norms of International Law," was published in the daily newspaper *Radians'ka Ukraina* (Soviet Ukraine) on August 11, 1985, and had this to say:

The policy of American imperialism in the eighties is characterized by new attempts to distort vulgarly the values of real socialism. Representatives of the highest echelons of power in the USA actively participate in this.

In their attempts to heap calumny upon the society of real socialism, the ruling circles of the USA and their ideological-propaganda apparatus have recently intensified their attacks on the economic development of our country as a whole and of our republic in particular. The

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<sup>58</sup> N. N. Varvartsev, *Natsionalizm v oblich'e sovetologii (Kritika sovremennoi burzhuaznoi istoriografii Ukrainy)* (Nationalism in the Guise of Sovietology: a Critique of Contemporary Bourgeois Historiography of Ukraine) (Kiev, Naukova dumka, 1984), p. 176.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

Administration in the USA has been especially vigorous in its attempts to discredit the agricultural situation in Ukraine.

A new step in the escalation of the "psychological war" and the intensification of its interference in the internal affairs of the USSR is the provocative and hysterical campaign in Washington in connection with the food supply difficulties which took place in the 1930s in Ukraine. The goal of this diversion, based on lying fabrications, argumentation based on manipulation of the facts (*pidtasovana argumentatsiia*), and insinuations refuted by life, is to slander and undermine the Soviet political and social system, to shatter the ideological-political and international unity of Soviet society. Bourgeois "scholars" repeatedly turn to this or that event in the history of our country in order to give them a distorted interpretation, and these insinuations could be ignored. But the campaign of which we are speaking here has its own character. This is not an ordinary ideological or propagandistic foray. This is an act of illegal "psychological war" with openly advertised aims. It is not at all accidental that the American head of state publicly identifies his attitude to the Soviet Union as if we were like the war criminals and traitors who actively helped the Nazis carry out in the lands they occupied their bloody "new order."

Babii added that America also had its hunger marchers in 1931-32 and, following Khmil', cited Harvard Professor Larry Brown to show that there is still hunger in the United States today.<sup>60</sup>

A most significant Soviet Ukrainian response to Western scholarship on the Famine appeared in the January 1986 issue of the *Ukrainian Historical Journal* under the heading "Against Bourgeois Falsification of History." It was entitled "Historical Experience of the CPSU in Carrying Out the Leninist Agrarian Policy and the Poverty of Its Bourgeois Falsifications." This was an extensive report of a "scholarly round table" which took place in Kiev on October 21, 1985, sponsored by the Ukrainian Central Committee's Institute of the History of the Party, the Academy of Sciences' Institute on the History and Socioeconomic Problems of Foreign Countries, and the editorial board of *Ukrainian Historical Journal*.<sup>61</sup>

Interestingly, the only more or less direct reference to the Famine itself was made by Iu. Iu. Kondufor in his opening statement:

We must recognize that to this very day in the West bourgeois falsifiers and their lackeys, Ukrainian bourgeois-nationalists, tendentiously distort the process of the socialist reconstruction of the village, the development of the collective farm movement, and the realization of contemporary agrarian policy of the CPSU, and to give a distorted portrayal of the processes which took place and now take place in the village. Yes, there were also errors and excesses in collectivization. The party boldly exposed and overcame them. But they were merely episodes in the tremendous creative activity of building socialism in the village. These were errors of creation, of searching creatively, and they arose out of the lack of experience. For the party and the people there is but one view of collectivization. The collective farm system is our great historic attainment.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> B. Babii, "Anatomiia antykomunizmu: vsuperech normamy mizhnarodnoho prava" (The Anatomy of Anticommunism: against the Norms of International Law), *Radians'ka Ukraina* (Soviet Ukraine), August 11, 1985, p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> "Istorychnyi dosvid KPRS po zdiisnenniu lenins'koï ahrarnoi polityky i nespromozhnist' ï burzhuaznykh fał'syfikatsii (Materialy 'Kruhloho stolu')" (The Historical Experience of the CPSU in Carrying Out the Leninist Agrarian Policy and the Groundlessness of its Bourgeois Falsifications: Materials of a Scholarly Round Table), *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* (Ukrainian Historical Journal), 1986, No. 1, pp. 39-99.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

At no point in the discussion did the reader learn that lives had been lost because of these errors. Instead, they were placed where the paranoia about revealing information about the Famine reached absurd heights. For example, O. F. Ivanov, senior instructor at Kiev State University, discussed a 1983 Senate agriculture subcommittee hearing on the Ukrainian Famine without mentioning what the topic was. He merely noted that “the leitmotif of the testimony of these ‘experts’ was the falsificationist thesis of the ‘absence of the economic prerequisites’ for the party’s course of collectivization, the totalitarian character of the process, the ‘exploitation’ of the peasantry, and so on.”<sup>63</sup>

Indeed, nowhere in the various presentations was the year 1933 singled out as having witnessed anything particularly noteworthy in conjunction with either collectivization or procurements in Ukraine. Even customary references to “food supply difficulties” (*prodovol’chi trudnoshchi*), were missing. The most accomplished expert on collectivization in Ukraine, Professor M. T. Kuts of the Chernihiv branch of the Kiev Polytechnic Institute, dealt only with All-Union policies and never once mentioned the particular experience of the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>64</sup> One can only assume that a decision was made simply to deny the historicity of the Famine or, at the very least, to avoid confirming “excesses” in Ukraine beyond the previously conceded level of All-Union errors. The fact that such an elaborate conference was organized without saying much of anything indicated both the growing need of the Soviet Ukrainian authorities address the rising level of public awareness and their inability to do so. The far from convincing performance succeeded only as a warning against the forbidden topic.

Another official response was an interview with Khmil’, now returned from the UN and a representative of the Soviet Ukrainian historical profession. This was an “analysis of the pseudo-documentary film ‘Harvest of Despair,’” broadcast on Radio Kiev for Ukrainians living abroad on the first three days of November 1986. According to Khmil’,

the notorious thesis about the artificial famine in the Soviet Union is being used by propaganda services in the USA in order to divert the attention of its own population from their own difficulties. ...it was not by chance that the start of the anti-Soviet campaign coincided with an acute exacerbation of the food situation in the USA itself.<sup>65</sup>

After reiterating his discovery of a famine-ravaged contemporary America, he declared that the “totally conscious falsification of the food situation in the Land of the Soviets, including our republic, in the 1930s” ignored the 1931-32 drought, the Soviet lack of experience in running collectivized agriculture, and the sabotage committed by class enemies. According to Prof. Khmil’, the film is based on falsified sources, the use of traitorous émigrés as eyewitnesses to the “alleged” Famine and of “professional anti-communists specializing in the field of Sovietology” like James Mace. Khmil’ concluded by assuring his audience:

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-68. Kuts in 1965 published *Pytannia kolhospnoho budivnytstva na Ukraini (1929-1941 rr.)* (Problems of Collective Farm Construction in Ukraine, 1919-1941), cited above.

<sup>65</sup> *Summary of World Broadcasts*, 21 November 1986, SU/8422/A1/9.



Attempts to speculate on historical events of 50 years ago to whip up anti-Soviet hysteria and encourage hatred for our country has turned out to be without prospects... But just as in the past, so now also, all this will gradually die down.<sup>66</sup>

From the above-cited works, we have seen that in the early 1980s Soviet historians retreated from even a limited scholarly analysis of issues touching upon the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933 to simple denial.

Yet, Gorbachev's *glasnost'* has begun to bear fruit, if not in the historical profession, then in the literary press. On July 16, 1987, the daily organ of the Union of Soviet writers in Ukraine, *Literaturna Ukraïna* (Literary Ukraine), mentioned the Famine twice. Soviet Ukrainian literary critic Mykola Oliinyk wrote:

*Perestroika* (restructuring) opens up many possibilities for literature. Quite a few themes have been under seven locks, which conceal their "secrets," and they await a true portrayal in the images and impact of art. It seems to me that the most important among them is ecological. Even the famine of 'thirty-three with all its tragic results, on which the hand of the artist has hung heavy for decades and which has been ruthlessly erased—even it gives way before the all-powerful problems of nature.<sup>67</sup>

Hardly a ringing call for a true portrayal, since the crux of the issue is not the ecological problem of crop failure but the political problem of crop seizure.

Interestingly, the same issue carried excerpts from the unpublished 1966 autobiography of the late Hryhir Tiutiunyk, a Soviet Ukrainian writer who died in 1980. In it he noted:

In the year 'thirty-three my family was swollen from hunger, and my grandfather, my father's father, Vasyl' Feodulovych Tiutiunyk, died—he was not even gray yet and every single one of his teeth was still strong... I still don't know where his grave is...<sup>68</sup>

This is a statement such as virtually any Ukrainian who came to the West from pre-1939 Soviet Ukraine might make, but hardly the type of statement one expects to encounter in the Soviet press. Once before in the Khrushchev period the writers of literature paved the way toward liberalization for the writers of history in the Soviet Union. Perhaps we are witnessing the beginning of a new such episode.

Among historians as well, a few courageous individuals have also begun to speak out in increasingly accessible public forums. V. P. Danilov in the October 11, 1987 issue of the mass circulation *Sovetskaia Rossiia* (Soviet Russia) denounced Stalin for forcing the peasantry into the collective farms and pointed out that in the Winter and Spring of 1932-1933 famine had claimed "a multitude" of lives.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, A1/9-11, quotation from A1/11.

<sup>67</sup> Mykola Oliinyk, "Chas i my" (Time and Ourselves), *Literaturna Ukraïna* (Literary Ukraine), July 16, 1987, p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> Hryhir Tiutiunyk, "Vichna zahadka: avtobiografia" (The Eternal Enigma: an Autobiography), *Literaturna Ukraïna*, July 16, 1987, p. 6. I am indebted to Dr. Larissa Onyshkevich for this and the preceding reference.

<sup>69</sup> V. P. Danilov, "U kolkhoznogo nachala" (The Beginning of the Collective Farms), *Sovetskaia Rossiia* (Soviet Russia), October 11, 1987, p. 4.

Those in the Soviet Union who want to write about the past truthfully have won significant victories, but there have also been setbacks. In his speech of November 2, 1987, Mikhail Gorbachev stated that under Stalin “many *thousands* of people inside and outside the party were subjected to wholesale repressive measures.”<sup>70</sup> Recognizing the victimization of thousands means only the limited recognition of arrests carried out among the elite. It ignores the violence done to society as a whole in events like the Famine of 1932-1933, which claimed the lives of millions.

Yet, Western scholarship has made it increasingly difficult for Soviet spokesmen simply to deny the historicity of the Ukrainian Famine. In December 1987, the weekly *Ogoněk* published an article by Mark Tol'ts on the suppressed Soviet census of 1937, “How Many of Us Were There at That Time?” In it, the Famine was attributed to a “very substantial harvest failure” in the North Caucasus, the Lower Volga, which “was little better ... in Ukraine (*sic*),” causing “sharply lowered” Soviet population growth. He continued:

The famine above all encompassed that part of the population of the country which normally fed it. The first victims were children. In the countryside whole families died out. It is commonly known that in order to fulfill the plan in those difficult conditions in many places during the procurement campaign all the grain was taken without exception. This encompassed even that grain which had been earmarked for forage or had been distributed (to the collective farmers—JM) as advances for their labor days. Then measures were adopted to correct these “excesses,” but they had already succeeded in creating their uncorrectable lesson.

For a long time there was the formula of “difficulties of the period of industrialization and collectivization” as if this were incapable of being deciphered. But now the time has come to say what was hidden. Otherwise the tragic events which preceded the 1937 census will remain undeciphered.

How were conditions of life in those years? They were above all characterized by the strictest norms and limitations on the consumption of necessities. From 1929 bread and sugar rationing became widespread in cities and was also extended to other forms of produce as well as to industrial goods. This of course was connected with the decrease in agricultural production during collectivization. Simultaneously, procurements of agricultural produce increased. This was necessitated not only by the rapid growth of the urban population, but also by the necessity of finding resources for rapid industrialization. And in order to provide the national economy with necessary technology, it was necessary to resort to purchasing from abroad. In 1931 Soviet purchases represented one-third of the entire world's export of machinery and equipment, and in the following year they constituted approximately half of the world's exports. But what could we sell in return? Not much except grain. And under these conditions of tremendous tension came the bad harvest of 1932.

The true scale of this disaster has apparently remained unknown to us to the present day. Namely the agricultural statistics “got the reputation” of being obvious falsifications. It is known that the data on grain production in 1933 as a result of methodological manipulations were exaggerated. How much so is evident from the following example. At the XVIIth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party, I. V. Stalin reported the 1933 grain production as 89.8 million tons. Now the Committee of Government Statistics sets it at 68.4 million. And for earlier years the figures are even now published as before. And, judging by them, there was no harvest failure throughout the country in 1932 whatsoever. But did the practice of exaggerating statistics just happen overnight? In a recently published jubilee statistical yearbook the old figures appeared once again. For 1932, 69.9 million tons, which is 0.4 million tons *more* than the harvest of 1931. On the contrary, the Government Statistical Committee gives a 1934 figure 2.3 million tons *lower* than 1932. But from January 1, 1935, bread rationing was discontinued. It is probably time to solve this riddle.

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<sup>70</sup> *Washington Post*, November 23, 1987, p. A26. Emphasis added.

Even as it is, it is clear that life was extraordinarily difficult for the population. This is obvious, for example, from the production of milk, the sharp decline of which might serve as an indicator of the child mortality situation. In 1933 the production of milk was no greater than in the famine year 1921...

For a long time I have been unable to find figures which would make it possible to judge what actually happened in 1933 concerning the number of the population. In one of the works of the outstanding demographer B. Ts. Urlanis I at last encountered the figures that interested me. In his book *Problemy dinamiki naseleniia SSSR* (Problems of USSR Population Dynamics) among other topics he addressed his former efforts to project the future population of the country. The scholar analyzed how the birth and death rates of the mid-1920s were projected onto subsequent years as remaining constant, parting company with reality. According to this reckoning the population of the USSR on January 1, 1933 should have been 167.7 million. "The deviation of the projected data from reality," as B. Ts. Urlanis wrote, "constituted about seven million people." Then he analyzed how the projection for the first five year plan deviated from reality. The author estimated the population count for the country for April 1 of that same year at 158 million. From these numbers it is clear that in 1933 the population of the country not only failed to increase but, on the contrary, decreased!

And now one can imagine how far it (according to Urlanis ten whole millions) was from Stalin's figures.

And here is other data, revealing the situation of that time. It is well known that in 1933, even in towns of the European part of the country the birth rate was lower than the death rate.

This, at last explains another puzzle—why at the time of the census they wrote about 170 million. For in 1935 I. V. Stalin spoke of annual population growth as equal to "a whole Finland." However, the fact that this was not so was quietly admitted. And so it came about that two figures came into play: 168 million for the end of 1933 and 170 million for the beginning of 1937.<sup>71</sup>

However, Tol'ts continued, the 1937 census reported a Soviet population of 163.8 million, the census was suppressed, and the officials in charge were arrested as enemies of the people.<sup>72</sup>

The 1937 census total was published a quarter of a century earlier, but in a technical journal on statistics—not in a mass circulation weekly—and then with no reference to famine.<sup>73</sup> As to the harvest figures for the early 1930s, it is not at all unlikely that the 1932 harvest was indeed larger than in either 1931 or 1934. In 1931-32 difficulties with the grain crop—officially attributed to drought in the Volga Basin—were admitted, and in 1934 only the release of grain from government stockpiles and lower procurement quotas averted famine. Moreover, no one familiar with the period would claim that the Lower Volga was worse off than Ukraine in 1933. Tol'ts, seems to know even less than we. Still, he at least was able to speak out from an official Soviet forum.

On Christmas Day, Volodymyr Shcherbyts'kyi, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine, gave a speech marking the 70th anniversary of the first attempt to create a Soviet Ukrainian government. In the middle of a long survey of Soviet Ukrainian history, there is a passage which represents a modest step forward:

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<sup>71</sup> Mark Tol'ts, "Skol'ko zhe nas togda bylo?" (How Many of Us Were There Then?) *Ogon'ek* (Little Flame), 1987, No. 51 (December 19-26), pp. 10-11.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>73</sup> V. Staroskii, "Metodika issledovaniia elementov rosta narodonaseleniia" (The Methodology of Studying Population Growth), *Vestnik statistiki* (Statistical Herald), 1964, No. 11, p. 11.

But the transition to collectivized agriculture was far from simple. The unproven forcing of the tempo, the usual administrative methods of leadership, coarse violations of the principle of voluntariness, and distortions of the (party) line in relation to the middle peasant during the struggle against the *kulaks* greatly complicated the situation in the village. There was also an unforeseen drought. All this made conditions ripe for serious food supply difficulties in late 1932 and early 1933, and in a number of rural localities even famine.<sup>74</sup>

This was a signal to official Soviet Ukrainian historians that it was now permissible to be somewhat more forthcoming in dealing with the Ukrainian famine. If nothing else, it was the first time that a Soviet Politburo member has publicly referred to 1933 as the year of the Famine.

An indication of how far Soviet Ukrainian historians might go was a January 1988 article by Stanislav Kulchytsky in *News from Ukraine*, published in English by the Ukraina Society, an organization for cultural relations with Ukrainians abroad.

Kulchytsky began by claiming that the famine of 1921 was worse than that of 1933 because of state policy, "Fortunately, owing to the measures taken by the state, the famine of the early 1930s was prevented from reaching the scope of the previous one." The author restated several conservative positions: First, that the collectivization of agriculture was historically necessary; second, that the Spring 1930 campaign against distortions "put an end" to forcing peasants into collective farms; and third, that peasant sloth and irresponsibility were much to blame for falling agricultural production. Despite the supposedly voluntary nature of collectivization after March 1930, Kulchytsky admitted that "peasants who became members of collective farms were not completely convinced in the advantages of collective labor over individual one." He continued:

Man's psychology cannot be changed by decree, so the petty peasants who joined the collective farms were distinguished for their poor discipline, at times irresponsible attitude to common cattle, squandering of collective property, indifference to everything beyond their private plots. If one adds to this the organizational disorder which was a natural result of the lack of experience in collective management, we will get a clear-cut picture of the real difficulties.<sup>75</sup>

Kulchytsky also declared:

During the purchasing (i.e., procurements) campaign of 1931 top authorities demanded from the leaders of districts and villages that the plans be fulfilled at any cost, though those plans were unstable. Unaware of the real state of affairs in localities, the republican (i.e., Ukrainian SSR) bodies often increased the planned targets. At the same time, the local authorities failed to see real potentialities of the collective farms. As a result, seed resources were frequently taken away even from the collective farms which overfulfilled the set targets.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> "Pid praporom Velykoho Zhovtnia, kursom perebudovy: dopovid' chlena Politburo TsK KPRS, pershoho sekretaria TsK Kompartii Ukraïny V. V. SHCHERBYTS'KOHO na urochystomu zasidanni, prysviachenomu 70-richchiu vstanovlennia Radians'koï vlady na Ukraïni, 25 hrudnia 1987 roku" (Under the Banner of Great October along a Course of Transformation: Report of CPSU Politburo Member and CPU First Secretary V. V. Shcherbyts'kyi at a Ceremonial Meeting in Honor of the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Soviet Power in Ukraine, December 25, 1987), *Molod' Ukraïny* (Ukraine's Youth), December 26, 1987, p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> Stanislav Kulchytsky, "Historical Experience: Vital Today," *News From Ukraine* 1988, No. 2, p. 7.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

True enough, *except* that the officials in the Ukrainian SSR were merely responding to pressure from Moscow.<sup>77</sup>

According to Kulchytsky, the peasants, lacking any incentive, “devised original tactics of sabotaging state purchases,” such as lying about the amount of grain produced and leaving part of the grain in the straw for a second secret threshing.

Of course, faced with such facts, the top authorities brought pressure to bear on the districts and farms which failed to meet the targets. Real difficulties weren't taken into consideration. Non-fulfillment of plans was regarded as sabotage, and this was enough to warrant repressions. The erroneous theory of aggravation of the class struggle in the process of socialist construction, which was regarded by Joseph Stalin as being of paramount importance, played its role, too. Leaders of districts and collective farms were demoralized and scared by strict disciplinary measures and therefore tried to meet the plan at any cost... As was pointed out in the resolution of the Third Conference of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine, serious food shortages ensued in a number of districts.<sup>78</sup>

This comes perilously close to blaming the peasants for provoking the state to repress them but otherwise is a fairly accurate description of the situation on the eve of the Famine. One noteworthy feature, which the author later developed, is the return to the Khrushchev-era dichotomy between the Communist Party, which is credited for everything good, versus Stalin, who is blamed for everything bad. This is reminiscent of Khrushchev's myth that even during Stalin's worst excesses there was a “Leninist core” of the party which attempted to restrain him.

Of most interest, of course, is Kulchytsky's explanation of the Famine itself:

The Spring sowing campaign of 1932 was conducted in unfavorable conditions. Labor productivity dropped dramatically even in comparison with 1931, which was accounted for by the undernourishment of the collective farmers, exhaustion of cattle, unsatisfactory organization of work. The unfavorable weather conditions added to the negative factors.

On May 6, 1932, the USSR Government and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) adopted a resolution providing for the reduction of the purchasing plan for collective farmers and individual peasants by 20 percent, which enabled them to sell grain surpluses in the cities. The situation, however, called for changes in the very principles of the purchasing policy, rather than for reducing the volume of purchases. In July 1932, the Third Conference of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine leveled principled criticism at the surplus requisitioning system—a major blunder of the policy of grain purchasing. But, unlike 1929, when Joseph Stalin acknowledged the fact of using erroneous methods in the organization of collective farms and did his best to improve the situation, this time, heedless of any arguments, he stubbornly stuck to the system of grain purchasing that had already taken shape.

The reduced volume of grain purchases in the second half of 1932 resulted in full cessation of export of Soviet grain, which had a catastrophic impact on the country's foreign trade. Actually, there was no question of further grain exports: The threat of famine loomed large over the country.

Cited below are striking figures testifying to the danger of the situation that had shaped up by that time: During the period from January to November, 1930, the Ukrainian peasantry

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<sup>77</sup> See, for example: “Ukraina prodolzhaet otstavat', tol'ko otdel'nye raiony po-bol'shevistski boriutsia za khleb” (Ukraine Continues to Lag, Only Individual Districts Are Struggling for Bread in the Bolshevik Manner), *Pravda*, January 26, 1932, p. 1. As the title suggests, Moscow blamed the Soviet Ukrainian authorities for *not* being willing to fulfill the plan at any cost, cited examples of districts failing to do so, insisted that they do so, and the latter did their best to comply or were replaced.

<sup>78</sup> Kulchytsky, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

## Chapter 2

produced 400 million *poods* of grain, while the figure for the corresponding period of 1932 was a mere 195 million. A similar situation was observed in other regions of the country as well.<sup>79</sup>

Once again, the article is as interesting for what it fails to say as for what it does. The Spring sowing of 1932 was belated. It covered a little less area than in the preceding year. The weather figured much less prominently as a factor producing a smaller harvest than it had in the past. The author also neglected to mention that in 1931-1932 a drought outside Ukraine was officially acknowledged and some limited aid mobilized.<sup>80</sup> The May Reforms reduced grain procurement quotas only to about the amount of grain actually seized in the 1931-1932 agricultural year, which meant little relief to the peasantry. Kulchytsky was correct, however, in stating that the whole system of forced procurements and supplementary quotas were a basic problem throughout the Soviet Union. It is also true that both during and after the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference the CP(b)U tried unsuccessfully to mitigate Moscow's demands for Ukrainian grain. Stalin and the central authorities actually intensified the procurements system by adopting measures such as the law of August 7, 1932 (ten years imprisonment or execution for stealing an ear of wheat). They also directly took control of the Ukrainian party apparatus in two stages, in October 1932 and January 1933. The claim that there was a full cessation of grain exports in the second half of 1932 is false, though they did decline greatly. It is also significant that the 1932 harvest was not compared with that of 1931, because it was even worse than that of 1932, yet the Famine occurred in 1932-33.

Kulchytsky claimed that in early November extraordinary commissions were set up to expedite procurements and were sent to Kharkiv, the North Caucasus, and the Volga Basin. He blamed the commission sent to Kharkiv, then capital of the Ukrainian SSR, for relying upon the "biological yield" method of calculating the crop, that is, estimating what was in the field rather than measuring what was actually brought to the barn. The difference was erroneously attributed to theft. Procurements became simple confiscation. As for the commissions mentioned, we know only of the one which was sent to the North Caucasus and focused on the largely Ukrainian Kuban.

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Molotov officially acknowledged that the 1931 drought in the Volga Basin, Western Siberia, and Kazakhstan had damaged the grain crop. After Molotov's February 1932 acknowledgement of drought related difficulties in the Transvolga areas, at least some aid was mobilized. In the second half of March *Pravda* announced that after the complete fulfillment of the procurements quota for the 1931-1932 crop year in the North Caucasus Territory, "shock work methods" had been employed to obtain an additional 40,000 tons of seed grain, which had been shipped to the regions affected by the drought. In Kazakhstan, where mass starvation had begun as early as 1930 for reasons quite different from those affecting Ukraine in 1932-1933, two million *poods* of grain (72 million pounds) were also released from government stores in 1932 to nomads and semi-nomads as seed and food aid. *Pravda*, February 6, 1932; March 20, 1932. A. B. Tursunbaev, "Torzhestvo kolkhoznogo stroia v Kazakhstane," *Ocherki istorii kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva v Soiuznykh respublikakh*, ed. Danilov, p. 295. No such acknowledgement was made in connection with any drought that may have affected Ukraine in 1932, and at the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference, Molotov pointed to the Transvolga drought as a reason why there could be no talk of lowering Ukraine's obligation to deliver grain to Moscow. *Visti VUTsVK*, July 14, 1932.

Kulchytsky took pains to show that Moscow had tried to help the situation. He pointed to the January 19, 1933 decree replacing the system of compulsory contracts (*kontraktsiia*) with firm quotas set by the state,<sup>81</sup> and hailed it as a return to “the Leninist principle of tax in kind.” He maintained that the peasants now had an incentive to work because the quotas were determined by as a fraction of the actual yields per hectare such that the peasants “knew their share of the yield well before the sowing campaign.”<sup>82</sup> He did not mention that this share still was calculated from the so-called biological yield, not from what was actually brought in.

Next he turned to the now familiar February 25 seed loan to Ukraine and the North Caucasus, no longer incorrectly referring to it as a food and seed loan, as evidence of the party’s desire to ameliorate the situation. He also, for the first time, indicated that

The Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine established a centralized children’s relief fund... In early March a network of nourishment stations for 60 thousand children was put into operation.<sup>83</sup>

Given the vast numbers of children who fell victim to starvation at this time, such a program was clearly only a drop in the bucket. But something like this having happened is plausible: There are isolated accounts that a limited number of children did receive one meal a day in some districts. It would be extremely interesting to know more about this fund as an indication that even after Postyshev’s arrival in Kharkiv some officials were able to do something to save lives, however few.

The question of Mendel’ Khataevich’s appointment to CP(b)U Second Secretary in October 1932 and of Pavel Postyshev’s appointment to this same post as Stalin’s *de facto* satrap on January 24, 1933, and their actions constitute the most glaring omission in Kulchytsky’s account. This is an issue of great sensitivity for Soviet historiography because it shows that Moscow’s intervention was far more invasive than merely appointing commissions. Postyshev, who in 1937 tried to hold Stalin back when he sought the execution of party figures and not just peasants, was one of the first of Stalin’s victims rehabilitated by Khrushchev in 1956. Thereafter Postyshev became a cornerstone of the so-called “Leninist core” that had supposedly tried to prevent Stalin’s excesses. Exposing the hero of 1937 as the villain of 1933 is understandably awkward.

Kulchytsky admitted considerable loss of life, but attributed it to circumstances beyond the authorities’ control, “But all this failed to prevent considerable loss of life. State stocks shortly ran out and there was no possibility to purchase foodstuffs abroad.”<sup>84</sup> Actually, the Soviets not only denied that there was a famine when it was taking place; they refused all offers of private aid. When the

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<sup>81</sup> The author refers to the decree, “Ob obiazatel’noi postavke zerna gosudarstvu kolkhozami i edinolichnymi khoziaistvami” (On the Compulsory Delivery of Grain to the State by Collective Farms and Individual Peasants), *Vazhneishie resheniia po sel’skomu khoziaistvu* (Most Important Decisions on Agriculture) 2nd ed. (Sel’khozgiz, Moscow, 1935), pp. 555-559.

<sup>82</sup> Kulchytsky, *op. cit.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

London *Daily Express* reported that the Soviet government had purchased 15,000 tons of wheat in order to alleviate the shortage of bread, *Pravda* published an indignant denial.<sup>85</sup>

Kulchytsky concluded with the obligatory denunciation of “Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists” who “try to prove that the famine of 1933 resulted from some special policy pursued by bodies of Soviet power with respect to Ukraine and Ukrainians who lived in other regions of the USSR.” The number of victims of the Famine, he adds, “is now practically impossible to determine precisely,” and those who make use of the fact that there were over three million fewer Ukrainians in the Soviet Union in 1939 than in 1926 “distort Soviet statistics in their own interests.” The reduction in the number of Ukrainians, it seems, was largely because of “processes of assimilation.” In sum, the resulting tragedy was not limited to Ukrainians, and was solved by the correct policies pursued by the Soviet state:

There is no denying that there was a tragedy which left its trace in the memory of all nations of the USSR – both those living in the regions hit by the famine and those whose republics didn't suffer from such grave consequences of the errors and distortions of the agrarian policy. People of different nationalities regarded the misfortunes of their compatriots as something that affected the well-being of the whole country. And it couldn't be otherwise in a federative state where the peoples are united by a common goal, where the destiny of each nation or nationality has an immediate impact on the might and well-being of the country as a whole. That is why Soviet people regard as hypocritic all attempts to prove that there was malevolence with some nations, Ukrainians in particular.

One can hardly say that there were no blunders or distortions in the nationalities policy of the USSR. There were grave, large-scale and tragic errors. Despite this, however, all attempts to single out the sufferings of the Ukrainian people at the expense of keeping back or diminishing the hardships that fell to the lot of other nations (and this is the method devised by Ukrainian nationalists, particularly as regards the Russians) bear the imprint of the lack of conscientiousness on the part of the investigators and their obvious inclination to falsifications.

Irrefutable is the fact that in the Winter and Spring of 1933 the famine that took away many lives raged not only in Ukraine but also in rural areas of Western Siberia, Southern Ural, Northern Kazakhstan, Northern Caucasus, the Kuban and Volga areas (in the latter region it hit the territory from Gorky to Astrakhan) as well as Rostov, Tambov and part of Kursk Regions of the Russian Federation.

The measures aimed at rectifying the agrarian policy bore fruit: Already in 1933 Ukraine fulfilled the plan of state grain purchases ahead of schedule... The situation with food-stuffs improved throughout the USSR.<sup>86</sup>

Although it is true that famine affected a number of areas other than the Ukrainian SSR, there is evidence that areas with substantial Ukrainian populations, in particular the Ukrainian SSR and the Kuban Region of the North Caucasus Territory, were treated more harshly than other regions. But this does not diminish in any way the fact that members of national groups other than the Ukrainians suffered or that there were Russians among the victims of the 1932-1933 Famine.

Kulchytsky's article, published only for Ukrainians abroad and not for domestic Soviet consumption, represents a major shift in the official Soviet position on the Famine. Since 1983, the Soviet position has gone from denying the “alleged” Famine to blaming those who have focused on what occurred in Ukraine for not

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<sup>85</sup> *Pravda*, May 27, 1933.

<sup>86</sup> Kulchytsky, *op. cit.*



giving a full enough account. In an interview broadcast in English by Radio Kiev, Kulchytsky admitted that the Famine was "one of the so-called blank spots of history." Only now were Soviets beginning to analyze the 1930s seriously. And this had actually been "promoted by an act of distortion of Soviet reality in the West," the film *Harvest of Despair* and various publications on the Ukrainian Famine.<sup>87</sup> Kulchytsky dismissed such efforts as propaganda stereotypes which resorted to falsifications, but if Soviet scholars are now prodded to give a fuller account of what transpired in 1932-1933, this can only be welcomed.

Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union, there are indications both that the Famine is being mentioned more often and that people are beginning to demand an explanation. For example, *Ogonëk*, edited by the Ukrainian writer Vitalii Korotych and often described as the flagship of *glasnost'*, has published a number of letters to the editor on the Famine. One, by M. E. Halushko, Sumy region, Ukrainian SSR, reads:

The new generation ought to know what their parents and grandparents went through. Many aspects of our history remain in the dark. An example is the famine of 1933. I cannot think of it without shuddering. In the Summer of that year I was tending some cows that were barely alive... I used to gather clover, which I dried and then ground into a powder. My mother would mix the clover powder with flour and we would live off this. To my dying day I will never forget the eyes of those people who were dying of hunger.

When I grew older I began to ask myself: How was it possible that Lenin was capable of feeding the country so soon after the civil war, but after several years we were starving?

The writer M. Alekseev, in the novel *Drachuny* wrote about the famine in Saratov oblast. People did not even have the strength to bury the dead. He wrote what he himself witnessed but was unable to provide any convincing explanation. He openly stated that he was unable to understand the origins of the famine. I am also trying to understand it. Was the famine a fatal inevitability or was it man-made? Could it have been avoided? As far as I am aware nobody has even tried to provide an answer to these questions. It is immoral to keep silent about such things. During the 1933 famine more people died than during Stalin's years of terror.<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps the Soviets will at last try to answer such questions.

Another hopeful sign is the fact that in February 1988, Oleksa Musiienko made one of the most sweeping denunciations of Stalin's policies ever heard at an official gathering in Ukraine. Musiienko is Deputy Secretary for ideological matters of the party organization of the Kiev branch of the Union of Soviet Writers in Ukraine. In his speech, he pointed out that among the reasons for the July 1933 suicide of Mykola Skrypnyk, the Ukrainian Commissar of Education from 1927 to 1933 and the leading Soviet defender of the rights of non-Russian republics, was the abandonment of the policy of fostering national cultural development known as Ukrainization and "the cruel famine" of 1932-1933, caused in part by the Fall 1932 grain procurements campaign. At one point, he went so far as to use a word hitherto used only in emigration to describe what took place, "*holodomord*" (murder famine). In reference to both the Famine and the millions of Ukrainians who died in World War II, Musiienko spoke of the Ukrainian nation's "holocausts

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<sup>87</sup> *Summary of World Broadcasts*, January 13, 1988, SU/0052/B2.

<sup>88</sup> *Ogonëk*, 1988, No. 2. English translation from *The Ukrainian Weekly*, March 6, 1988, p. 2.

of millions.” He called for “the removal of the blank spots” in Ukrainian history and culture.<sup>89</sup>

Nothing as sweeping as Musiienko’s courageous statement has been heard either from official Soviet historians in Ukraine or from any quarter in Moscow. In April 1988 in the weekly tabloid *Argumenty i fakty* (Arguments and Facts), Academician Vladimir Tikhonov stated that Stalin “repressed” 10,000,000 peasants in the early 1930s.<sup>90</sup> As with the letters published in *Ogoniek*, this also represents progress.

Recently, there has been significant progress in the Soviet Union in coming to terms with both the Famine and the broader legacy of the Stalin period. It is only a beginning. We cannot speculate on how far the current Thaw will go or how long it will last. Nor can we guess what it will produce. What Soviet scholars will have to consider, if they are to fill in the blank page of history dealing with the Famine, will be discussed in the succeeding chapter.

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<sup>89</sup> O. H. Musiienko, “Hromadians’ka pozytsiia literatury i perebudova” (The Civic Position of Literature and *Perestroika*), *Literaturna Ukraina*, February 18, 1988, pp. 7-8; reported in Bohdan Nahaylo, “Ukrainian Writer Denounces ‘Monster Stalin’ and His Heirs,” *Radio Liberty Research*, RL85/88, February 25, 1988.

<sup>90</sup> David Remnick, “Academician Details Stalin’s 1930s Terror,” *Washington Post*, April 5, 1988, p. A17.

## Chapter 3

### SOVIET PRESS SOURCES ON THE FAMINE

The Soviet government's denial of the existence of the Famine both at the time it occurred and thereafter is well known. From this often follows the erroneous assumption that the Soviet press offers little information about what happened in the Ukrainian countryside. Actually, the Soviet press reveals so much about the policies behind the Famine that it is clearly the single most valuable source of information.

The official Soviet Ukrainian press of the period has been little used by scholars in Soviet studies. Lack of familiarity with the Ukrainian language has barred most specialists in Soviet history from using it. Ukrainian scholars, on the other hand, often assume that it is little more than propaganda. While there is far too much material of this type for us to consider in detail, we can summarize it as follows:

- 1) Soviet historiography, which is in turn largely based on data published during the period, clearly indicates that the 1932 wheat crop, while below average, was not so small as to create famine conditions.

According to post-Stalinist Soviet crop statistics, the wheat crop, decisive for Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and the parts of the Volga Basin affected by famine in 1932-33, was larger than it had been in 1929, when there was no famine. The 1932 crop for all bread grains (*zerno*), was larger than in either 1931 or 1934, as the table on the following page shows.

Later Soviet historiography has consistently seen 1931 as a worse year than 1932, because it was in 1931 that climate took its toll to a far greater degree.<sup>1</sup> Yet, in 1931-32, the Soviet central government acknowledged difficulties produced by drought in the Volga Basin, the Urals, Kazakhstan, and Bashkiria, and even sent aid there.<sup>2</sup> A Soviet state decree cited the Volga drought as a major justification for building a hydroelectric dam there.<sup>3</sup> In the Summer of 1932 Viacheslav Molotov,

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<sup>1</sup> "...1931 and 1932 were years of poor harvests, especially 1931, when drought struck the Volga Basin, the Urals, Western Siberia, and Kazakhstan." I. E. Zelenin, "Kolkhoznoc stroitel'stvo v SSSR v 1931-1932 gg. (k itogam sploshnoi kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva)" (Collective Farm Construction in the USSR in 1931-1932: Concerning the Results of the Collectivization of Agriculture), *Istoria SSSR* (Problems of History), 1960, No. 6, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> For example, on March 18, 1932, the North Caucasus Territory reported the 100% fulfillment of its plan to send 40,000 tons of seed grain to the Middle and Lower Volga, the Urals, Kazakhstan and Bashkiria, collected by "shock-work" methods. "40 tys. tonn semzerna otgruzheno" (Forty Thousand Tons of Seed Grain Have Been Sent), *Pravda*, March 20, 1932, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Soviet state decree of May 22, 1932, "O bor'be s zasukhoi i oroshenii Zavolzhia" (On the Struggle with Drought and Irrigation in the Volga Basin), *Vazhneishie resheniia po sel'skomu khoziaistvu* (Important Decisions on Agriculture) (Moscow, Sel'khozgiz, 1935), p. 201.

**GROSS HARVEST AND PROCUREMENTS OF SOVIET GRAIN CROP**  
(in millions of centners)

Year	All grains	Rye	Wheat	Oats	State Procurements
1927	732.0	241.7	215.5	131.1	
1928	733.2	193.0	219.7	164.8	107.9
1929	717.4	203.6	188.8	157.4	160.8
1930	835.4*	236.0	262.2	166.2	221.4
1931	694.8	219.9	205.0	109.6	228.3
1932	698.7	220.2	202.5	112.4	190.3
1933	684.0**	241.9	277.3	154.1	236.6
1934	676				69.6
1937	974				319.3

\* Nemakov notes that this figure was seen as dubious even at the time.

\*\* Moshkov's figure, now generally accepted. Nemakov's figure of 898 million centners was the official one given during the period, calculated according to the so-called "biological yield" principle. However, if the 1933 figure is to be adjusted downward, those for other years in the 1930s probably should be also.

[Table from N. I. Nemakov, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia—organizator massogo kolkhoznoho dvizheniia (1929-1932 gg.)* (Izd. Moskovskogo universiteta, Moscow, 1966), p. 258, and Iu. A. Moshkov, "Zernovaia problema v gody kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva," *Istorika Sovetskaia krest'ianstva i kolkhoznoho stroitel'stva v SSSR: Materialy nauchnoi sessii, sostoiavshcheisia 18-21 aprelia 1961 g. v Moskve* (Izd. AN SSSR, Moscow, 1963), p. 271.]

sent to the then Ukrainian capital of Kharkiv as Stalin's personal emissary, specifically cited the 1931 drought in the Volga Basin, the Southern Urals, Western Siberia, and Kazakhstan as one reason why Ukraine had to meet its obligations to procure grain for the central authorities. He also denounced any notion that the quotas might be too high in Ukraine as an "anti-Bolshevik idea" that had to be repulsed.<sup>4</sup>

This in itself indicates that the Famine's cause was not as an insufficient quantity of foodstuffs produced in the 1932 harvest. The harvest was below average, but not so small as to produce the mass starvation.

**2) Soviet officials in Ukraine made Moscow aware of "food supply difficulties" well before the harvest of 1932.**

In Ukraine as elsewhere the 1931-1932 procurements were carried out in such a way that some collective farms were left without anything to distribute to their members. Of course, the procurements were conducted under pressure from Moscow which during the campaign never stopped prodding local authorities to

<sup>4</sup> "III Vseukrains'ka partiina konferentsiia: dopovid' V. M. Molotova" (Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference: Report of V. M. Molotov), *Visti VUTsVK* (News of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee of Soviets), July 8, 1932, p. 4.

ever greater efforts in seizing grain.<sup>5</sup> However, in May 1932, when it was evident that the hardships wrought by the preceding procurements campaign had led to difficulties with the Spring sowing, the difficulties were blamed in part on the local authorities in Ukraine, who had allegedly permitted "left-wing distortions" and excessive administrative pressure in the forcible procurement of grain.<sup>6</sup>

The episode is a good example of Stalinist policy in that blame was first apportioned for not being forceful enough (a right-wing error), but when problems arose those who had taken the earlier criticism to heart were then condemned for the left-wing error of over-reliance on force and thereby "distorting" the Party line. Since in the absence of precise directives, which were almost never given, any given course of action could be condemned at any moment as either a right or left deviation, Stalin and the top leadership could always blame someone else for the execution of any policy that did not work out.

The Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference was held in Kharkiv in July 1932, at a time when the regime hoped to overcome the widespread "distortions," which had characterized the previous procurements campaign. Just a few days earlier, on June 28, a major trial had ended in the small town of Drabove, where virtually the entire district leadership had been sentenced for having committed such "distortions."<sup>7</sup> At the Party conference, which opened in Kharkiv on July 8, virtually every one of Ukraine's top Communist officials accepted the procurements quota imposed by Moscow and dutifully denounced those who did not. Yet, at the same time, they cited the need to correct "distortions" and the existence of "food supply difficulties" (still a major euphemism for famine in the USSR) in various parts of the Ukrainian SSR.

On July 8 Molotov stated:

The past year created some additional difficulties for several agricultural regions: The Middle and Lower Volga, the Southern Urals, Western Siberia, and Kazakhstan. This required from the state substantial resources for seed and partial food aid to these districts. ...there must be no diminishing of the importance of the tasks which confront us in agriculture.<sup>8</sup>

There had been great errors, he continued, in both the sowing and procurements campaigns, as evidenced in the imposition of supplementary tasks, sometimes three

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, "Ukraina prodolzhaet otstavat', tol'ko otdelnye raiony po-bol'shevistski boroiutsia za khleb (Ukraine Continues to Lag, Only Individual Districts Struggle for Bread like Bolsheviks)," *Pravda*, January 26, 1932, p. 1. The article condemned the "opportunist practice" of not seizing enough grain. A similar lead editorial condemning Ukraine, Kazakhstan, the Western Region (the Smolensk area), and the Urals is "Bor'ba za khleb eshche ne zakonchena" (The Struggle for Bread Is Still not Finished), *Izvestiia*, March 1, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> "Ot ukrainskoi organizatsii partiia zhdët bol'shevistskoi bor'by za uspekhn seva" (From the Ukrainian Organization the Party Expects a Bolshevik Struggle for a Successful Sowing), *Pravda*, May 18, 1932, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> "Drabivs'ka sprava: vyrok" (The Drabove Affair: Verdict), *Visti VUTsVK*, July 2, 1932, p. 4. The "distortions" for which the accused officials were given sentences of from 18 months to three years had actually been extremely widespread during the course of the 1931-32 grain procurements campaign in Ukraine.

<sup>8</sup> "III Vseukrains'ka partiina konferentsiia" (Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference), *Visti VUTsVK*, July 14, 1932, p. 4.

and four times, on those who had already fulfilled the quota in order to make up for those who had not met their quota. The idea that the quotas had ever been too high was “anti-Bolshevik” and had to be repulsed. Only “Right Opportunists” and “Left Distortionists” would “capitulate before difficulties.” Bolsheviks would have to “mobilize the masses to fulfill the tasks which the Party has set out.” The May 1932 reform, a (largely bogus) reduction of quotas throughout the USSR and legalization of private grain trade in districts where all quotas had been met, had to be followed exactly. *Kulaks* and speculators would try to take advantage of it. Trade could be permitted only after the quota had been 100% fulfilled. “Permitting *kolkhoz* trade not only does not blunt the struggle against the *kulak* and the speculator but, on the contrary, makes it more comprehensive and resolute.”<sup>9</sup> He left no doubt that Moscow permitted no relaxation of its demands on Ukraine.

After Molotov came Stalin’s other emissary, Lazar Kaganovich, former CP(b)U First Secretary and Stalin’s most reliable trouble-shooter. Kaganovich’s tone was harsher than Molotov’s. He made it clear that he had come to give orders. He declared, “Ukraine’s Bolsheviks must now and in the Bolshevik manner (*po bil’shovvys’komu*) expose their practical errors and immediately begin to correct them.” First among the errors was the “mechanical” way in which quotas had been applied without regard to the capacities of individual districts and collective farms. Also an error, he declared, was the fact that large losses had been allowed in the course of bringing in the harvest. This showed “self-flow” (*samoplyv*), the complacency of assuming that things would turn out all right on their own without the Party’s forceful intervention. According to Kaganovich, the class enemy was still very much in evidence and had to be combatted, “We have basically liquidated the *kulak*. But it would be wrong to say that in all villages there is no *kulak* influence. It exists.” And the very fact that there were large losses at harvest time showed the strength of *kulak* influence. Then Kaganovich gave specific orders: Improve the technical basis of agriculture, and raise more livestock, supplement intensive grain production in the steppe region with more technical (i.e., non-food) crops, introduce gardens belonging to and run by its mines and factories in the Donbas, make the Moldavian ASSR specialize in viticulture and gardening, double per hectare and increase the area sown in the sugar beet region located in Vinnytsia, Kiev, and Kharkiv *oblast*’s. “Above all, all forces must be devoted to successfully bringing in the harvest and to the total fulfillment of the grain procurements plan.” This could only be done through the continued struggle against the class enemy, the defeat of the collective farmer’s “petty bourgeois psychology” and his ideological reeducation. Unlike even Molotov, Kaganovich made no mention whatever of “Left distortions.”<sup>10</sup>

On the next day the main report was delivered by the First Secretary of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine, Stanislav Kossior, who spoke frankly

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5. On May 6, 1932, Ukraine’s 1932 grain procurements plan was lowered in the *kolkhoz* sector to 356 million *poods* from the 434 million called for in the previous year, while raising the plan in the *sovkhaz* sector. “O plane khlebozagotovok iz urozhaia 1932 g. i razvertivanii kolkhoznoi torgovli khlébom. Postanovlenie Soveta narodnykh kommissarov Siouza SSR i Tsentral’nogo komiteta VKP(b)” (On the Grain Procurements Plan from the 1932 Harvest and Permitting Collective Farm Trade in Bread. Instruction of the USSR Council of Peoples Commissars and the All-Union Communist Party Central Committee), *Vazhneishie resheniia po sel’skomu khoziaistvu*, p. 534.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

about the difficult situation facing the Ukrainian SSR in agriculture. After noting that the area sown in the Spring of 1932 was down 4.5% from the previous year, he made it clear that pessimism was widespread in the Party's ranks:

It is known that in many districts, in many *kolhosps*—and even among our *aktiv*—after the appearance of the first great difficulties in the Spring attitudes of decay were here and there created...

What were the causes of our difficulties? One of the serious causes ... was the difficult weather conditions of this year, but this is not the main cause. Last year we had a usual, average harvest. And, even with the growth of collectivization and the substantial growth of agricultural marketings, a number of our districts found themselves in a difficult food supply situation by spring...

Last year, as is known, we had in a number of districts serious distortions and deformations (*perohynty*) during the grain procurements. All this had the strongest effect on the Spring sowing...

Individual comrades attribute the difficulties of the Spring sowing campaign and the distortions during the grain procurements to the large grain procurements plans, as if everything flowed from this.

Such thoughts are nothing new for us. Those who have worked in Ukraine and who have taken part in the grain procurements know that such empty talk is less widespread now than in the past. Opportunist elements always lose their heads in difficult periods. At every fork in the road they cry, "It's because of the heavy plans. Our speed and our plans are excessive. If only the speed were slower and the quotas lighter, then things would be different." We all know quite well the absolutely clear *kulak* talk and *kulak* Petliurist views they spread.

Yes, in our midst many errors were permitted in the grain procurements campaign. There were distortions and outrages. But what and who is to blame here? Is it the grain procurements plan or the incorrect leadership and bad work of our Party organizations? The attempt to use the grain procurements plan to cover up all the serious errors of our work must be resolutely exposed and condemned, because this is nothing but simple capitulation before difficulties and the surrender of positions to hostile elements and the anti-Party path.

In our Party there are people—not yet all of whom have been exposed—who rejoice in evil and are even happy about all our difficulties.<sup>11</sup>

Such people were "right opportunist capitulators" and "*kulak*" agents, and it was crucial to struggle against their anti-Party attitudes. There was, to be sure, "a difficult food supply situation," and drought had contributed to it. But the main causes were the "mechanistic" application of procurements quotas, the large losses permitted in bringing in the harvest, peasants who were illegally selling off their grain, and *kulak* wrecking activities.<sup>12</sup>

When it came to the approaching grain procurements campaign, Kossior made it absolutely clear that dissent and lagging would not be tolerated:

Comrades! We have begun the harvesting campaign, and we are already taking steps toward the grain procurements. And the fulfillment of the grain procurements plan depends entirely upon the quality of the preparation with which the Ukrainian Party organization enters the harvesting and grain procurements campaigns from the first days. It is absolutely clear that at

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<sup>11</sup> S. V. Kossior, "Pro pidsumky vesnianoi zasivnoi kampanii, pro khlibozahotivli ta zbyral'nu kampaniiu i zavdannia orhanizatsiino-hospodars'koho zmitsnennia kolhospiiv" (On the Results of the Spring Sowing, the Grain Procurements and Harvest Campaign, and the Task of the Organizational-Economic Strengthening of the Collective Farms), *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy* (Bolshevik of Ukraine), 1932, No. 11-12, pp. 6-8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-11.

no time can we tolerate dissension and laxity, and above all right opportunist and capitulationist attitudes in this fundamental problem of our work, the grain procurements campaign.

Ukraine's Party organization must swiftly and resolutely liquidate in its midst those essentially anti-Party attitudes and rebuild its Bolshevik ranks in order to achieve the Party's most basic tasks—the harvesting and grain procurements campaigns.

The task of the grain procurements has been assigned to us by decree of the Party Central Committee and the Soviet government. The figure is 356 million *poods* in the village sector. We must fulfill this plan unconditionally, because it is derived from our abilities and from the minimum required by the state.<sup>13</sup>

Kossior assured his audience that there should be no problem in meeting this figure, less than actually procured in the previous year, if the quotas were correctly apportioned according to the capacities of the various individual districts and collective farms, if losses were combatted, and if the class enemy were fought without mercy. The harvest, he assured the conference, would be better than the previous year's, and thus the goals could be met without "distortions." Advances of 10-15% would be given the collective farmers from the harvest's first proceeds (this would be condemned in the months that followed).<sup>14</sup> And above all, "We must exclude from our ranks without mercy all the whiners and pessimists, all the bearers of *kulak* ideology, the right opportunists and the left deviationists—in a word, all those who in theory and practice impede our work."<sup>15</sup>

Soviet Ukrainian head of state Hryhorii Petrov's'kyi also stated that, "...in some districts we are in a difficult food supply situation," and explained this "breakdown" by saying, "...our countryside is complex—the whole Union knows this—we have stronger *kulaks*, much nationalism, and chauvinism."<sup>16</sup>

But Education Commissar Mykola Skrypnyk went farthest in making it clear just how serious the situation had become in the Ukrainian countryside. He even used the word famine (*holod*). Skrypnyk bluntly told the Conference:

We must know the situation as it is. We must know that we are in a great and shameful breakdown, both with the Winter and Spring sowing.

We can also in no way hide the food supply condition which exists in some districts. We can in no way hide the extremely difficult condition of a whole series of collective farms in these districts.

Yet, it must be said that there are many places among us where there are 'satisfied' voices singing hallelujah about our condition.

I went, for example, to Hryhoriv's'kyi District in Moldavia (the portion of the current Moldavian SSR east of the Dniester was then an ASSR within Ukraine—JM). I went up to the district government secretary and asked how his situation was. "Nothing extraordinary, alright, there are some difficulties, but nothing extraordinary." We went around the district with him all day, and then I asked, "Comrade, how can you be here and say everything is alright, sing hallelujah, and keep quiet about this?" "No, Comrade Skrypnyk," he answered, "I did not know what our situation was." And this is how some comrades, instead of making the effort to overcome the serious situation, sing hallelujah and declare that everything is "satisfactory." —

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, pp.14-25.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> "III Vseukraïns'ka partiina konferentsiia" (Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference), *Visti VUTsVK*, July 17, 1932, 4.



It must be said straight out that our situation is difficult, that last year's grain procurements campaign suffered a breakdown, that we fell 70 million *poods* short, and that we have also suffered a breakdown in the food supply situation in a whole series of *kolhosps* and villages in a whole series of districts.

What caused our breakdown and our situation? How could Ukraine, with a no worse than average and even better than average harvest, fall 70 million *poods* short of the grain procurements plan and have food supply difficulties in a whole series of districts and *kolhosps*?

From January on I have traveled to over 30 *raions* and many dozens of villages, collective farms, state farms, and Machine Tractor Stations, and say firmly that this question faces everyone.

Now then, this is the answer I found in a number of places. I was in a district with great food supply difficulties, in the village of Novo-Krasne, Okniansky District, in Moldavia, "The reason is that they took everything from us with a whisk broom, and because of this 'left' distortion we are choked with grief." This is how they explained the situation. In other words, this explanation says, "The underfulfillment of the grain procurements plan and the bad food supply situation are the Communists' fault; the Communists took the bread, and that's why there was no bread to live on, that's why there is a difficult food supply situation, that's why there is famine (*holod*) in some localities."<sup>17</sup>

The Conference accepted the quotas imposed by Moscow, for what other choice did it have? And at the same time, they called for the combatting of "left-wing distortions." The resolution passed by the conference adopted the grain procurements quota Moscow insisted upon, 356 million metric tons, and simultaneously called for an end to so-called distortions.<sup>18</sup> Only the former long remained a priority.

**3) The Soviet authorities in Ukraine faced a worsening crisis in their inability to meet the grain procurements quota and responded by increasingly severe measures to extract as much grain as possible from the peasants.**

From the very beginning of the 1932 grain procurements campaign, the Ukrainian SSR rapidly fell behind targets. As early as August 3, *Visti* reported that the initial results of the July procurements had been "highly unsatisfactory." Only 15.6% of the plan and 5.3 times less than had been procured in the same period of the previous year.<sup>19</sup> Later that month, local organizations were ordered to "take appropriate action" to ensure the immediate repayment of the almost 8,000,000

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<sup>17</sup> "III Vseukraïns'ka partiina konferentsiia," *Visti VUTsVK*, July 11, 1933, 5.

<sup>18</sup> "Rezoliutsiia III konferentsii KP(b)U pro pidsumky vesnianoi posivnoi kampanii, pro khlibozahotivel'nu ta zbiral'nu kampanii i zavdannia orhanizatsiino-hospodars'koho zmitsnennia kolhospiv" (Resolution of the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference on the Results of the Spring Sowing Campaign and the Task of Organizationally and Economically Strengthening the Collective Farms), *Istoria kolektivizatsii sil's'koho hospodarstva Ukraïns'kof RSR, 1917-1934 n.: zbiryk dokumentiv i materialiv u tri'kh tomakh* (History of the Collectivization of the Ukrainian SSR's Agriculture, 1917-1934: a Collection of Documents and Materials in Three Volumes) (Kiev, Vydavnytstvo Akademii Nauk Ukraïns'kof RSR, 1962-1971), vol. II, pp. 603-616. First published in *Visti VUTsVK*, July 11, 1932, pp. 1-3.

<sup>19</sup> "Lypnevii plan khlibozahotivel' vykonano lyshc na 15.6%" (The July Grain Procurements Plan is Only 15.6% Fulfilled), *Visti VUTsVK*, August 3, 1932, p. 6.

poods of grain loaned to the collective farms for the previous Spring sowing.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the exhortations, which had encouraged the "distortions" of the previous campaigns, were revived. The Party was told

The class struggle surrounding the grain procurements has sharpened with particular force. The *kulak*, defeated but not yet completely eliminated, does and will continue to resist the grain procurements insanely. He will make use of every organizational shortcoming; he will use every possible means to hamper the grain procurements, to make it more difficult, and even in various places to undermine them. Unrelenting struggle against the *kulak* and against his agents will be the indispensable prerequisite to the Bolshevik organization of the grain procurements.<sup>21</sup>

The same statement added, "Every Party member, every member of the Communist Youth League, every collective farmer and every worker must be conscious of Ukraine's deciding role in the overall grain procurements plan of the USSR." "Right opportunism" was elevated to "the main danger at the present moment." The main thing was to "guarantee victory in the struggle for bread."<sup>22</sup>

The increasing seriousness of the situation was evident in a September 5, 1932 letter of Ukrainian Collective Farm Center, stating that especially (but by no means only) in Kharkiv, Kiev, and Vinnytsia regions there were many cases of peasants leaving the collective farms. This migration had in some places assumed a "mass character," largely because of "distortions of the Party line committed while such basic political campaigns as the grain procurements, etc., were carried out."<sup>23</sup>

At the same time, heads were beginning to roll at the *raion* and *obkom* level. On September 16 the Odessa regional Party bureau censured four district Party organizations for non-fulfillment of grain procurements by their *raions*. On October 5, the Kiev *obkom* secretariat was censured for non-fulfillment, and at the *raion* level eight district Party committees were censured and another 12 were singled out with a warning to their secretaries. From June 1 to October 1, a total 121 of Ukraine's 494 district government heads were replaced. From July 1 to November 1, 47 district Party secretaries were replaced. And the district leadership similarly replacing recalcitrant village authorities with those more willing to seize grain.<sup>24</sup>

On October 12, 1932, a CP(b)U Central Committee plenum was held, and the Party apparatus was "strengthened" by the transfer of Mendel' Khataevich, from the Middle Volga *obkom* where he had won a well-deserved reputation for his brutality in combatting "*kulak* sabotage," to the post of Second Secretary of the

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<sup>20</sup> "Za bil'shovyt's'ku orhanizatsiiu ta udarni tempy khlibozabotivel' " (For Bolshevik Organization and Shock-Work Tempo of the Grain Procurements), *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, 1932, No. 15, pp. 9-10.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> "Lyst Ukrkolhospsentru holovam obkolhospspilok pro usunennia prychnyn vykhodu selian z kolhospiiv" (Letter of the Ukrainian Collective Farm Center to Regional Collective Farm Unions on the Failure to Deal with the Causes of Peasants Leaving the Collective Farms), *Istoriia kolektyvizatsii sil's'koho hospodarstva Ukrainy koi RSR*, II, p. 622. This letter was not published at the time.

<sup>24</sup> M. Khataievych, "Zavdannia bil'shovytiv Ukrainy v borot'bi za khlib, za orhanizatsiino-hospodars'ke zmitsnennia kolhospiiv i za pidnesennia sil's'koho hospodarstva" (The Task of Ukraine's Bolsheviks in the Struggle for Bread, for the Organizational-Economic Strengthening of the Collective Farms, and for Elevating Agriculture), *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, 1932, No. 21-22, pp. 13-14.

Ukrainian Central Committee. Simultaneously, the First Deputy Head of the All-Union OGPU, Ivan Akulov, was made head of the Donbas *obkom*.<sup>25</sup> The plenum resolution was largely concerned with the Fall sowing, then at its height. It reiterated the customary denunciation of "left" abuses without describing them and complained that the grain procurements campaign had "almost ground to a halt." The situation was blamed on the peasants for illegally selling their grain, especially in the private sector, which still constituted 30% of all Ukraine's peasant households, and on the inadequate work of district authorities. The resolution ordered the mobilization of the *aktyv* on all levels "to liquidate the shameful breakdown of grain procurements," "to defeat utterly right opportunist attitudes," and to ensure that the plan be fulfilled.<sup>26</sup> As late as October 22, Ukraine's Commissariat of Agriculture and Collective Farm Center ordered the distribution of proceeds to the collective farmers.<sup>27</sup>

Under increasing pressure from Moscow, the Ukrainian Central Committee sent a circular letter to all regional and district Party Committees, published in full in *Visti* on October 26, demanding immediate mobilization to overcome the "shameful backwardness" in grain procurements and to meet the plan:

*...we cannot wait another single day. The task of Ukraine's Bolsheviks, the task of all regional and district organizations, of every collective farm and state farm CP(b)U circle, of every Party member and candidate, and of every member of the Communist Youth League is to mobilize as rapidly and strongly as possible, not in words but in deeds, to overcome immediately this shameful backwardness, and to elevate immeasurably their role in leading the masses toward the successful fulfillment of the grain procurements, by guaranteeing in deeds that turning point which the CP(b)U Central Committee plenum demanded. We must be able to make up for lost time rapidly and by means of combined forces and additional mobilization to raise Ukraine to the level of the leading districts of the USSR.*

Specifically, all regional, district, and primary Party organizations were ordered to agitate immediately for fulfillment of the grain procurements among the peasants. They were to call village meetings, set up socialist competitions, mobilize personnel from "leading" collective farms to "help" other farms meet their quotas, and mobilize all district newspapers to serve as "militant organs" of struggle for the procurements. They were also to mobilize the trade unions to take part in "the struggle for bread," and "to strangle mercilessly all attempts by the class enemy and his agents" to undermine the grain procurements.<sup>28</sup> On the following day, the lead editorial in *Visti* stressed that the letter should be understood as "a militant signal

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<sup>25</sup> "Plenum TsK KP(b)U" (Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine), *Visti VUTsVK*, October 15, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> "Pro perebih zairvnoi kampanii, zhyrannia buriakiv i khlizobahotivli" (On the Failure to Fulfill the Sowing Campaign, the Sugar Beet Harvest, and the Grain Procurements), *Visti VUTsVK*, October 15, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> "Pro rozpodil prybutkiv u kolhospakh na 1932 rik. Postanova Narkomzemu USRR i Kolhosptsentru" (On the Distribution of Proceeds in the Collective Farms in 1932: Instruction of the Ukrainian SSR People's Commissariat of Agriculture and the Ukrainian Collective Farm Center), *Visti VUTsVK*, October 22, 1932, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> "Do vsikh obkomiv i raikomiv KP(b)U" (To All Regional and District Committees of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine), *Visti VUTsVK*, October 26, 1932, p. 1. Original emphasis.

to mobilize *all forces* of the Ukrainian Party organization to overcome the breakdown of the grain procurements.<sup>29</sup>

On November 2 and 3, Khataevich emphasized the problem by delivering the same speech twice, beginning with the words, "At the present moment the task that is most important for the Ukrainian Party organization in all its work is the fulfillment of the grain procurements plan."<sup>30</sup> Khataevich blamed the problem on the poor work of the Party and called for the "correct" distribution of goods and harvest proceeds to collective farmers to stimulate procurements. The dismissal of responsible workers in the countryside was reaching a level where "fluidity of cadres" was becoming a real problem: Khataevich demanded this "rain of repressions" be halted. Nor was the sending of all sorts of "plenipotentiaries" (*upol'nomocheni*) to the districts and villages working: Second and third rate workers were left in charge of important tasks while the boss was out 3/4 of the year as a plenipotentiary.<sup>31</sup> But the bottom line remained the same:

Currently Party and Soviet organizations on the local level devote their efforts to the issue of grain procurements. This is an issue of primary importance. We must guarantee the complete delivery of bread to the working class and the Red Army. So long as the annual grain procurements plan is not wholly fulfilled, this task will be primary and decisive.<sup>32</sup>

The quotas were not met, and the expedients which Khataevich complained about did not cease.

On November 20, the Ukrainian Soviet government ordered the verification of all bread resources on the collective farms. It made any further distribution of food to collective farmers before the complete fulfillment of the grain procurements a crime, ordered the immediate seizure of "stolen" bread, and made collective farm board members responsible for and misappropriation of foodstuffs subject to the All-Union law of August 7, 1932 on the inviolability of socialist property.<sup>33</sup> A second decree on the same date authorized village Soviets to levy on individual farmers who "perniciously" failed to meet their grain deliveries quota to an additional meat delivery quota equal to their regular meat quota for a 15 month period.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> "Ne na slovakh, a na dili mobilizuvats' na borot'bu za khlib" (Mobilize not in Words but in Deeds to Struggle for Bread), *Visti VUTsVK*, October 27, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> M. Khataevych, "Zavdannia bil'shovykiv Ukrainy v borot'bi za khlib, za orhanizatsiino-hospodars'ke zmitsnennia kolhosviv i za pidnesennia sil's'koho hospodarstva" (The Task of Ukraine's Bolsheviks in the Struggle for Bread, for the Organizational-Economic Strengthening of the Collective Farms, and for Elevating Agriculture), *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, 1932, No. 21-22, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33. Original emphasis.

<sup>33</sup> "Pro zakhody do pidsylennia khlibozahotivel': postanova Rady narodnykh komisariv USRR" (On Measures to Strengthen the Grain Procurements: Instruction of the Ukrainian SSR Council of People's Commissars), *Visti VUTsVK*, November 21, 1932, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> "Pro orhanizatsiiu khlibozahotivel' v odnoosibnomu sektori: postanova Rady narodnykh komisariv USRR" (On the Organization of the Grain Procurements in the Non-Collectivized Sector: Instruction of the Ukrainian SSR Council of Peoples Commissars), *Visti VUTsVK*, November 21, 1932, p. 2.

As of December 6, 1932, Ukraine had procured only 65.3% of the quantity of grain demanded by Moscow. Dnipropetrovsk, Odessa, and Kharkiv were singled out as the most backward of Ukraine's seven regions. Out of 494 *raions*, in only 43 had the collective farm sector fulfilled the plan. In only 24 had the private sector done so, and in only 16 had both sectors fulfilled their grain quotas.<sup>35</sup> Having promised to fulfill the plan by January 1 and under threat of further intervention by Moscow should they fail, Ukraine's panicked leaders were ready to take any measures, no matter how extreme.

On December 6, an initial six villages were placed on the "black board" (*chorna dashka*)<sup>36</sup> and subjected to an economic blockade consisting in: 1) closing all stores and removing all their goods from the village, 2) a complete ban on all trade, including that in food, 3) calling in all loans and advances, including food, 4) thoroughly purging local officials and the collective farm (exclusion from the collective farm at that time meant a *de facto* sentence of death by starvation).<sup>37</sup> On December 13, 82 districts were placed on the black board, and the Ukrainian Central Committee ordered the Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv regional authorities to expropriate immediately 1500 individual peasants who had not met their quotas.<sup>38</sup>

On December 10, the Ukrainian SSR state secretariat declared that

The basic reason for the torpid course of the grain procurements has resided in the fact that regional, district, and village organs of power have not mobilized social organizations, not organized Soviet society, and thus not assured that a decisive blow be struck against the sabotage of the grain procurements by the *kulaks* and their agents, the remnants of the Petliurists and Makhnovists.

The decree "proposed" that district executive committees and village Soviets take the following steps, among others:

- 1) To verify immediately with documentary data every collective farm's level of fulfillment of the grain procurements plan; to verify the existence of bread resources in collective farms which are lagging in the grain procurements, turning particular attention to the existence of hidden grain, especially in straw, chaff, in sediments, and so forth; to organize immediately the return of illegally distributed bread and its inclusion in the grain procurements, to organize the confiscation of bread stolen in the collective farms, above all from idlers and loafers who have bread without working.
- 2) To force the tight-fisted (*tverdodavtsi*) to give up immediately their granaries of bread to the tasks they have been assigned; to demand from individual peasants the closest daily fulfillment of the grain procurements plan; to apply immediately and resolutely the measures outlined in the UkSSR decree of November 20, 1932, to those individual peasants who maliciously undermine the grain procurements.

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<sup>35</sup> "Pro perebih khlibozahotivel': postanova sekretariatu Vseukraïns'koho tsentral'noho vykonavchoho komitetu" (On the Failure to Fulfill Grain Procurements: Instruction of the Secretariat of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee), *Visti VUTsVK*, December 11, 1932, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> The "black board" and "red board" were initially placed in factories to list respectively, in public, the names of shirkers and exemplary workers.

<sup>37</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, December 8, 1932, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> I. I. Slyn'ko, *Sotsialistychna perebudova i tekhnichna rekonstruktsiia sil's'koho hospodarstva Ukraïny (1927-1932 rr.)* (The Socialist Transformation and Technical Reconstruction of Ukraine's Agriculture in 1927-1932) (Kiev, AN URSR, 1961), p. 298.

The decree also called for speeding up the threshing under the strict supervision of the state, purging collective farms and their officials of so-called *kulak* counterrevolutionary elements, and for sending more people to the villages and collective farms to help procure grain.<sup>39</sup>

Activists in charge of seizing grain also lived in terror of punishment, and the press made certain that they knew it. For example, on December 14, *Visti* published a notice from the republic Justice Commissariat and General Prosecutor's office about two cases. The item stated that a people's court in Hrosulivs'kyi district, Odessa region, had found that one Khymovych

instead of struggling for bread in a Bolshevik manner, drank with the hostile class element, obstructed investigation of matters for which the *kulaks* and tight-fisted were responsible, and let them off with a slap on the wrist. This was in reality giving aid to the *kulak* in his struggle against the grain procurements.

He was ordered removed from his post, arrested, and held over for trial.

The second case dealt with one Padurets (Brusalivs'kyi district, Kiev region), who had allegedly impeded the grain procurements by playing up to the *kulaks* and the tight-fisted, letting them evade punishment and ameliorating their lot. He too was removed, arrested, and held over for trial. Regional prosecutors were ordered to be "vigilant" in the search for such 'criminals.'<sup>40</sup>

Few of those involved in the "struggle for bread" could fail to realize what awaited them if the state found them wanting. And, just to make certain, on December 21, the CP(b)U Central Committee removed ten leading district officials from their posts "for total inaction" and "failure to carry out measures to break the *kulak* sabotage of the grain procurements." A joint Party-State decree ordered the expulsion from the Party and arrest of five directors of state farms "for criminally frustrating the task of the Party and state in the grain deliveries."<sup>41</sup> A week later the entire leadership of Kobeliats'kyi District, Kharkiv Region, was given sentences of two to ten years imprisonment for supposedly organizing "*kulak* sabotage of the grain procurements" by themselves.<sup>42</sup> Similar cases were also reported.

Despite the daily exhortations, threats, and ever shriller headlines, the authorities found the press wanting in its militant commitment to the grain seizures.

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<sup>39</sup> "Pro perebih khlibozahotivel': postanova Vseukrains'koho tsentral'noho vykonavchoho komitetu" (On the Failure to Fulfill Grain Procurements: Instruction of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee), *Visti VUTsVK*, December 11, 1932, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> "Do suvoroi vidpovidal'nosti (Z postanovy Narodnoho Komisara iustytisii ta heneral'noho prokuratora respubliky)" (To Heavy Responsibility: from an Instruction of the People's Commissar of Justice and the Republic General Prosecutor), *Visti VUTsVK*, December 14, 1932, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> "Postanova TsK KP(b)U vid 21 hrudnia 1932 roku," "Postanova RNK USRR i TsK KP(b)U vid 21 hrudnia 1932 roku" (Instruction of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine Central Committee of December 21, 1932; Instruction of the Ukrainian Council of People's Commissars and CP(b)U Central Committee of December 21, 1932), *Visti VUTsVK*, December 23, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> M. Ohurtsov, "Neshchadnoi kary voroham z partkvytkamy v kysheni: prysud u spravi kolysn'oho kerivnytstva Kobeliats'koho raionu" (Immediate Punishment to the Enemies with Party Cards in the Pocket: Verdict in the Case of the Former Leadership of Kobeliaky District), *Visti VUTsVK*, December 29, 1932, p. 4.

December 29, Mendel' Khataevich as Second Secretary of the CP(b)U sent a letter to all newspaper editors and all *oblast'* and *raion* Party secretaries, ordering complete mobilization of the press in the "struggle for bread:"

The work of Ukraine's district and regional newspapers has been unsatisfactory. This is seen especially clearly in the complete inadequacy of press participation in the struggle for bread and the obviously useless help given to Party organizations in exercising leadership over this most important matter.

Therefore, THE STRUGGLE FOR BREAD DEMANDS OF OUR PRESS THE MAXIMAL RAISING OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF MILITANT STRUGGLE AND STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE PRESS AS A MILITANT ORGANIZER AND A MIGHTY WEAPON IN THE PARTY'S HANDS IN LEADING THE MASSES AND IN THE MOBILIZATION OF THEM TO THE STRUGGLE FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF THE GRAIN PROCUREMENTS PLAN. Now as never before the press must be able to reveal and expose concretely the maneuvers and ruses (*khytroshchi*) of the *kulaks* in order to mobilize the broad collective farm masses for the decisive and final rout of *kulak* sabotage of the grain procurements.

Khataevich then ordered the press to "reconstruct itself decisively and rapidly" so as to assume "AN ORGANIZING ROLE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE UNCONDITIONAL FULFILLMENT OF THE GRAIN PROCUREMENTS PLAN" and ordered the *obkoms* and *raikoms* to take newspapers under their direct supervision.<sup>43</sup>

At the beginning of 1933, Ukraine had procured only 74.5% of its grain quota. None of Ukraine's *oblast's* had met their grain procurements quotas.<sup>44</sup> It is doubtful if there was very much left to seize by this point, yet the grain seizures continued along with the dismissals and arrests of local officials who had been denounced for "inactivity" or acting as the "agents" of the *kulaks*, the "tight-fisted," and the "saboteurs" of grain procurements.

- 4) Fully aware of impending tragedy, the Soviet authorities in Ukraine had followed Moscow's orders and carried out the procurements policy which they themselves knew could only lead to catastrophe. They continued to do so even after mass starvation became a fact of life which only the newspapers ignored. At the same time, however, they also appealed to Moscow.

A good example of the ambivalence of the leading Ukrainian Communists is provided by Roman Terekhov, who served as a member of the CP(b)U Politburo and Kharkiv regional secretary until he was replaced by Postyshev in late January 1933. At the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference in July, he followed the rest of the Ukrainian Party leadership in denouncing those who called for lower quotas as Right Opportunists, but he also cited the example of Nedrahailivs'kyi district (now in Sumy region) where the procurement quotas had been raised five

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<sup>43</sup> M. Khataievych, "Do vsikh redaktoriv raionykh hazet, do obkomiv i raikomiv KP(b)U" (To All Editors of District Newspapers, to All Regional and District Committees of the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine), *Visti VUTsVK*, December 29, 1932, p. 2. Original emphasis.

<sup>44</sup> "Perebih khlibozahotivel' po Ukraini za stanom na 1 sichnia 1933 roku" (The Development of the Grain Procurements throughout Ukraine according to the Situation on January 1, 1933), *Visti VUTsVK*, January 4, 1933, p. 1.

times.<sup>45</sup> On December 23, he secretly ordered the seizure of even the seed for the next crop. After his removal in January 1933, his successor revealed that Terekhov had stated:

The seed reserves may be collected and counted toward the fulfillment of the grain procurements. Certainly, this must be done with caution. In this connection we must not forget about the sowing campaign and its difficulties. We must approach the question of seed cautiously. We cannot go on record at present that the seed reserves should be taken, but we also cannot go on record that the seed reserves should not be taken.<sup>46</sup>

Yet, it was this same Terekhov who somehow survived and lived to tell the following tale, couched in euphemisms, in *Pravda* in 1964:

When in 1932, in connection with a crop failure in Kharkiv Region, I had to tell Stalin about the difficult situation in the villages and ask for bread to be sent to these districts, he listened and then abruptly interrupted:

"We have been told, Comrade Terekhov, that you are a fine storyteller. You made up this story about famine and thought you would frighten us, but it won't work! Maybe it would be better if you stopped being a secretary of a region and of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine and went to work in the Union of Soviet Writers writing fairy tales for idiots to read..."<sup>47</sup>

There were other appeals as well. None were successful.

If Stalin had in fact disbelieved the messages being sent through his emissaries in mid-1932 or more directly by officials such as Terekhov, he certainly had ample means of independent verification (such as the secret police) at his disposal. On the basis of the above, not only was the All-Union leadership generally aware, but Stalin was personally warned as early as July 1932, that famine in Ukraine would result from his policies; we now see that they were well aware of the situation as it worsened through the end of 1932. Stalin personally rejected any and all appeals from Ukrainian SSR officials who, in turn, carried out as best they could a policy which they themselves knew could lead only to disaster.

- 5) The Soviet central authorities in Moscow and Stalin personally responded to the Famine by taking actions which could only be calculated to worsen the situation and maximize the loss of life.

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<sup>45</sup> "III Vseukraïns'ka partiina konferentsiia" (Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference), *Visti VUTsVK*, July 10, 1932, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted by P. P. Postyshev, "Osoblyvosti suchasnoho etapu i zavdannia borot'by za bil'shovyt's'ke zbyrannia, obmolot i khlibozdavannia" (Peculiarities of the Current Stage and the Task of Struggling for a Bolshevik Gathering of the Harvest, Threshing, and Grain Deliveries), *Bil'shovyk Ukraïny*, 1933, No. 7-8, p. 13. It should be noted that Postyshev did not share Terekhov's qualms about going on record on the issue: Postyshev in this speech called openly for the seizure of seed reserves and for the seizure of additional grain to replenish them.

<sup>47</sup> K. Kuznetsov, R. Terekhov, "Vazhnaia vekha v zhizni leninskoï partii: k 40-letiiu XII s'ezda RKP(b)" (An Important Milestone in the Life of the Leninist Party: Concerning the 40th Anniversary of the XIIIth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (bolshevik)), *Pravda*, May 26, 1964, p. 3.



On December 27, 1932, the All-Union government proclaimed the establishment of an All-Union system of internal passports and simultaneously brought local militias (police) under the direct supervision of a specially created board headed by G. F. Prokofiev and under the OGPU.<sup>48</sup> The passport system enabled the Soviet government to control who could live in cities and who would have to remain in the village. All-Union control of local police forces meant that Moscow now possessed a powerful instrument through which to enforce its will more easily and directly. In Ukraine introduction of the passport system was to be carried out by the end of 1933 with top priority given its enforcement in Kharkiv, Kiev, and Odessa.<sup>49</sup>

At a January 11, 1933, joint plenum of the All-Union Central Committee and Central Control Commission, Stalin developed his notorious theory on the progressive intensification of the class struggle as society advanced toward socialism. He also blamed procurement difficulties on the laxity of Party officials who were accused of failing to collect the grain soon enough after the harvest and allowing the collective farmers to set up "all kinds of reserves" and sell off their grain, rather than using it to meet their obligations to the state.<sup>50</sup>

Stalin insisted that the difficulties in meeting the quotas

can by no means be explained by a poor harvest, because this year's harvest was not worse, but better than last year's. No one can deny that more grain was harvested in 1932 than in 1931, when drought in the five basic regions of the northeast USSR significantly decreased the country's grain balance. Of course, in 1932 we also had some harvest losses because of bad weather in the Kuban and the Terek regions and also in some districts in Ukraine. But there can be no doubt that these losses do not amount to even half of the losses which occurred in 1931 because of the drought in the Northeastern districts of the USSR. It is clear that in 1932 we produced more grain than in 1931. But despite this circumstance, the grain procurements were carried out in 1932 with greater difficulties than last year.<sup>51</sup>

Dismissing the argument that the quotas were unrealistic, Stalin turned his attention to the failure to meet the grain procurements plan. He stated that Party members had been incapable of realizing that the attainment of practically total collectivization demanded of the Party far greater control over the collective farms than had been necessary when individual peasant farms predominated. Moreover, he added, many Communists had failed to realize that the collective farmer was still at heart a petty bourgeois and that the collective farms themselves were full of hidden class enemies. "Many comrades," he declared,

do not realize that the collective farm by itself, despite its being a socialist form of agriculture, cannot yet in any sense guard against all sorts of dangers and the penetration into the collective farm leadership of all sorts of counterrevolutionaries, cannot guard against the possibility that

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<sup>48</sup> The three decrees were published side by side in *Visti VUTsVK*, December 29, 1932, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> "Pro zaprovadzhennia iedynoi pashportnoi systemu na URSR" (On Instituting a Unified Passport System in the Ukrainian SSR), *Visti VUTsVK*, January 1, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> I. V. Stalin, "O pabote v derevne" (On Work in the Countryside), *Sochineniia* (Works) (Gosizdat, Moscow, 1946-1952), XIII, pp. 216-233. This speech of January 11, 1933 was widely published in the press.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217.

### Chapter 3

under known conditions the collective farm can be used by anti-Soviet elements for their own ends.<sup>52</sup>

According to Stalin, problems had arisen from the fact that members of various counterrevolutionary organizations had been able to worm their way into the collective farms, turning them into veritable nests of counterrevolution.

We know that a detachment of counterrevolutionaries, in the North Caucasus, for example, are themselves trying to create their own sort of collective farms and to use them to conceal their underground organizations. We also know that in a number of districts where anti-Soviet elements are unmasked but undefeated, they eagerly enter the collective farms and even sing the praises of the collective farms in order to create within them nests of counterrevolutionary work...

From the Leninist viewpoint, the collective farms, like the Soviets, taken as an organizational form, are a weapon and a weapon only. This weapon can, under certain conditions, be used against the revolution. It can be used against the counterrevolution. It can serve the working class and peasantry. It can serve, under certain conditions, the enemies of the working class and peasantry. It all depends upon who holds this weapon is and against whom it is used...

And ... some Communists do not understand this simple thing ... that in a whole series of collective farms well-masked anti-Soviet elements are active and organizing wrecking and sabotage.<sup>53</sup>

According to Stalin, the enemies had changed tactics from direct attacks to secret wrecking.

They do not say "down with the grain procurements." They are "for" the procurements. They "only" allow themselves the demagogy of demanding that the collective farm keep a forage reserve three times greater than really necessary, that collective farm keep an emergency reserve three times greater than really necessary, that the collective farm distribute for food six to ten pounds of bread a day to each worker, and so forth.<sup>54</sup>

Such denial of reality was typical of Stalin: There was bread on the farm, where the hidden class enemy was hoarding it. The Communists merely had to take it. This was pure fantasy on two counts: Not only was there no bread to take, the persistence of the "class enemy" was also a myth. The party itself had implicitly recognized as much when it ordered a halt to the mass deportation of *kulaks* in May 1932: After that time only individuals, not families, could be deported as *kulaks*.<sup>55</sup>

A month later, as the Famine worsened, Stalin managed to top even this flight of fancy when, at the First All-Union Congress of Collective Farm Shock-Workers, when he proclaimed a new slogan to his hungry subjects, "Make every peasant a

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 227-229.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>55</sup> M. Bogdenko, "K istorii nachal'nogo etapa sploshnoi kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva SSSR (Concerning the History of the Initial Stage of the Collectivization of the USSR's Agriculture), *Voprosy istorii* (Problems of History), 1963, No. 5, p. 31.

collective farmer and every collective farmer wealthy.”<sup>56</sup> The audience, which was well aware of the starvation, responded with suitable enthusiasm.

In spite of all the measures taken by the authorities in Ukraine, the Central Committee in Moscow censured the Communist Party of Ukraine for its failure to meet the targets set for state grain procurements, “strengthened” the Ukrainian apparatus by appointing Pavel Postyshev its Second Secretary and *de facto* ruler, and replaced several other top officials. This gave Stalin almost direct control through his hand picked representatives. A special Central Committee “instruction” of January 24, 1933, accomplished this:

The Central Committee considers it an established fact that the Party organizations of Ukraine have been unable to cope with the task the Party has assigned them regarding the grain procurements and the fulfillment of the plan for the grain deliveries, despite the fact that it has been lowered three times.

The Central Committee believes that the basic regions which will determine the fate of Ukraine’s agriculture and which must first of all be strengthened are Odessa, Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv. The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party resolves:

1. To assign as Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine and as First Secretary of the Kharkiv *obkom* Central Committee Secretary Comrade Postyshev.
2. To assign as First Secretary of the Dnipropetrovsk *obkom* Comrade Khataevich, also retaining him as one of the secretaries of the CP(b)U Central Committee.
3. To assign as First Secretary of the Odessa *obkom* Comrade Veger.
4. To free Comrades Maiorov, Stroganov, and Terekhov from the posts they have held and place them at the disposal of the Central Committee.
5. Comrades Postyshev, Khataevich, and Veger are to begin their new duties no later than January 30 of this year.<sup>57</sup>

This was a real *coup d'état*: Stalin now controlled two of the three CP(b)U Central Committee secretaries and four of Ukraine’s seven *obkoms* through the October and January appointments. Maiorov, who had spent most of his career in Ukraine, was dismissed as Ukrainian Supplies Commissar and Odessa *Obkom* secretary and made secretary of the Party’s Central Asian Bureau. Stroganov, who had been demoted from Second to Third CP(b)U Secretary in October to make way for Khataevich, was now dismissed from this post and the Dnipropetrovsk *Obkom* and made Second *Obkom* Secretary in Sverdlovsk. Terekhov was sent to serve in various second-rate posts in Moscow. Khataevich (like Akulov who retained the Donbas *Obkom*) had only been in Ukraine since October. He was more than compensated for any “demotion” from Second to Third Secretary by his new *obkom*. Veger had hitherto been merely a rather obscure Central Committee *apparatchik*.

Pavel Postyshev, a Russian from Ivano-Voznesensk had served in Ukraine during the years of national cultural revival (1923-1930) and had even been an ardent public proponent of Ukrainization when that was the Party line. He now returned as the republic’s *de facto* ruler. It was clear that Stalin had placed the top Ukrainian officials under Postyshev’s supervision. Those who had ruled Ukraine

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<sup>56</sup> I. V. Stalin, “Rech’ na pervom Vsesoiuznom s’ezde kolkhoznikov-udarnikov” (Speech at the First All-Union Congress of Collective Farm Shock Workers), *Sochineniia*, XIII, pp. 236-256.

<sup>57</sup> “Postanova TsK VKP(b) z 24 sichnia 1933 r. ta zavdannia bil’shovykiv Ukraïny” (Instruction of the All-Union Communist Party Central Committee of January 24, 1933 and the Task of Ukraine’s Bolsheviks), *Bil’shovyk Ukraïny*, 1933, No. 3, p. 3.

could hardly have been enthusiastic at the prospect of receiving a new overlord who had been given a mandate to clean house.

Postyshev's housecleaning was extremely thorough. A few months after taking control, he made clear its extent. By October 15, in those regions where the ongoing 1933 purge had been completed 27,500 of the CP(b)U's 120,000 members and candidates had been purged as "hostile class, vacillating, dissolute elements." At the same time, Postyshev revealed that he had sent thousands of his own new men to Ukraine's districts and countryside:

I will cite some figures. In the last ten months 1,340 comrades were sent to take over *raion* leadership posts. At the same time 237 *raion* Party committee secretaries, 249 *raion* executive committee chairmen, and 158 *raion* control commission chairmen were replaced by more tenacious workers.

Under the leadership and with the help of the All-Union Communist Party Central Committee 643 MTS political sections and 203 state farm political sections were organized in Ukraine, where, in all, 3,000 leading workers were sent and played an exclusive role in integrating new forms and methods of leadership with socialist agriculture.

Simultaneously, at least 10,000 people were sent to the *kolhosps*, including 3,000 sent for permanent work as *kolhosp* chairmen or as secretaries of *kolhosp* Party cells and organizations.

*A great detachment of tenacious, experienced Bolsheviks were sent to the village as organizers of collective farm construction.*<sup>58</sup>

This meant that nearly half of Ukraine's district Party secretaries, over half its district government heads, and a third of district control commission heads were replaced; about six political section workers were sent to each district; and another 10,000 "experienced Bolsheviks" to the collective farms. Hryhory Kostiuk rightly described the total picture as "that of a wholesale occupation of key posts in the country by the staff of Stalin's satrap."<sup>59</sup>

Postyshev almost immediately called a Kharkiv *Obkom* plenum. The CP(b)U's response to its new overlord seemed less than enthusiastic. As Postyshev described it, the closed plenum lasted only 20 minutes, was purely formal, and no one seemed ready to engage in the "self-criticism," which Postyshev evidently considered appropriate. He found it strange that "the leadership seemed to want to hide" rather than "give the Central Committee's decision its due."<sup>60</sup>

On February 4, Postyshev called an open joint plenum of the Kharkiv regional Party committee, city Party committee, Party secretaries of agricultural districts, and activists. This was a major opportunity for him to make clear the fact that he was now in charge and to give the entire CP(b)U organization a thorough dressing down for its "temporizing" in the struggle for bread. He specifically cited Terekhov's December 23 statement on seizing the seed grain while refusing to go

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<sup>58</sup> "Itogi 1933 sel'skokhoziaistvennogo goda i ocherednye zadachi KP(b)U. (Rech' tov. P. P. Postysheva na plenum TsK KP(b)U 19 noiabria 1933 goda)" (Results of the 1933 Agricultural Year and the Tasks of the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine: from the Speech of Comrade P. P. Postyshev at the November 19, 1933, Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine), *Pravda*, November 24, 1933, p. 3. Original emphasis.

<sup>59</sup> Hryhory Kostiuk, *Stalinist Rule in the Ukraine: a Study in the Decade of Mass Terror (1929-1939)* (Atlantic Books, London, 1960), p. 28.

<sup>60</sup> P. P. Postyshev, "Pro zavdannia sivby ta postanovu TsK VKP(b) vid 24 sichnia 1933 r." (On the Tasks in the Sowing Campaign and the Instruction of the All-Union Communist Party Central Committee from January 24, 1933), *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, 1933, No. 3, pp. 70-71.

on record in favor of such seizures as an example of the sort of wishy-washy policy which would no longer be tolerated. The openly enunciated policy was now to seize as much grain from the agricultural population as possible. However, with the Spring sowing rapidly approaching, Postyshev declared that no seed would be forthcoming from Union coffers, and the first priority was to seize the grain to be used as such:

The most acute class struggle is already spreading around the collection of seed in the village. The *kulak* and anti-Soviet elements are exerting all their efforts to organize sabotage of the build up of grain stores. And since it would be naive to suppose that the seed is laying ready in the granaries, we must immediately broaden the struggle for the return to the seed reserves of stolen and illegally distributed grain.

There can be no doubt that the class enemy will try to organize the theft and destruction of the seed collected. We must prepare for this and immediately send to work in the collective farm granaries absolutely reliable people from the collective farms and from among those comrades who will be sent to the collective farms from district and regional organizations.<sup>61</sup>

In other words, Postyshev made it clear that no aid for the sowing was to be expected from Moscow. Seed for the sowing was to be seized by the same measures as in the procurements. And since any advance distributed by *kolhosps* which had not met their quotas, including the customary 15% post-threshing advance, was "illegally distributed grain," any grain in the possession of those who had not met their quotas was presumed subject to immediate seizure.

Postyshev added, "The task of preparing and carrying out the Spring sowing requires the substantial strengthening of our repressive measures against *kulaks*, *subkulaks*, Petliurists, wreckers, and other anti-Soviet elements."<sup>62</sup> Such enemies were to be sought not only among the peasants but also within the Party, and loyal Bolsheviks were obliged to be vigilant in rooting out "wreckers" and "saboteurs" who had wormed their way into responsible Party posts. As Postyshev put it:

unverified persons have been admitted into the party, and on the sly here and there Petliurists and White Guard elements have sneaked in...

There have even been cases where Communists have led in organizing the sabotage of the grain procurements. This is the enemy within the Party executive, who organized the mass theft of grain and then advised "don't bury it in one pit, but bury the grain in dozens of pits." This is the Petliurist, the White Guard, the wrecker who, having sneaked into the organization, has become the inspirer, organizer, and leader of various malicious acts against the Soviet power and collective farm construction.<sup>63</sup>

The plenum passed a resolution that officially accepted Moscow's January 24 instruction, admitted errors in the failure to recognize Petliurists and other class enemies inside the Party and in the collective farms, denounced the *pro forma* nature of the January 29 plenum, and approved the correctness of Terekhov's dismissal and of Postyshev's appointment.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>64</sup> "Pro zavdannia vesnianoï zasivnoï kampanii i postanovu TsK VKP(b) vid 24-I 1933 roku: rezoliutsiia ob"iedanoho plenumu kharkiv's'koho obkomu i mis'komu razom z sekretariamy

On February 5-7, a CP(b)U Central Committee plenum was held to approve the January 24 instruction officially. Kossior delivered the main speech, giving Postyshev full public support. Moscow's instruction, he stated, "Characterized not only the work of the three decisive regions but also the work of our whole Party organization in organizing and carrying out the grain procurements." The mere 225 million *poods* procured was inexcusable, given that more had been procured from a worse harvest in 1931.<sup>65</sup> There had been "a lack of Bolshevik vigilance" and an "illusion" that the plan could be met without full mobilization. The peasants had carried out mass theft and sold off the grain before the party so much as noticed it. Only in November 1932 was the CP(b)U really mobilized to take part in the "struggle for bread."<sup>66</sup> And by then the class enemy had wormed his way into the regime. Kossior declared:

New forms of the class enemy's struggle against the grain procurements rose up in our midst. The class enemy "was sought" as before outside the collective farm, but he, having sneaked into the collective farm in such posts as store-keeper, bookkeeper, supervisor, etc., organized theft, covered up to protect the thieves, and the illegal sale of grain...

When you go to a district on grain procurements business, they start to pull out of every pocket figures and tables on a lower harvest, which are from start to finish put together by hostile elements who have entrenched themselves in the collective farms, land sections, and the MTS. But you don't find one single word about the crop that was on the root and was pulled up, stolen, and hidden. Our comrades, including some plenipotentiaries, by failing to examine these false figures shoved at them, have in numerous cases become *kulak* advocates armed with these figures. In numerous cases it has been shown that this arithmetic is *kulak* arithmetic, according to which we would not have procured even half of the grain we have procured thus far. In the hands of the class enemies, false figures and empty talk were a cover for the grain being stolen and carried off in all directions.

The Party must expose this "*kulak* arithmetic" as "machinations of the class enemies" and refuse to allow them "to weaken our position in the struggle for bread."<sup>67</sup> Even those districts that had once been among Ukraine's best had failed to notice that many collective farms had fallen "under the influence of *kulak*, Petliurist, Makhnovist, and other elements," and "as a result of our complacency and lack of Bolshevik vigilance, even in the best districts *kulaks* and wreckers have wormed their way into the leadership of many collective farms and organize there the sabotage of the grain procurements."<sup>68</sup>

Kossior blamed the *apparat* down to the *raion* level for sabotage:

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sil'raikomiv KP(b)U ta aktyvom, ukhvalena 4-II 1933 p." (On the Tasks of the Spring Sowing Campaign and the All-Union Communist Party Central Committee Instruction of January 24, 1933: Resolution of the Joint Plenum of the Kharkiv Regional and City Committees together with the Secretaries of CP(b)U Committees in Agricultural Districts and with Activists, Held on February 4, 1933), *Visti VUTsVK*, February 6, 1933, pp. 1-2.

<sup>65</sup> S. Kossior, "Pidsumky khlibozahotivel' i zavdannia KP(b)U v borot'bi za pidnesennia sil's'koho hospodarstva Ukrainy" (Results of the Grain Procurements and the CP(b)U's Tasks in Elevating Ukraine's Agriculture), *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy*, 1933, No. 3, p. 23.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

We believed many comrades when they assured us and swore to us that they would wage a resolute struggle for bread and fulfill the plan. But then started talk that demobilized and disarmed the Party organizations. These demobilizationist attitudes on the local level are explained by the fact that when preparations were being made for the grain procurements, there was talk of a lower plan. They lived on the hope of an easy plan, and this spread to the collective farmers. But then, when the plan was issued, when, for example in Odessa, where the harvest was much better than last year, they failed to oppose and defeat these demobilizationist attitudes. Our leading district comrades suddenly found themselves in the position of people who did not keep their word because their hopes for a plan that was easier than last year's was not fulfilled. Clearly, it is very important for people with such attitudes to combat those attitudes. All this could not help but hamper the grain procurements, and a considerable period of the struggle for bread passed in hesitation, doubts, empty talk, and such.

Such talk among the secretaries about the plan is worthless. Did the regional workers really not know about this opportunist talk? They knew, but they did not oppose it... Among us there are numerous workers who, instead of taking part in the struggle for bread, just sit it out and maneuver, and there are even some "Communists" who have degenerated and are simply sabotaging the grain procurements...

To say that the plan, even the earlier version, was unrealistic is something that no one, not one single Bolshevik, can do. It is enough to check honestly all the elements from which the harvest was calculated, check all the data on the harvest and what was brought in, to be able to say with all certainty that the plan was realistic...

Had we pursued from start to finish a firm line on every opportunistic attitude; had the regions, especially the decisive ones, not been so complacent but from the very start of grain procurements attacked the opportunistic, degenerate elements, there would have been no place among us for such things as Orikhivs'kyi, Kobeliaky, Balakliia, or the recently exposed Bashtanka affairs. Take Orikhivs'kyi district (Dnipropetrovsk region). There for the several months those who headed the *raion* leadership organized the sabotage of the grain procurements, and the region sent plenipotentiaries and all sorts of commissions that did not notice anything at all about what was going on. The same with Kobeliaky. It is a great disgrace for the old leadership of the Kharkiv *oblast'* organization that the Kobeliaky *raion* leadership organized sabotage of the grain procurements right under their noses, and they noticed nothing right up to December. Had the *oblast'* organization and leadership known the real situation in the *raions* and on the *kolhosps*, all this would have been exposed much sooner.<sup>69</sup>

Kossior also made it clear that leaving grain for food or seed while the procurements had not been met was unacceptable, "A very large amount of grain was lost to so-called communal food consumption. In this connection, there was no serious struggle whatsoever against this evil until September." Those who had diverted grain from procurement to seed reserves were also "opportunists" and "agents of the class enemies." The policy was clear: "The state must be given grain first, and only later are reserves to be created..."<sup>70</sup> In other words, the greatest sin had consisted in leaving the peasants something to eat or to plant. Only now were efforts to be turned to seizing grain for seed.<sup>71</sup>

Once again, the plenum formally accepted the January 24 instruction and engaged in the same sort of self-criticism as the Kharkiv organization had done immediately before.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 34.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>72</sup> "Pro pidsumky khlibozahotivel' na Ukraini i postanovu TsK VKP(b) z 24 sichnia 1933 roku: rezoliutsiia plenumu TsK KP(b)U, ukhvalena na zasidanni 7 liutoho 1933 roku" (On the Results of the

Soon after the plenum, the Central Committee's theoretical journal published a lead editorial emphasizing the same theme, calling the breakdown of the grain procurements "shameful," blaming it for its failure to "force" from the first days of the harvest the peasants' "very first of their obligations—the obligation to the state in the matter of grain deliveries," and again denounced the practice of leaving a seed reserve before the procurements target had been met.<sup>73</sup>

It soon became apparent, however, that everything that could be taken had already been seized, and this led on February 25, 1933, to a seed loan from Union stockpiles of 20,300,000 *poods* of grain to Ukraine and another 15,300,000 *poods* to the North Caucasus Territory, specifically to the Kuban. The resolution stated that the loan was being extended because unfavorable weather had led to harvest losses in the steppe regions. Some of the loan was indeed consumed as food, often being distributed in the collective farm fields in order to give the peasants an incentive to work on the Spring sowing.<sup>74</sup> Without this loan there would likely have been no crop at all in 1933.

Even then, the pressure on the countryside was not eased until after the harvest had been brought in. As late as June 1, the Dnipropetrovsk regional committee announced that it was reversing itself by cutting the customary 15% advance, distributed to the collective farmers immediately after the threshing, to 10%.<sup>75</sup>

In the succeeding months, the rhetoric and the policy which it supported changed little. As the time for the 1933 harvest approached, the starving populace was treated to warnings of the sly and omnipresent class enemy. In July, for example, *The Collective Farm Woman of Ukraine* wrote:

The class enemy, the *kurkul'*, is nimble. He adapts himself to time and circumstance. He now does not shout openly against the collective farm. He knows that by doing so he would expose himself in front of the masses. He "quietly" and "meekly" goes about his wrecking activities crouched down. And this year is no different from the last.

The article stated that the enemy's maneuvers had been thwarted in the spring sowing campaign "by powerful discipline, shock work, and the safeguarding of socialist property." At harvest time, the enemy would seek to promote the heresy of consumerism and to juxtapose the interests of the collective farmer to those of the state.

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Grain Procurements in Ukraine and on the All-Union Central Committee Instruction of January 24, 1933), *Visti VUTsVK*, February 10, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> "Postanova TsK VKP(b) z 24 sichnia 1933 r. ta zavdannia bil'shovykiv Ukraïny" (The Instruction of the All-Union Communist Party Central Committee from January 24, 1933, and the Task of Ukraine's Bolsheviks), *Bil'shovyk Ukraïny*, 1933, No. 3, pp. 3-20.

<sup>74</sup> Text of decree in *Istoriia kolektyvizatsii sil's'koho hospodarstva Ukraïns'koï RSR, 1917-1937 rr.*, III, pp. 59-60. Originally published in *Visti VUTsVK*, February 26, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup> "Pro postanovu Biura Dnipropetrovs'koho obkomu pro advansuvannia kolhospykiv i ukhvalu v ts'omu pytanni TsK VKP(b) i TsK KP(b)U: postanova IV pleumu Dnipropetrovs'komu obkomu KP(b)U" (On the Instruction of the Bureau of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Party Committee on Advances to Collective Farmers and Its Praise in All Questions of the Central Committees of the All-Union Communist Party and the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine: Decision of the Fourth Plenum of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Committee of the CP(b)U), *Visti VUTsVK*, June 1, 1933, p. 2.



To what does this lead? What is the enemy's goal? He wants to undermine the strength of our state. For bread is a great force in the state's hands. Bread in the state's hands is a powerful tool of Bolshevik influence both upon the development of agriculture and of the whole country's economy.

The party, it warned, would not permit this. The class enemy would act not only with his own hands, but with those of other people, including Party members, to undermine the delivery of grain to the state. Officials who under-reported the crop in hopes of a smaller quota were the class enemy's agents. Theft and other undermining activities would not be permitted.

In this struggle we will finish off the *kurkul's*, the Petliurists, the Makhnovists, and all the wreckers of socialist construction; we shall strengthen the collective farms and scatter all the thieves of collective farm grain and idlers; we shall strengthen the collective farm and bring closer the cultured prosperous life.<sup>76</sup>

The Famine ended soon after the 1933 harvest, thanks to the fact that the harvest was an exceptionally bountiful one and to the fact that this time the state allowed the distribution of grain to the collective farmers. As often in Soviet usage, the order was given on September 27 in the form of a condemnation of those officials who had failed to distribute harvest proceeds and ordered them to distribute 10 to 15% of the amount of grain threshed regardless of whether the given collective farm had met its grain deliveries quota.<sup>77</sup>

In sum, during the Famine Moscow intervened by taking control of the Ukrainian party and state apparatuses, using thousands of new men, increasing extractive pressures on the Ukrainian countryside, and proclaiming a witch-hunt of recalcitrants within the regime itself. Only after a final attempt to squeeze out the last kernel of grain did it allow any aid to be sent to Ukraine, and that only because without it the new crop could never have been planted. Such a policy at a time of mass starvation, insofar as it was effective, could only have led to higher mortality.

**6) Postyshev had a dual mandate: Not only was he to intensify the grain seizures (and therefore the Famine) in Ukraine, he was also charged with eliminating "national deviations," that is, the modest national self-assertion hitherto allowed Ukrainians in the USSR.**

On December 14, 1932, the All-Union Central Committee and *Sovnarkom* adopted an unpublished—indeed, never published—decision. We know of its existence only because in his speech before the November 1933 plenum of the Ukrainian Central Committee, Postyshev revealed that this "historic decision" ordered the Ukrainian Central Committee and Soviet government:

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<sup>76</sup> "Dostrokovoiu zdacheiu khliba derzhavi dob"iemo voroha" (By Early Delivery of Bread to the State We Shall Finish Off the Enemy), *Kolhospyntsia Ukrainy* (The Collective Farm Woman of Ukraine), 1933, No. 14, p. 1. I am indebted to Fedir Kapusta for this reference.

<sup>77</sup> "Lyst TsK KP(b)U pro vydachu avansiv kolhospykam" (Letter of the CP(b)U Central Committee on Distribution of Advances to Collective Farmers), *Istoriia kolektyvizatsii sil'skoho hospodarstva Ukrainy'koi RSR*, III, pp. 81-82. See also pp. 93-97 for the December 17 Ukrainian Commissariat of Agriculture and MTS Political Section Supervisory Sector joint decree ordering distributions be made by January 10, 1934.

### Chapter 3

To turn serious attention to the proper implementation of Ukrainization, to cease carrying it out mechanically, to disperse Petliurists and other bourgeois-nationalist elements from the Party and Soviet organizations, to select and educate Ukrainian Bolshevik cadres painstakingly, and to safeguard the Party's systematic leadership and control over the way Ukrainization is carried out.<sup>78</sup>

Postyshev carried out this order by eliminating the nationally self-assertive wing of the Communist Party of Ukraine, which had been led by Mykola Skrypnyk. He labeled vestiges of Ukrainian national self-assertion as "bourgeois nationalist deviations" and suppressed them. The weeks that followed Postyshev's arrival witnessed an extensive purge of Ukrainian cultural life.<sup>79</sup> On February 28, a major reshuffling of the Soviet Ukrainian government was carried out. Skrypnyk was transferred to the Ukrainian State Planning Agency, one of diminishing importance with the Union's growing role in the economic sphere, and was replaced as Commissar of Education by Volodymyr Zatons'kyi, another of the few Ukrainian Old Bolsheviks, but one never known for advocating specific policy prescriptions of his own.<sup>80</sup> On March 11, the Ukrainian Central Committee denounced the schoolbooks which Skrypnyk's Education Commissariat had approved.<sup>81</sup> At the end of April, the CP(b)U Central Committee sponsored a conference on the nationality question where Zatons'kyi denounced national deviations in education and party propagandist Andrii Khvyliia denounced them in linguistics. Both had been under Skrypnyk's jurisdiction.<sup>82</sup>

The final showdown between Postyshev and Skrypnyk came at the June plenum of the Ukrainian Central Committee, the transcript of which was never published. Skrypnyk spoke first. His speech was never published, and we know of its content only from Postyshev's response. One of the most discerning European observers of the situation, Ewald Ammende, reconstructed Skrypnyk's last stand thusly:

He seems above all to have denied that disaffected Ukrainian Communists were acting as enemies of the state and tools of anti-Soviet movements, and to have urged that the new situation brought about by the methods of force and exploitation employed against the people could only lead to protests against the policy of Moscow on the part of those intellectuals and Communists now being charged with nationalism. He further showed that the chief reason for the collapse of Ukrainian agriculture must be looked for in the steps taken by Moscow and the suppression of local freedom and initiative by Moscow centralism.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> "Sovetskaia Ukraina—nesokrushimyi forpost velikogo SSSR. (Iz rechi P. P. Postysheva na plenumie TsK KP(b)U)" (Soviet Ukraine—the Unconquerable Outpost of the Great USSR: from the Speech of P. P. Postyshev at the CP(b)U Central Committee Plenum), *Pravda*, December 6, 1933, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> See Kostiuk, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>80</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, March 1, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> "Pro pidruchnyky dlia pochatkovoï i seredn'oi shkoly: postanova TsK KP(b)U z 11 bereznia 1933 r." (On Primary and Middle School Textbooks: Instruction of the CP(b)U Central Committee Plenum of March 11, 1933), *Visti VUTsVK*, March 12, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> "Narada z pytan' natsional'noi polityky partii" (Meeting on Questions of the Party's Nationality Policy), *Visti VUTsVK*, May 1, 1933, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> Ewald Ammende, *Human Life in Russia* (reprint: Zubal, Cleveland, 1984), 122-123.

Postyshev began with the now customary reminder of the January instruction:

**The Central Committee of our Party set in January of this year before Ukraine's Bolsheviks a whole series of most serious tasks. The basic and primary task is to extract Ukraine's agriculture from that breakdown status which it has been suffering for several years and to rid itself of those difficulties which we still have in Ukraine.**

**This task is extraordinarily complex and responsible. Its significance extends far beyond Ukraine's borders. To a very substantial degree the further growth of socialism in the USSR and the further strengthening of our position in the world arena depends on the successful accomplishment of this task.**

Then he declared that the errors of previous years—obviously referring to the so-called national deviations of the 1920s—had not been completely overcome. He reminded the party that the successful recent sowing campaign owed much to “the great help” Ukraine had received through the seed, food, and forage loan extended at sowing time. But errors remained which could only be overcome by means of deeper criticism:

**We must put Ukraine's entire Party organization “in harness,” put it on alert, and not permit the repetition of those errors.**

**Therefore, every communist and every Communist Youth League member must give all his attention to the question of those errors, which include not only errors of a practical order but also very great errors of political principle.**

The main error which had been committed, according to Postyshev, consisted in “the breakdown of Bolshevik vigilance, such that wrecking counterrevolutionary elements have attained their widest field of action in Ukraine.” Some had been active in agriculture, but their activities were by no means confined there.

**Do not think that the enemy has taken up arms only in the system of our agricultural organs. The wrecking, counterrevolutionary elements have been able to deploy their forces in other realms of socialist construction as well and not seldom in leading posts.**

**Take the cultural front. Cultural construction in Ukraine is a most important factor in carrying out the Leninist nationality policy, has the most direct and immediate bearing to our whole daily struggle, and for this reason numerous Petliurists, Makhnovists, and agents of foreign counter-intelligence, who extended their roots deeply and who played leading roles in various spheres of cultural construction.**

He then mentioned the Ukrainian Communists and cultural figures, whom he had arrested as spies and wreckers. Among them was the historian Matvii Iavors'kyi, whose textbooks had been obligatory in Soviet Ukrainian schools. Others were Badan, Maksymovych, Ersteniuk, Shums'kyi, and Solodub. They had collectively represented the CP(b)U's contribution to the Ukrainian national cultural revival of the 1920s. According to Postyshev, they had,

**besides carrying out the work assigned them by the various counter-intelligence services, which they served as agents by leading various spheres of cultural construction, planted, not, of course, our Ukrainian culture, which is national in form and socialist in content, but the nationalist, chauvinist, bourgeois culture of the Dontsovs, Iefremovs, and Hrushevs'kyis, a culture hostile to the ideology and interests of the proletariat and toiling peasantry.**

Postyshev stated that such people had sought to undermine the Leninist nationality policy. By means of their wrecking “they sought to undermine and

weaken the proletarian dictatorship, fervently preparing new actions against the USSR not excluding dreams of detaching Ukraine from the Soviet Union.” These spies and wreckers had wrapped themselves in “the tattered banner” of a unified Ukraine, which actually served the interests of the German fascists, and the Polish *pans*, who hoped for the restoration of capitalism.

But what created the favorable conditions for their wrecking and espionage activities? The main cause is the dulling and in some cases even the loss of Bolshevik vigilance. And the fact is that even some of our leading comrades fell victim to their delicate entanglements.

In connection with this I want to pause on the statement made here by Comrade Mykola Oleksiiovych Skrypnyk. It must be stated plainly that this statement can in no way satisfy any of us.

That realm which was up to a short time ago led by Comrade Skrypnyk (I have in mind the Peoples Commissariat of Education and the whole system of organs of education in Ukraine) was the most polluted with wrecking, counterrevolutionary, nationalistic elements. It was in these very organs that these wrecking elements rose, appointed by him, to the most responsible realms of the ideological front. And there was no struggle whatsoever against these elements. And even Comrade Skrypnyk was forced to recognize that here our enemies not seldom had strong and authoritative protection from some, obviously blind and deaf, “Communists.”<sup>84</sup>

Only now was Postyshev ready to respond to what Skrypnyk had said, and only then by ridiculing it and identifying it with the “wrecking” of the class enemies and bourgeois-nationalist traitors. The reader’s only real clue to what Skrypnyk said is in the following passage, which makes it clear that the former Commissar of Education had protested the far-reaching Russification of the Ukrainian language and culture, implemented by Postyshev:

How is it possible, Comrade Skrypnyk, to come to this most responsible tribune, to which heed is paid by tens and hundreds of thousands of Communists and by millions of non-Party activists sent by the Party, with such trifles. Is the issue really those facts which you point to in the realm of Ukrainian grammar and orthography? Is the main wrecking of the bourgeois-nationalist Petliurist elements in the fact that they incorrectly arranged the letters “h” and “g”? And letters really do have significance. But these are trifles compared to the wrecking work which was carried out in the *Narkomosvity* [Ukrainian Commissariat of Education] organs, aimed at entangling our youth in ideology hostile to the proletariat. And before arranging the letters “h” and “g,” these wreckers in *Narkomosvity* put their people in the entire system’s education organs (*laughter in the hall, calls of “right!”*). You, Comrade Skrypnyk, should have spoken here about this; this is primary. (*Stormy applause*).<sup>85</sup>

Skrypnyk had not confessed his errors, as he evidently had been expected to do, but attempted to justify his record. According to Postyshev,

The errors were great; the errors were serious, both in Comrade Skrypnyk’s literary works on the nationality question and in his leadership of the Peoples Commissariat of Education.

And of course, Comrade Skrypnyk, the essence of the matter is not the way you now have put it in your speech. You said that earlier these people were suitable, but conditions have changed and now these people have become wreckers. Such an explanation, you know, just gives the class enemy something to grab on to. Badan was always a wrecker – both now and six

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<sup>84</sup> “Mobilizuiemo masy za svoiechasnu postavku zerna derzhavi: promova t. P. P. Postysheva na plenumi TsK KP(b)U 10-VI 1933 p.” (We Shall Mobilize the Masses for the Timely Delivery of Grain to the State: Speech of Comrade P. P. Postyshev at the CP(b)U Central Committee Plenum on June 10, 1933), *Visti VUTsVK*, June 22, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

years ago. Erstenink was a spy from the first and at present; free him and he would be a spy again. Iavorsky was at first and is now our mortal enemy; he is still our enemy. And all the while these people were running things. You see, Comrade Skrypnyk, that the essence here lies not in the letters "h" and "g" or "h" and "kh", as you would have it. (*Laughter, applause*).<sup>86</sup>

The "exposure of the national deviation headed by Skrypnyk" and the plenum was followed by a veritable competition of denunciations. Skrypnyk's erstwhile comrades vied with one another to denounce every manifestation of Ukrainian national distinctiveness that had been permitted during Skrypnyk's tenure at *Nar-komosvity*. It was a competition which even Skrypnyk's suicide in July did not end.<sup>87</sup>

Meanwhile, Postyshev continued his speech, returning to agriculture and blaming the CP(b)U's past failure to seize the requisite quantity of bread from the starving on the lack of "Bolshevik vigilance," that is, the unwillingness of some of Ukraine's Communists to blame everything on the omnipresent class enemy:

I have got off the track somewhat, but this whole question is directly and intimately connected with the causes of the breakdown of the grain procurements last year in Ukraine. It is absolutely necessary to state such facts only because Ukraine's Party organizations lacked Bolshevik vigilance concerning the class enemy.

Is everything really all right with us now? Do we really not have among individual workers—including some very responsible ones—anti-Party talk to the effect that the only reason Ukraine's agriculture broke down was that the *otrug* was liquidated and *oblast's* created with the special aim of "putting a paw on Ukraine and centralizing everything"? Such talk (*balakanyia*) is hostile to us. All this is just the belching of the old hostile influence which has done great harm to socialist construction in Ukraine. A decisive struggle must be proclaimed against such anti-Party talk, and, above all, we must remember Bolshevik vigilance and not for a moment forget that it is the enemy who foists upon us this sort of explanation for the breakdown of Ukraine's agriculture.

The lack of Bolshevik vigilance led to Ukraine's Party organizations being littered with Petliurist, Makhnovist, White Guard elements. The enemy from the Party committee, who not seldom occupied leadership posts, organized direct sabotage of last year's grain procurements in some districts.

The struggle for bread is the struggle for socialism. The struggle for bread in Ukraine is the struggle for the consolidation of a socialist Soviet Ukraine. This is why it was in the struggle for bread that we especially felt the maneuvers and activities of the class enemy and his agents. It was precisely here that we felt the class enemy's greatest resistance and precisely here that all the blunders of our work presented themselves with the greatest acuteness.

Postyshev concluded by assuring the CP(b)U that with sufficient "Bolshevik vigilance" for the maneuvers of the Petliurists, Makhnovists, White Guards, and other class enemies, 1933 would be the last year of difficulties.<sup>88</sup>

By blaming everything on "class enemies," especially those within the Party, Postyshev completed his enunciation of Stalin's policy of ignoring the human suffering and massive loss of life caused by the man-made famine, blaming the failure of the CP(b)U to seize enough agricultural produce on an impermissible lack of vigilance for the maneuvers of the class enemies, and linking Skrypnyk's "national deviation" to the alleged maneuvers. This, then, was the unfolding of a

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> See James E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1933* (Harvard, Cambridge, Mass., 1983), pp. 296-300.

<sup>88</sup> "Mobilizuiemo masy..." *Visti VUTsVK*, June 22, 1933, p. 2.

policy already implicit in the decision of December 14, 1932, made explicit the link between Moscow's policy toward Ukraine's countryside and its policy toward Ukrainian national self-assertion.

Nationality policy (what to do about the USSR's non-Russian nations) reflected policy toward the countryside, and the "national question" was seen, as Stalin himself put it, as "essentially a problem of the peasantry."<sup>89</sup> Thus, it was the crushing of the Ukrainian peasantry which made the crushing of Ukrainian national self-assertion possible for Stalin and his subordinates. We have seen that the Famine was not caused by an act of nature but by an act of policy. The leadership in Ukraine warned Moscow of what could be expected. Under pressure, the CP(b)U carried out the policies which brought the Famine. Moscow's response was to take direct control of the Ukrainian apparatus by giving Postyshev a dual mandate which could only have been calculated to make the Famine even worse and, at the same time, to crush any assertion of a distinct Ukrainian identity under the guise of combatting national deviations. Thus the Famine, by neutralizing the basic mass constituency of Ukrainian national self-assertion, was used to eliminate any "Ukrainian factor" in Soviet politics. This is not the same as stating that the Famine was created merely to destroy the Ukrainians. There were pressing economic motives for the extraction of as much produce as possible from the peasantry at this juncture in Soviet history. Indeed, famine had been an ongoing reality in Kazakhstan since 1930 and in the Volga Basin since 1931. But, if Stalin did come to the conclusion that some must starve in order that the state receive the grain his plans required, is it unreasonable to assume that he might have decided that as many as possible of the victims be claimed in areas that he saw as stumbling blocks to his policies of centralization and Russification? His actions, beginning in December 1932, indicate that he was more than willing to do whatever necessary to remove the stumbling block that was Ukraine.

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<sup>89</sup> I. V. Stalin, "K natsional'nomu voprosu v Iugoslavii" (Concerning the Nationality Question in Yugoslavia), *Sochineniia*, VII, p. 72.

## Chapter 4

### SOVIET HISTORICAL FICTION ON THE FAMINE

Like the once-taboo subject of the Gulag, the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933 has surfaced from time to time in post-Stalinist Soviet fiction and literary criticism in both Ukraine and Russia. Four writers who deal with the Famine at some length are Ivan Stodniuk in his novel *Liudi ne angely* (People Are not Angels), first published in the Leningrad journal *Neva* in December 1962, subsequently issued in book form in Russian, Ukrainian, and English, and also as a play in 1967; Petro Lanovenko in *Nevmyruchy khib* (Undying Bread, 1981); Mikhail Alekseev in *Drachuny* (Fighters), first serialized in the journal *Nash sovremennik* (Our Contemporary), in 1981 and soon thereafter as a book; and Vladimir Tendriakov in the novella *Konchina* (The Demise, 1974).

The lifting of the once-absolute taboo on the Famine does not imply a full portrayal. Rather, it has only meant the creation of a new set of limitations on how far the author can go. Fiction, of course, does not necessarily demand verisimilitude. In the West, fiction writers, including those who write on historical themes, are under no special obligation to interpret reality and history in any way other than the way they choose. In non-totalitarian societies, historical fiction, like all fiction, is a literary genre where style is at least as important as content in being the measure of a novel's aesthetic merit.

The imposition of the aesthetic formulas of socialist realism in 1934 long made a purely personal interpretation of a historical event unthinkable. Socialist realism, like "proletarian internationalism" or "the Leninist nationality policy," is an ideological constant, the actual meaning of which changes frequently. According to the formula enshrined in the constitution of the Union of Soviet Writers, socialist realism requires an artist to provide a historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development aimed at the education of the masses in the spirit of communism. Socialist realism rejects as "bourgeois" the concept of art for art's sake; rather, art is viewed functionally as a weapon in the class struggle, and its worth is measured by how it advances the historical process guided by the Communist Party. This means that art, including historical fiction, reflects "truth" as defined by the Party. The writer of historical fiction must adhere to "historical truth" as determined by Soviet historians, who are also responsible to the party.

The starting point for both the Soviet historian and historical fiction writer is less the historical event than the author's political "responsibility" to the party as the party defines it. While adherence to socialist realism remains a constant in art and literature, the party's definition of "truth" changes, and the strictures to which the individual artist must adhere become more or less confining according to whether there is a "thaw" or a "crackdown." Moreover, since fiction deals with the personal and experiential rather than with the impersonal formulas by which the "historical

process" is "scientifically" understood, Soviet fiction inherently has more freedom than history.

Historical fiction on the Famine of 1932-1933 appeared as a facet of destalinization, the high point of which was attained in 1962-1963. The first stage of "exposing Stalin's crimes," which Khrushchev began with his 1956 secret speech at the XXth Party Congress, merely rehabilitated some of Stalin's individual victims who perished in the Great Purge of 1937-1938. The XXIIInd Party Congress and the official publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* about the Gulag in 1962 extended the notion of "victims of Stalinism" from individuals to a whole social category.

The politics of the creative process are restated from time-to-time by virtually every Soviet leader. At a meeting of party leaders with representatives from the arts on March 8, 1963, Nikita Khrushchev described the principles of socialist realism as follows:

Our people need militant revolutionary art. Soviet literature and art have been called upon to recreate vivid images of the great heroic period of building communism and to portray accurately the assertion and victory of new communist relations in our life. An artist must be able to recognize the positive and to rejoice in the positive which constitutes the essence of our reality, to support it, and, at the same time, not to overlook the negative—that which impedes the birth of the new in life.

All things, even the best, have their dark sides. Even the most handsome man can have flaws. It is all a matter of how one approaches life's phenomena and from which positions one judges them. An unbiased individual who actively takes part in the creative activity of the people objectively views both the positive and negative in life, correctly understands and accurately evaluates both, as he actively stands up for the assertion of the most advanced, that which is decisive for the society's development.<sup>1</sup>

A good nutshell summary of Khrushchev's directives, which one would do well to keep in mind in discussions on the Famine, is that a Soviet writer was permitted to admit to seeing many different sides to reality, including the dark sides of the Soviet experience under Stalinism—if he did so from the proper standpoint. In short, one had to blame Stalin and not the Soviet system or the party.

In this particular speech, Khrushchev turned to two of his favorite themes, denouncing Stalinism—this time in the arts—and the persistence of its legacy:

The question often asked now is why the violations of the law and abuses of power were not exposed and cut short when Stalin was alive and whether it was possible then. Our point of view on this has been more than once stated fully and with the utmost clarity in party documents. Unfortunately, some people, including certain workers in art, still try to present events in a false light. This is why we have to dwell on the question of the Stalin personality cult again today.<sup>2</sup>

Specifically, Khrushchev also revealed for the first time that the much-honored writer Mikhail Sholokhov, who was a native of the Don region, had been critical of Stalin's policies during the Famine and had lived to tell about it. Sholokhov was the author not only of the monumental epic on the Don Cossacks in the Civil War,

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<sup>1</sup> N. S. Khrushchev, "Vysokaia ideinost' i khudozhestvennoe masterstvo: velikaina sila Sovetskoi literatury i iskusstva" (High Idealism and Artistic Mastery: the Great Strength of Soviet Literature and Art), *Pravda*, March 8, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.



*Tikhii Don* (Quiet Flows the Don), but also of the lesser known *Podniataia tselina* (Virgin Soil Uplifted), a book acknowledged by Khrushchev, on this occasion, as being the definitive novel on collectivization. Khrushchev began by noting that:

In the Spring of 1933 our esteemed Mikhail Sholokhov raised his voice in protest against the arbitrary rule that reigned on the Don at that time. Not long ago two letters to Stalin and Stalin's replies were found in the archives. One cannot remain calm reading Sholokhov's truthful words, written with a bleeding heart, about the shocking deeds of people who engaged in criminal activities in the Veshenskaia and other districts of the Don.<sup>3</sup>

Omitting the full text which evidently had delineated specific abuses, Khrushchev cited excerpts from Sholokhov's letter of April 16, 1933:

Countless such examples could be cited. These are not isolated instances of deviation but of a legalized "method" on a district scale of conducting grain procurement. I have heard about these facts either from communists or from collective farmers themselves, who came to me asking "to have this printed in the papers" after having been subjected to all these "methods." Joseph Vissarionovich, do you remember Korolenko's article, "In a Pacified Village?" The same kind of "disappearance" has been the fate of tens of thousands of collective farmers—not three peasants suspected of having stolen grain from a *kulak*—and, as you see, with a wider use of technical means and in a more refined way... The cases not only of those who have committed outrages against collective farmers and Soviet power, but also those whose hand directed them should be investigated... If everything I have described merits the attention of the Central Committee, send to the Veshenskaia district real Communists who will have enough courage to expose, irrespective of the persons concerned, all those responsible for the mortal blow delivered to the collective farm economy of the district, who will investigate properly and show up not only all those who have applied loathsome "methods" of torture, beating up, and humiliation to collective farmers, but also those who inspired them.<sup>4</sup>

Khrushchev did not reveal the contents or date of the second letter, but did read Stalin's response to the two epistles:

I thank you for the letters, for they expose a sore in our Party-State work and show how our workers, wishing to curb the enemy, sometimes unwittingly hit friends and descend to sadism. But this does not mean that I agree with you *on all points*. You see only *one* side, though you see it quite well. But this is only *one* side of the matter. In order not to go adrift in politics (your letters are not *belles lettres* but 100 percent politics), one has to observe and to be able to see the other side as well. And the *other* side is that the esteemed grain-growers of your district (and not only of your district alone) carried on a sabotage campaign and were not loath to leave the workers and the Red Army without bread. That the sabotage was quiet and outwardly harmless (without bloodshed) does not change the fact that the esteemed grain-growers waged what was virtually a "quiet" war against Soviet power. A war of starvation, dear Comrade Sholokhov... This, of course, can in no way justify the outrages which, as you assure me, have been committed by our workers... And those guilty of these outrages must be duly punished. Nevertheless, it is clear as day that the esteemed grain-growers are not as harmless as they could appear to be from afar.<sup>5</sup>

Stalin's response, outwardly objective but clearly leaning toward a defense of state policies, could very well serve as an operating model of socialist realism which

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

also interprets reality in the “proper” way while appearing to weigh both sides of the issue. But even more instructive is the light the letters shed on the extent to which a prestigious writer was able to protest the Famine at the time it was happening. Of course, it must be kept in mind that neither Sholokhov’s letters nor the response to them were ever published in Sholokhov’s collected works. Hence, we know about them only what Khrushchev chose to tell us. Moreover, they belong to the realm of private correspondence, which like private conversation, allows people to say more than they would in the presence of a third party.

Although for Sholokhov, who was a special correspondent in the Don region at the time of the Famine, the issue must have been one of paramount importance, there is no repetition in his fiction of the indignation expressed in his letter to Stalin regarding the “methods” of grain extraction involving torture and other “sadism.” In fact, in *Virgin Soil Upturned*, the first part of which came out in 1932 in the journal *Novyi mir* (New World), the brutality of the Party thug, Nagulnov, in his grain requisitions is rationalized by the fact that he is a throwback to the old partisan school of persuasion and that he and others like him are rapidly being supplanted by more humane party activists.

In Sholokhov’s published correspondence the only possible allusion to the Famine is in an article entitled, “The Results of Ill-Conceived Work,” written March 22, 1933, and in which Sholokhov laments the senseless way almost half of the draught animals in Veshenskaia district (the same one mentioned in the letter to Stalin) had been lost in transporting 1,000 tons of grain from collective farms in that area to those in Millerovskii District.<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, a public voicing of the sentiments like those Sholokhov expressed in his letters to Stalin would have been inconceivable. Stalin’s reprimand of the writer was light, considering that many writers were “removed” from the literary arena for lesser crimes. Chiding him for being too political, Stalin suggested that Sholokhov forget what he knew best—the situation of the grain shortage in his native region and stick to what he did best—writing fiction.

All this is instructive in terms of what Sholokhov was praised for having done. Khrushchev’s Sholokhov did not criticize either collectivization or the fact that the peasants had to part with their produce involuntarily, only the widespread brutality with which this was done. Nor did he specifically mention famine, only the whole system of abuses by which grain was being seized. In other words, he had the proper standpoint, loyal in fundamentals, but critical of abuses.

Ultimately, the works of Stadniuk, Lanovenko, Alekseev, and Tendriakov, all of which were written during or after the Khrushchev period and all of which reflect, to a lesser or greater degree, the aforementioned formulas of socialist realism, are compelling, if hardly ever from a purely artistic angle, then certainly from the standpoint of what could or could not be written about the Famine during three decades of shifting political winds. Although there is no record of any of these writers, with the possible exception of Alekseev, ever showing political courage of the type Sholokhov exemplified by going to Stalin, the Famine is still far from being an innocuous issue. Both in their fiction and in other writings, these writers have taken pains to bend with the political currents.

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<sup>6</sup> Mikhail Sholokhov, “Rezultat neprodumannoi raboty” (The Result of Ill-Conceived Work), *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh* (Collected Works in Eight Volumes) (Moscow, Pravda, 1975), vol. VIII, pp. 37-38.

Ivan Stadniuk, a highly popular "official" writer, whose novel was written earliest and has been reprinted many times since, in a recent article in the periodical *Sotsialisticheskaia industriia* (Socialist Industry), hints at the political "responsibility" of those who write Soviet historical fiction—the need to pay homage to the current official interpretation of a given historical event. Stadniuk, as always, with his sails trimmed to the latest shift in the political wind, now speaks out in favor of more *glasnost*' in the realm of historical fiction. He observes that while historical verisimilitude has always been an important criterion for him, it was not always possible to uphold, even in the so-called liberal early sixties which marked the height of anti-Stalinist sentiment, "In *People Are not Angels* I condemned, categorically condemned, *insofar as I was able*, the unjustified repressions as well as the excesses and errors connected with collectivization and dekulakization."<sup>7</sup>

The past decade has been a time of great shifts in internal Soviet politics, official Soviet historiography, and—reflecting them—the politics of Soviet fiction. Under Khrushchev, Stadniuk published the first more or less honest portrayal of the Famine in Soviet letters. Under Brezhnev Soviet cultural life regressed, backing off from the more critical expression permitted in the Khrushchev years. The winds favored, if not an outright denial of the Famine's existence, then certainly a gross distortion of its scope and causes. Soviet historians have yet to own up to Stalin's and the party's responsibility for the Famine, and to mention the topic in criticism is still a dangerous thing. This is quite evident even in something as brief and seemingly innocuous as Stadniuk's comments on the excesses of collectivization and dekulakization. It is immediately apparent to anyone reading Stadniuk's novel that one of the "excesses and errors" he is referring to is the Famine, yet, though he has no reservations about having addressed the topic in the fiction he wrote 20 years earlier, he does seem to have second thoughts about using the word today in literary criticism. Given the fact that his article is a plea for more *glasnost*', Stadniuk's reticence cannot but strike one as significant. As always, he remains highly sensitive to what the current regime wants and how far it is willing to go.

Yet, even with the constraints of official policy working against them, some of the more daring Soviet writers of fiction today are able to say more in their works than are historians, if only through hints and innuendoes. One writer in particular has conducted an energetic campaign to tell the truth about the Famine, Mikhail Alekseev. Alekseev is the chief editor of the literary journal *Moskva* (Moscow), the secretary of the Board of the USSR Writer's Union, and winner of many literary awards. He is also one of the most prominent members of the so-called Russian Fellowship, a group of writers preoccupied with the Russian national past.<sup>8</sup> Given his high status in the official Soviet literary community, which even he could lose if his candor were to become excessive in official eyes, Alekseev's preoccupation with the Famine, culminating in the publication of his most recent novel, *Fighters*, is both remarkable and courageous. Only the relative favor enjoyed by the current of Russian nationalism with which Alekseev is

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<sup>7</sup> Ivan Stadniuk, "Pravo na poisk istiny" (The Right to Seek the Truth), *Sotsialisticheskaia industriia*, July 14, 1987, p. 3. Emphasis added.

<sup>8</sup> On officially tolerated Russian literary trends which reject many official historical interpretations in the name of Russian national values, see Mikhail Agursky, "Contemporary Russian Nationalism: History Revisited," Soviet and East European Center, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Research Paper No. 45 (Jerusalem, 1982).

associated can explain the fact that he has been allowed to go as far as he has. And even he has paid a price.

Alekseev was 15 at the time of the Famine, certainly old enough both to remember the horrors it wrought in Saratov province in the Volga Basin where he lived with his family and to draw his own conclusions about what he saw. In "Sower and Preserver," a 1972 autobiographical sketch whose real purpose seems to have been to elucidate the author's literary program and explain his shift from World War II to village themes, Alekseev devoted a large part of the article to an account of the Famine in his native village of Monastyrskoe:

In thirty-three famine began in the Volga Basin (if it were only the Volga Basin!). The word, "bad harvest" (*neurozhai*), is usually juxtaposed with the word, "famine" (*golod*). Admittedly, to this very day I am still trying to comprehend the origins of the famine, which came in 1933. The harvest of 1932 was, if not the richest, then certainly not a bad one. What happened? This is not the place to delve into an intricate historical investigation of its reasons. One thing is amazing—not a single textbook on recent history contains even the slightest mention of the year 1933, which was marked by the most terrible tragedy. Individuals died along with their entire families. In our village of Monastyrskoe, which prior to that year had 600 homesteads, 150 were left. And yet none of the wars left their mark on these parts! I recall that the first to die were the horses in the collective farm stables. Our Kariukha, who was not a picky eater, lasted longer than the others... The year 1933 has remained and will continue to remain the most horrible marker in my memory. Many of my relatives and schoolmates, the companions of carefree childhood games, died before my eyes. Many of them were buried on the very spot where they were overcome by death from starvation. I'll never forget the little human skeleton who broke a window in our hut, stretched out his bony little hand toward the hot gruel set out to cool in an iron pot and straight away began shoving handfuls of it into its mouth. I probably should have written a whole book on thirty-three, but can't seem to pluck up my courage to do so, for it would mean reliving everything anew.<sup>9</sup>

Alekseev's decade-long preoccupation with the Famine gives credence to his desire to write "a whole book" on the subject. Since the 1960s Alekseev has made numerous attempts to incorporate the Famine, as well as other phenomena of the late twenties and thirties (collectivization, the destruction of village churches, dekulakization), into his works on village life. *Vishnevyi omut* (Cherry Pool, 1961), the collection *Khleb—imia sushchestvitel'noe* (Bread—the Name of Life, 1966), *Kariukha* (1969), and *Ivushka neplakuchaia* (The Willow Does not Weep, 1975), all contain fairly standard superficial treatments of the Famine. In the latter, for example, Alekseev alludes to the Famine in a general way, noting its local death toll and referring to it as "the terrible '33" and "the hungry '33." Fuller descriptions of the Famine, many of which are expanded versions of the passage cited in "Sower and Preserver," sometimes even using the exact same words, occur in collection of short stories, *Bread—the Name of Life*. But, on the whole, Alekseev saves the bulk of his own Famine experience for treatment in *Fighters*, his magnum opus on the subject, published almost ten years after the admission of a lack of fortitude in the article, "Sower and Preserver."

For several reasons, *Fighters* broke new ground in the treatment of the Famine. For one thing, it was a novel, in which passing references to the Famine, however long, gave way to an organic incorporation of the Famine into the essentially autobiographical account of the author's own childhood. In other words, the

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<sup>9</sup> Mikhail Alekseev, "Sciatel' i khranitel'" (Sower and Preserver), *Nash sovremennik* (Our Contemporary), 1972, No. 9, p. 96.

Famine was no longer a historical backdrop, as it largely was for Stadniuk and Lanovenko, but an event that had a decisive influence on the development of the novel's plot as well as on the moral and psychological evolution of the main protagonists. In fact, so vital was the Famine to the novel's meaning that if the Famine chapters were excised, it simply would not be the same novel. This cannot be said for Stadniuk's, Lanovenko's or Tendriakov's novels. In addition to the Famine's role as a structural component in the novel, Alekseev's sympathies, as we shall soon see, lay squarely with the Famine victims, while the standard apologies for the necessity of collectivization (the suffer-now-for-the-sake-of-a-better-tomorrow theory propounded by almost all of the other writers mentioned), was hardly brought up at all.

Finally, not the least of *Fighters* unique features was the fact that although the book dealt largely with non-Ukrainian famine victims of the Volga Basin, an awareness of the larger scope of the Famine was ever present. This was generated by the author's unique relationship to the Ukrainian language and culture. Why a Russian author should espouse sentimental feelings for things Ukrainian was elucidated by Alekseev himself in his article, "Sower and Preserver." Explaining his genealogy, Alekseev wrote:

We owe our nickname, *Khokhlov* (literally from the word, *khokhol*, topknot, from the old Ukrainian Cossack custom of shaving the head except for a single tuft of hair, and a derogatory word for a Ukrainian—OS), which for a long time the villagers used in place of our real surname, to my grandfather, Mikhail, or more accurately to my great-grandmother, Anastasia. Great-grandmother was never called anything but Nastas'ia Khokhlushka, while the rest of us were *khokhliata* (little *khokhols*—OS). As a seventeen year old girl, great-grandmother was literally kidnapped (with her full consent, it should be added) by great-grandfather from the estate of some gentry woman in either Kharkiv or Poltava province where she was a house-serf. Great-grandfather, a participant in the Crimean War who served in the tsarist army for almost 20 years, took her to his native land of Saratov. From them sprang our clan with a surname that appeared to be patently Russian, but with blood that was partially Ukrainian. Ukrainian songs and Ukrainian food came to our home through Nastas'ia Khokhlushka, and, I might also add, so did the universal love of nature, above all for orchards...<sup>10</sup>

Official critical response to *Fighters* is instructive. Its acceptance by some critics and rejection by others is a very good indicator of political lines drawn on the issue of confronting the Stalinist past. It also serves as an object lesson concerning the pitfalls that might face other Soviet writers, should they pick up where Alekseev left off.

Alekseev's novel was met with a barrage of criticism following its initial serialization in 1982. Soon after the final installment was published, a favorable review by Mikhail Lobanov appeared in the regional periodical *Volga*. Its title, "Liberation," could be taken to mean several things—Alekseev's own liberation or catharsis from his memories of the Famine by writing the novel; the liberation of Soviet literature from lies about Stalinism; or the liberation of Soviet criticism from the ossified formulas of socialist realism.

Lobanov evaluated the book from two angles. On the literary plane he linked it to the Aksakov-Tolstoy-Gorky autobiographical tradition. Although Lobanov tactfully sidestepped a direct comparison between *Fighters* and these classics, his comments on the psychological flatness of some characters (the protagonist's

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

mother, for example) and certain lexical infelicities suggested that Tolstoy (or even Gorky, for that matter) was in no danger of being overshadowed by Alekseev in the area of autobiographical fiction.

But Lobanov's stingy praise of the novel's artistic merits was countered by lavish praise of its historicity. Lobanov clearly saw *Fighters* as a radical departure from typical Soviet historical fiction, which, as he pointed out in his essay, either dwells in the remote past, too timid to broach contemporary historical themes, or treats the latter unrealistically (that is to say rendering historical events according to the sterile formulas of socialist realism – OS).

As an example of the typical treatment of a concrete event by Soviet fiction writers, Lobanov cited a narrative poem by one V. Kazin on the construction of the White Sea Canal in the 1930s.<sup>11</sup> The poem, writes Lobanov, is "very uplifting in tone and in its the praise of the beauty of physical labor and the rehabilitation through the latter of the main hero, a brigand." Yet, its so-called "enthusiasm for socialist construction" (*pafos stroitel'stva*), Lobanov laconically continued, did not exactly exclude all that can be said about the thirties. Given the limitations of the artistic method, how can historical fiction be a tool to inform posterity of events that transpired in the twentieth century?<sup>12</sup>

From Lobanov's words it is immediately clear that he is no Western critic, for he sees the roles of fictionist and historian as being inextricably linked. A writer of contemporary historical fiction must be nothing short of a historian, who acts as a repository of information about the past and an educator of future generations. And Lobanov judged Alekseev's *Fighters* by this criterion:

Now we come to that line in the novel beyond which literature ends and the burning truth about national life begins. Having hesitated to talk about this, but for occasional outlets for the pressure of memories of the year, the author finally resolved to liberate himself from what for decades has been gnawing away at his soul and to tell everything the way it was. It would be absurd to address ourselves to any literary merits these passages may have, just as it would be blasphemous for the author to give an artistic rendering of a national tragedy. If it is appropriate to mention any kind of literary artistry which deserves our understanding in the given situation, it is the author's comprehension of what occurred on the level of those who endured it. This is how that part of the novel is written which talks of the famine in 1933 in the village of Monastyrskoe in Saratov province, where the author lived as an adolescent and where he was witness to everything that happened there. This is no longer prose, it is a chronicle which a historian incorporates into his own work... Every fact here is historically significant.<sup>13</sup>

Lobanov praised Alekseev for his truthful portrayal of historical events, and also in something more elusive yet fundamental to good fiction—an accurate psychological portrayal of the characters, in this case the Famine victims:

But more important than the author's own work is the meaning of *Fighters* for our contemporary literature. We must speak of the importance of such a feature of the novel as its historical

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<sup>11</sup> The White Sea Canal, praised at the time as a great triumph, was built by Gulag slave labor at a tremendous cost in human life and was practically useless economically. Lobanov is probably using it ironically as a metaphor for the senseless squandering of human life under Stalinism.

<sup>12</sup> Mikhail Lobanov, "Osvobozhdenie (O romane M. Alekseeva 'Drachuny')" (Liberation: on M. Alekseev's Novel, 'Fighters'), *Volga*, 1982, No. 10, pp. 145-146.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

method. In the direct sense of the word from now on the thirties are full of content which will stand the historian in good stead in his illumination of that time. But there is still another side to the issue. Long ago in the past sacred objects were built on the blood of martyrs. In the life of our nation there are so many ordeals that any one of them can be a "leaven" for an entire body of literature if this literature were to properly recognize its obligation. The words from Tolstoy alluded to by the author of *Fighters* in the epigraph to the novel to the effect that with time the writer will only tell that which he happened to have observed from life—this is what true historical method is. But there is also the historical method of a psychological kind in the sense that the prominent Russian historian Kotliarevsky had in mind when he said that the (emotional and psychological—OS) experiences of the people already constitute a historical fact on the same level as the events themselves. But who if not literature can and must apply the historical method of its time to the internal psychological content.<sup>14</sup>

Ultimately, Lobanov's praise of Alekseev provoked other critical responses that, like Stadniuk's later article, test the viability of the new liberalism in Soviet literary circles. For one thing, Lobanov's article was published as a "discussion" (i.e., non-authoritative) piece, accompanied by the following editorial postscript:

The author analyzes the work of M. Alekseev from a wide historico-literary perspective and with respect to contemporary tendencies in the depiction of man in world literature. Not every position he takes or every conclusion made by him can be agreed with—but that is what discussions are for.<sup>15</sup>

The central authorities explicitly condemned such treatment of collectivization as heresy in a special Central Committee decree, which stated:

One cannot reconcile oneself to the fact that certain journals have published works that contain serious digressions from the reality of life in their presentation of events pertaining to national history, the Socialist revolution, and collectivization.<sup>16</sup>

With the top authorities clearly on their side, official critics then took issue with Lobanov's defense of Alekseev's sympathetic portrayal of the famine victims, making it clear that that they had little use either for what Alekseev had done or for Lobanov's attempt to use it in order to posit the primacy of historical truth over the dictates of socialist realism. In an article entitled, "'Liberation' ... from What?" published in the *Literaturnaia gazeta* (Literary Gazette), P. A. Nikolaev accused Lobanov of violating historicity:

[Lobanov's] article contains many word combinations such as 'historical truth,' 'historical conditions,' 'historical equivalent,' 'historical foresight.' But let not the reader think that these commendable declarations are realized in practical analysis or that historicity is the investigative method employed by the critic. Alas, the contrary is true.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>16</sup> "On the Creative Ties of Literary and Artistic Journals with the Practice of Communist Construction," *Pravda*, July 30, 1982, as quoted by Sergei Yurenen, "The Lenin Prizes for 1984: Why the Writer Mikhail Alekseev was Excluded," *Radio Liberty Research*, RL 16/85, January 18, 1985, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> P. A. Nikolaev, "'Osvobozhdenie' ... ot chego?" (Liberation from What), *Literaturnaia gazeta* (Literary Gazette), January 5, 1983, p. 4.

Nikolaev made it clear that Lobanov was guilty of violating long-established “historical truths” about the “socialist transformation” of the Soviet countryside:

Since when is the wholesale rejection of historical truths attained by the great socialist experience of the people called a discussion? M. Lobanov's article is a phenomenal example of unconditional critical nihilism with respect not only to great literature but also to history ... it is virtually a unique phenomenon in contemporary criticism... Collectivization was the unavoidable historical act of the revolutionary reconstruction of the peasant mentality. The practical consequences of this act have been elucidated clearly enough by historical scholarship and literature, but its essence was never called in question. However, neither M. Lobanov's aesthetic nor the socio-moralistic views allow him to accept this historical axiom. In various material, from various sides, but always in the same ironic stylistic key he calls it in question.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, Lobanov questioned what no party-minded Soviet critic should ever question, that collectivization was an unavoidable and revolutionary act by which the backward peasant mentality was “reconstructed.”

Beyond this, historicity for Nikolaev is simply not the same thing as it is for Lobanov. For Nikolaev it means the way in which historical events are depicted in literature through the method of socialist realism, working in tandem with current political doctrine. But for Lobanov, it means stating the obvious about what happened and what quite a few living people remember, that people suffered. For Lobanov, the reality of Alekseev's portrayal of collectivization and the Famine in *Fighters* lies, as we shall see, in blurring precisely those political differences of the protagonists (which a party hack like Sholokhov brings to the forefront) in favor of presenting a sense of precisely that *universality* of human suffering brought about by the Famine, which until *Fighters* Soviet literature ignored. Put another way, the real villain of Alekseev's novel is the Famine, not the *kulaks*. And if the Famine is the villain, the role of those who brought it about by fighting “*kulaks*” is implicitly called into question—though no Soviet writer would ever state this explicitly and hope to get published.

So unmistakable must have been the villainous role played by the Famine (and so weak by comparison the usual class conflicts presented) to anyone reading the novel that Nikolaev, reading Lobanov's review, must have been genuinely appalled at Lobanov's failure to make a big issue out of the imbalance. It is almost as if Lobanov were more guilty in refusing to point out the ideological fuzzy spots in Alekseev's novel between Marxist hero and anti-hero than the author was in creating the blur to begin with. For Nikolaev, the guardian of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, both Lobanov's fearless praise of the dimensions of the Famine in *Fighters* and his seeming mockery of the “pathos of Soviet construction” smacked of political heresy.

Thus, Nikolaev accused Lobanov of being a proponent of ideas like a single folk soul (*edinnaia narodnaia dusha*) and of *pochvenichestvo* (a peasant-loving back-to-the-roots movement of the 19th century), both heresies denounced by Lenin and evident in Lobanov's ideologically incorrect criticism of Alekseev's depiction of the peasantry in *Fighters*. Nikolaev sees the peasants as “dark masses” transformed into politically enlightened Soviet citizens, a process that Nikolaev calls the dialectics of the soul, a term meant to emphasize its connection with the dialectics of history.

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*



Nikolaev attacked Lobanov for implicitly challenging fundamental assumptions about the conventions of socialist realism in delineating a sharp separation of “good guys” and “bad guys.” Since the 1930s it has been beyond question that the hero’s role be given to those who implemented state policy against class enemies or imposed it upon “backward masses” who ultimately benefited from it.

Precisely by embracing Alekseev’s sympathetic portrayal of the victims of state policy, which implicitly cast the hitherto heroic “builders of socialism” in the role of victimizers, Lobanov had called into question basic political assumptions. In Nikolaev’s eyes, Lobanov was also guilty of ignoring class differentiation and equating all of the peasants of Monastyrskoe in the face of a common tragedy. But above all, he was even more guilty of implying that there was a certain trans-historical value in peasant culture (particularly Ukrainian culture), passed on from one generation to the next in much the way, one might add, Alekseev’s great-grandmother passed down the Ukrainian cultural heritage to him. In other words, Lobanov not only did not draw the right villains (*kulaks*), he failed to show that the peasantry *needed* the transformation they experienced through collectivization which would have justified their suffering for the sake of a better future.

Nikolaev largely passed over Alekseev’s novel in favor of putting in place a fellow critic who had wandered into political heterodoxy. For Nikolaev, Lobanov had failed to do what a Marxist literary critic was put on this earth to do—“aid in the active formation of the new man ... seen by our Communist party as one of the most important goals of socialist politics.”<sup>19</sup> Nikolaev rested his case against Lobanov by declaring that there was no need for any kind of liberation. But, concerning Alekseev and the novel in question, Nikolaev did not seem to be particularly interested in analyzing the artistic merits of the book or the lack thereof beyond suggesting that it was a pretty good novel. Perhaps he simply did not dare to take on someone of Alekseev’s stature. Beyond that, however, a novel is detailed enough that one can draw all sorts of political lessons—what disturbed Nikolaev was less the novel than the lessons the critic drew from it.

Although Alekseev was not attacked directly, the whole affair certainly succeeded in sowing the seeds of doubt about Alekseev’s political loyalties, and in April 1984 Communist Party First Secretary Konstantin Chernenko rejected Alekseev as a candidate for the Lenin Prize.<sup>20</sup> There can be little doubt that the rejection of the novel for the award stands as an indictment of its subject matter. The message to other writers was clear: Someone as prominent as Alekseev might get away with such heterodoxy, but even he would have a price to pay. What price might be demanded of a younger writer not up for an award? His Writers’ Union card?

This controversy belongs to the post-thaw pre-*glasnost*’ era when ideological restraints were enforced in discussions of events deemed profoundly embarrassing to the Party. In the present era of *glasnost*’ however, with its highly touted expectations for more truthful assessments of Soviet reality, the Famine promises to be one of the Stalinist “excesses” slated for possible re-evaluation. Recently, the Famine of 1932 has been mentioned for the first time in two widely read

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Sergei Yurenea, “The Lenin Prizes for 1984: Why the Writer Mikhail Alekseev was Excluded,” *Radio Liberty Research*, RL 16/85, January 18, 1985, p. 1.

periodicals, *Sovetskaia Rossiia* and *Ogonëk*.<sup>21</sup> Whether the Famine's re-evaluation will extend beyond chance references in mass periodicals to a more substantive assessment of its causes is anyone's guess. As for the area of *belles lettres*—at the time of the writing of this report it is not known whether any other Soviet writers have joined Alekseev and the other writers mentioned in addressing the Famine in their historical fiction. Literary critics, including Ukrainian literary critics, on the other hand, have been somewhat less reticent in bringing up the subject.

Some months ago the Ukrainian literary journal, *Literaturna Ukraïna*, carried two columns mentioning the Famine. In the section entitled "Writers' Reflections" the critic, Mykola Oliinyk, applied *perestroika* (or *perebudova* in Ukrainian) to literature and literary criticism. Oliinyk approached Soviet literary criticism since the time of its inception, much the same way that Lobanov did when talking about the evolution of Soviet literature in his article on Alekseev. Oliinyk calls to task Soviet critics for their timidity in tackling challenging subjects and for failing to clear the path for the publication of deserving literature:

And what of the critic? It's as if he didn't notice. Pretending that these matters did not concern him, he subscribed to other, higher interests, dealt with problems and ventured into other dimensions, although occasionally it happened that he would do the suppressors (of good literature—OS) a good turn. It was all the more disillusioning to hear in his voice the false notes of yesterday's "reformer."<sup>22</sup>

Rejecting the notion of literary *perestroika* through the innovation of style, Oliinyk sees literary reform as a matter of branching out into previously unexplored (i.e., politically dangerous) subject matter, particularly the topic of ecology which, according to Oliinyk, had been "severely restricted" in the past:

*Perebudova* opens up many possibilities for literature. Many topics are coming out from where they were kept under seven locks, awaiting truthful portrayal. The most important of these, it seems to me, is ecology. Even the famine of 1933—with all its tragic consequences which the artist's hand has reached out to portray and which were mercilessly expunged—even it yields before the omnipotence of Nature. The conscience of our party and people turns to the treatment of the earth, water, air, trees and our mute universe. I haven't yet written a single line about Chornobyl', although I was present in the "zone" with the evacuees... Having shared their bitterness and spiritual anguish, I can say that the reason for the tragedy lies in human conscience, or, more accurately, in the lack of it.<sup>23</sup>

Oliinyk's remedy seems an odd panacea for what ails Soviet literature. Does *perebudova* mark the birth of a new age of environmental concern in Soviet *belles lettres*? Will novels on pollution now supercede that favorite of favorites, the Second World War, in the imagination of Soviet writers? In mentioning the Famine with Chornobyl', a tragedy of national magnitude still fresh in the minds of

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<sup>21</sup> This is in reference to two articles cited elsewhere in the report: V. P. Danilov, "U kolkhoznogo nachala," *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, Oct. 11, 1987, p. 4; Mark Tol'ts, "Skol'ko zhe nas togda bylo?" *Ogonëk*, No. 51, Dec. 19-26, 1987, pp. 10-11. The first breaks no new grounds with the mention of millions of lives taken at the time of collectivization, and the second deals with the suppressed census of 1937.

<sup>22</sup> Mykola Oliinyk, "Chas i my" (Time and Ourselves), *Literaturna Ukraïna* (Literary Ukraine), No. 29, July 16, 1987, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

Soviet citizens, Oliinyk implies that the Famine of 1932 was a tragedy of equal magnitude. This is easy to do because under normal circumstances the word "famine" does, in fact, trigger images of an environmental disaster. The point is that in the question of the Famine, the differences between it and a national disaster like Chernobyl' are more significant than the similarities, for whereas the latter really was an accident, the former was not.

Famine is mentioned also in an excerpt from the unpublished autobiography of Hryhir Tiutiunyk, written in 1966 and printed along with sketches by Tiutiunyk's contemporaries commemorating the life of the writer who died in 1980:

In 1933 our family was swollen from hunger and grandfather, my father's father, Vasyľ Feodulovych Tiutiunyk, died. He wasn't even grey yet and had every one of his teeth in place... To this day, I don't know where his grave is. At that time, I had stopped walking, having just learned how to at the age of a year-and-a-half. I stopped laughing and talking...<sup>24</sup>

Other details of the Stalin years are also mentioned, particularly the arrest of the author's father in 1937 during the purges and his eventual rehabilitation in 1959. Beyond this cursory observation, the Famine of 1933 is not elaborated and even deemphasized by the fact that it is only one of several Tiutiunyk mentions.

None of the authors whose works on the Famine are under discussion here are able to write truthfully or as completely on the Famine as they could, should they wish to. The writers, with the exception of Alekseev, minimize the magnitude of the Famine, soften its horrors, and avoid honest consideration of the question of culpability. The extent of the vagueness of the answers given by all can be fully assessed only through a comparison with a work like Vassily Grossman's *samizdat* prison epic, *Vsë techet* (Forever Flowing, 1970) where the question of culpability, arguably the most crucial question, is answered with brutal directness. Finally, most of the writers, regardless of how they portray the causes of the Famine are in sympathy with its victims. The single exception is Tendriakov who seems to lack even a rudimentary sympathy for the latter.

*People Are not Angels* and *Undying Bread* are virtually indistinguishable in style, content, and genre. Though the first was first published in Russian and the second in Ukrainian, there is no indication that the use of the Ukrainian language implies any national aspirations on the part of the author. Petro Lanovenko is fundamentally a Soviet writer whose decision to write in Ukrainian appears to be motivated by nothing more than a need for at least some ethnicity (the novel is, after all, set in Ukraine), some local color, if you will, to brighten the grayness of seemingly endless descriptions of Stalinist progress. In Lanovenko's Soviet Ukraine industrialization is no different from anywhere else in the Soviet Union, and except for their speech, the characters reflect no ethnic traits. Stadniuk's novel, retains occasional Ukrainianisms like *shchiro* (sincerely), *divchatki* (little girls), *stezhka* (little path), *levada* (meadow), and folk songs, such as "*I shumyt' i hude / dribnyi doshchuk pade*" (loosely, The Gentle Rain Falls) sung by the *kulak's* daughter, Nastia, are left in the original Ukrainian.

Lanovenko's and Stadniuk's novels are wide-sweeping epics of life in Ukrainian villages (Kokhanovka in *People Are not Angels* and Pavlivka in *Undying Bread*) from

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<sup>24</sup> Hryhir Tiutiunyk, "Avtobiohrafiia" (Autobiography), *Literaturna Ukraina*, No. 29, July 16, 1987, p. 6.

the mid-twenties to after the Second World War. The contents of the novel consist of the numerous, ultimately surmountable, obstacles barring the road to communism—dekulakization, collectivization, the Vlasovite movement during World War II, the peasant's inherent mistrust of technology, his sloth, his inordinate love of drink. Balancing, indeed outweighing, the latter are the luminous achievements of socialism—the coming of the first Machine Tractor Station (MTS) to Pavlivka, the installation of the first telephone lines, the building of a cultural center.

Highly evocative of the 1930s Five Year Plan novels, like Valentin Kataev's *Vremia vpered!* (Time Forward!), Stadniuk's and Lanovenko's novels just as easily could have fit the generic label, *Socialist Construction in a Soviet Republic*. Brick by brick, the groundwork for rural communism in fictitious Pavlivka and Kokhanovka is laid by the familiar cross section of village types from the period—poor peasants, middle peasants, village activists, Twenty-Five Thousanders, teachers, representatives of the district party apparatus, etc.

The two epics, like the constructionist novels of the 1930s, are saturated with action scenes and cliff hangers. No sooner is one crisis overcome, than another occurs to test the mettle, and, especially, the political resolve of the villagers. No sooner is this obstacle removed than another appears on the horizon, and so on with monotonous regularity. The realities of rural existence in any country, and particularly the drab reality of Soviet rural existence at the height of Stalinism, while holding interest for the historian or sociologist, seldom make for compelling reading. As socialist realists, Stadniuk and Lanovenko are not supposed to dwell on the shortcomings of rural Ukraine, of course; their task is to make it appear as the exciting setting for the creation of the new socialist way of life. To create a sense of exhilaration, the writers manufacture drama and suspense at the expense of class enemies. The most riveting scenes involve counterrevolutionary plots engineered by *kulaks* who in the two novels are never really successfully neutralized during dekulakization and who periodically rear their ugly heads throughout the decades to strike at the fledgling Soviet regime. It is from the *kulak* class that most of the nefarious villains of the two novels are taken. The rest are Ukrainian nationalists whom Stadniuk at one point dubs "birds of yellow-blue plumage" (*ptitsy zheltogolubogo opereniia*) in reference to the colors of the Ukrainian national flag.<sup>25</sup>

As in all works of socialist realism, a character's political profile is the ultimate measure of his net worth as a human being. The communist hero (in both novels he heads the village soviet) is "tested" politically by attachments he inadvertently forms with class enemies. It is interesting to note that in matters of the heart, the enemy is always a woman who, though not a *kulak* herself, comes from a dekulakized family. The union is doomed by what seems to be an inherent character flaw in the *kulak* progeny. You can take a *kulak* out of the village but the bad seed, as it were, periodically blossoms into an aberration (such as madness) in the children. On a symbolic level the union of opposites represents the ties binding the new Soviet man of impeccable social credentials to the blemished past of his countrymen with whom he must learn to live, very much the way the communist hero Stepan in *People Are not Angels* must learn to live with his wife, Nastia, after she unsuccessfully tries to axe him to death at the famine's height.

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<sup>25</sup> I. Stadniuk, *Liudi ne angely: roman v dvukh knigakh* (People Are not Angels: a Novel in Two Books) (Moscow, Molodaia gvardiia, 1972), p. 98.

A chapter or so of each novel is devoted to the Famine of 1932-33, which appears chronologically after dekulakization and is treated as one of the aforementioned obstacles to building socialism. One of the most telling features of Soviet literary accounts of the Famine is the requirement that it either distort completely or minimize the role of the state's culpability for seizing food from the starving by listing it as only one of several alleged causal factors. Both authors commit this type of whitewashing.

Thus, without actually bypassing the role of increased grain quotas in causing the Famine, Lanovenko creates the impression that the latter was only one in a series of natural and man-made mishaps which, taken together, resulted in the Famine. Premonitions of the Famine are scattered throughout the chapters preceding the ones dealing with the Famine. The general rejoicing at the completion of collectivization in Pavlivka is offset by an observation that the insects are sure to spoil that year's crop; that the management is generally poor; that wheat is allowed to rot at the railway station. Finally, it is observed that in the Spring of 1931 the ground is insufficiently thawed to produce a good harvest. In *Undying Bread* the grain requisitions, which are described as aggravating an already bad situation, are thus relegated to the rank of a tertiary cause of the Famine.

Unlike the numerous incidents of counterrevolutionary intrigue, the grain seizures in *Undying Bread* are never dramatized, thereby minimizing the vividness with which the reader recalls them. Several characters mention grain seizures from the collective farm granaries, but Lanovenko is silent on the subject of grain seizures by village activists from individual households. This is not to say that village activists and their urban support personnel, the so-called "Twenty-Five Thousanders" are not portrayed in the novel. They are, but as the noble "builders of socialism" familiar from Soviet propaganda and not at all as they are remembered by those upon whom they imposed the party's will.

First of all, Lanovenko begins by depicting grain search brigades not at the time of the Famine, but when they were first introduced several years earlier, in 1927-1928. A triumvirate including the communist hero, Panas Kushnirenko, head of the village soviet, in a preposterous affront to historical verisimilitude, is actually invited by old Teklia, an unrepentant *kulak*, to search her home for hidden grain, which she adamantly denies having. Kushnirenko and his crew come equipped with sharp pikes—the well-documented weapons used to extract grain "to the last kernel" from difficult to reach areas. Famine survivors almost unanimously describe such searches as violent, with the members of the shock brigade breaking everything in sight, including the pots on the stove, in their frenzied search for hidden grain. Contrary to his real-life counterparts, Kushnirenko behaves like a perfect gentleman during the search. The violence is generated by none other than Teklia herself, who accompanies his every unfailingly gingerly move around her house with vile abuse and threatening gestures. When a hefty 20 *poods* of grain are uncovered, the incensed *kulak* strikes Kushnirenko over the head with a lamp. As the wounded head of the village soviet is carried away by his comrades, Teklia goes on rampage, demolishing singlehandedly the entire interior of the house, screaming all the while at the top of her lungs that the activists did it.<sup>26</sup>

The absurdity of a frail old woman subduing three grown men is bad enough, but the implications of the incident are even more disturbing because it so blatantly

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<sup>26</sup> Petro Lanovenko, *Nevmyrushchyi khlib* (*Undying Bread*) (Kiev, Dnipro, 1981), pp. 10-16.

reverses the role of victim and victimizer, as though the armed party activists had all they could do to defend themselves from the old unarmed woman.

The same thick coat of whitewash is applied to Lanovenko's Twenty-Five Thousander, a Russian by the name of Kremnev who arrives from Kharkiv to direct the MTS in Andriivka, a sister village of Pavlivka. The kind of propaganda expounded by Kremnev is totally innocuous. In fact, what he tells villagers most of the time cannot even be called propaganda, merely good sensible farming advice. He is the efficiency expert par excellence, cautioning the overly zealous villagers to spend more time worrying about this year's harvest (which is bad) rather than planning ahead for future ones.

When it comes to identifying the authority behind the order for increased grain requisitioning, Lanovenko places the blame not on the state, but on the corrupt head of the district party apparatus, Borovyk. In a heated argument Panas Kushnirenko, communist hero and head of the village soviet in Pavlivka, levels the accusation of avarice at Borovyk:

"I'm not a saboteur," Kushnirenko rose up in his own defense. "Maybe I feel even more sorry than you do for the workers who are unable to buy enough bread to satisfy their needs. But what can one do, when year after year the harvest is bad. And why is it? You yourself were once a farmer and should know the reason. At one time the villager would go hungry all winter long without touching the seed grain, because he knew that without it there would be no harvest. And what are you doing? Let's recall last year, for example. Half of the seed supply and all of the reserves were taken away from the collective farm. And then they gave us a state loan. We were forced to plant seeds with a low germinating power. Why? Just so the *raion* can take first place in the grain-collection reports, so that you can look good on the honor list for overfulfilling your quota..."<sup>27</sup>

In the final analysis the Soviet state emerges blameless, while the guilt for the Famine is placed squarely on the shoulders of a "degenerate" member of its political hierarchy, a scapegoat. Thus, the Soviet reader is expected to believe that millions perished because individual "degenerate" local officials all simultaneously committed the same excesses and took it upon themselves to seize everything.

Stadniuk, like Lanovenko, provides not one, but several reasons for the Famine in *People Are not Angels*, some of which equally strain the reader's credulity. The most implausible of the latter is a counterrevolutionary plot revolving around the diabolical, resilient *kulak*, Oliana Basok, who miraculously turns up in Kokhanovka after the double whammy of dekulakization and exile to the frozen North. Black magic rather than a hardy constitution is hinted at as the reason for her survival. From her Ukrainian nationalist husband, an exile in Poland, Oliana receives orders via an emissary to sabotage village efforts to collectivize:

In two or three years neither a horse nor a pair of oxen must remain on the collective farm. The harvest should be set on fire while it's still in the field. We need a famine. We need a peasant revolt. This will bring aid from abroad. The army of the Ukrainian National Rada [Council, the reference is to a Ukrainian government-in-exile—OS] is ready. Trifon is a colonel in that army."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>28</sup> Stadniuk, *Liudi ne angely: roman*, p. 56.

Following Trifon's directives, Oliana sets her sights on persuading villagers bereft of political consciousness to hoard their grain, instead of handing it over to the state. "Collective farms are the work of the devil ... thresh the harvest and keep half of it yourself for a rainy day," she advises Platon Yarchuk, a naïve peasant who temporarily falls under her spell.<sup>29</sup> In a couple of years, Oliana's persistent campaign to woo Kokhanovka's Platon Yarchuks to the side of the now invisible but active *kulak* element and away from party influence, bears fruit, becoming an important contributing factor of the Famine in Kokhanovka.

Once the Famine begins, counterrevolutionary forces are shown busily trying to exploit it for their own nefarious nationalistic ends. At the former Basok homestead during a secret nocturnal strategy meeting a band of fugitive Petliurists identifies their goals with those of other "enemies of the people:"

We held high hopes for the undermining work of the Trotskyites and our own people who have penetrated the Soviet government apparatus. So far there have been no results. It is true that now the famine is ripening. It will be good if it leads to unrest. However, there are no guarantees that it will. The *muzhiks* (traditional derogatory name for the Russian peasants) are all fleeing to the towns where the labor force is desperately needed.<sup>30</sup>

Significantly, not everyone from the mushrooming population of grain thieves who rob the land is a villain. The author does make an effort—giving at least some credence to his claim of impartiality in the treatment of the subject matter—to differentiate between dyed-in-the-wool scoundrels, unavailable to salvation through political redemption, and gullible but basically good peasants who simply knew no better than trust the devious *kulak*, but who can be brought round to the correct way of thinking with a good dose of party-minded "enlightenment."

The village of Kokhanovka breeds plenty of the former, people like Kuz'ma Gritsai, who after dragging his feet, finally joins the collective farm, only to discover that he lacks group spirit. In order to get out of it what he put in, Kuz'ma devises a clever ruse—insomnia—which eventually earns him the nickname "*lunatik*" (Stadniuk plays on both meanings of the word—"moon-walker" and "lunatic"). Under the protective covering of his fabricated affliction Kuz'ma Lunatik (his real surname is rarely used by the villagers) nightly roams the village, taking everything in sight, including bags of grain from the collective granary. Others get the same idea, and in a mildly amusing twist of plot, the entire village is soon overrun with *lunatiks* whose nocturnal excursions contribute to the food shortage in the village. Eventually Kuz'ma and brethren are given seven years for pilfering socialist property—only after Stadniuk convinces the reader that the "*lunatiks*" contributed heavily to the Famine.

In addition to the true political retrogrades, there are those who like Platon Yarchuk, a thinly disguised latter day version of Tolstoy's peasant-philosopher, Platon Karataev, who hobnob with reactionaries out of sheer ignorance. Platon is basically a "good guy." And the novel, whose title is, after all, a platitude concerning humanity in general, and the politically uneducated in particular, is really about how he and others like him try to reconcile themselves to the new order. Although, prodded by Oliana Basok, Yarchuk commits but one theft of

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

grain from the collective field, the deed returns to haunt the good-hearted fellow for the rest of his life, bringing on nightmares and eventually heart disease, "Platon Yarchuk felt as if he had literally offended a child or did something horribly shameful, from which his conscience gave him no rest."<sup>31</sup>

The real difference between Lunatik and Yarchuk is not so much that one is sorry for one's crime and the other isn't, but that Yarchuk's motive for stealing collective farm property is entirely selfless. The reason that Oliana's insidious advice is able to take hold of Yarchuk in the first place is — famine:

But he was not sorry for what he did. The stolen grain saved his family from starving to death. And if one thought about it, the field, after all, was not really his, but belonged to the collective farm... Last year all of the grain was taken directly from the threshing floor and thresher to warehouses near the railroad station. The representatives of the District Center did not leave the village while the threshing was going on, but conscientiously remained to fulfill the orders of the regional authorities. As the figure designating the tons of grain gathered grew, the peasants harbored secret hopes of getting some of the harvest. It was unclear to Platon why those whose responsibility it was to look after the welfare of the peasant, kept forgetting that the latter was also part of the commonweal, that the collective farm needed the seed grain, that the state would also require harvested grain the following year.<sup>32</sup>

Through the information about the Famine that is part of Platon Yarchuk's thought processes, Stadniuk is able to extricate himself from the embarrassing web of make-believe that he throws over the reader's eyes when he suggests that the sorcery of Oliana Basok and the fiendish machinations of Ukrainian nationalists are legitimate causes for the Famine of 1932. Platon Yarchuk is a patently ordinary man, very much like those of Stadniuk's readers who themselves suffered through the Famine, and Stadniuk makes a definite concession to historical truth by selecting such a likeable old fellow to introduce the topic of forced grain requisitions by the government.

But Stadniuk is hardly using Yarchuk as a spokesman for his own ideas. Yarchuk's artlessness, his tendency to question the actions of the state, his open skepticism of state policies, and the fact that his musings on the Famine come dangerously close to placing the real blame on the state, in no way compromise the author himself. Indeed, how can it? After all, it is made perfectly clear through the grain theft episode that Yarchuk, charismatic though he may be, is still a thief, an offender against the Soviet people. By definition he cannot be completely trusted in anything he says, including the Famine. Whatever historical truth there lies in his mental peregrinations, the fact remains that he cannot see the ultimate Soviet truth (which the author makes certain that his readers know he does see), that many unpleasant obstacles must be overcome before he and the other peasants of Kokhanovka can bask in the rewards of Socialism. In other words, Stadniuk can make any claim he wishes 30 years after the fact of writing the novel about espousing or not espousing the views of his character. The fact remains that there is plenty of evidence in the novel to completely absolve the author from being identified with his character, should he wish to be so absolved. On the other hand, the reverse is also true. Pointing to Platon Yarchuk's speech about the state not taking care of its own, Stadniuk can always claim, and indeed, as we have

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*



already seen does claim, that he tried to be as objective as possible about the years of Stalinism.

Ultimately, Stadniuk is too slippery to be accused of anything, regardless of how the political winds might shift, and this is the secret of his success. In his passages on the Famine he constantly vacillates between typical Soviet propaganda about counterrevolutionary plots to vindicating the grain thieves and implying that the state did the peasants wrong. But his Soviet propaganda is always more perceptible than any implied violation of political dogma.

On the whole, in keeping with the party line at the height of Khrushchev's Thaw, Stadniuk was a bit more forthcoming about the Famine than Lanovenko would later be under Brezhnev. For example, Platon Yarchuk's fleeting thoughts on state-sanctioned forced grain requisitions appear to hover close to a direct accusation of Stalin. In the following passage the culprit goes unnamed, but Yarchuk muses how the peasants of Kokhanovka are denied bread so that the proletariat can fulfill what every Soviet reader recognizes as Stalin's dreams of industrialization:

Yes, yes indeed, you till the soil, sow, harvest and all you get for your efforts is not bread, but first or tenth place on the district honor list.

Of course, Platon understood what everyone knew—that the peasants have a big brother—the working class, without whom there would be not only no machinery, or cotton, but not even any nails. The workers have to be given bread... And you can't very well put the Red Army, your sons, on zero rations. In a word, a lot of bread is needed. Without it you can't build factories or mines... But is it right to ravage the village? Is it right to run a huge economy without as much as a thought to tomorrow?<sup>33</sup>

Stadniuk also stops short of denouncing Stalin and, like Lanovenko, lays the blame for the Famine squarely on three factors—corrupt members of the political hierarchy who manipulate the quotas and grain requisitions, the so-called “enemies of the people” (presumably like Oliana Basok), and a poor harvest:

No, the good and wise Platon Yarchuk failed to understand everything there was to understand. He didn't have the facility for understanding that the persons who turned the levers of the complex government mechanism, either through malicious intent or lack of understanding, were capable of sacrificing the chicken who laid the golden egg, just to “deliver the quota,” “report back to headquarters,” “not to lag behind...” Evil enemies were doing the Party dirt in order to sow the seeds of discontent among the people and weaken the nation, while careerists went about doing all they could to stay firmly seated in their “ruling armchairs.” There were even those workers who through their blind ambition were doing the Party more harm than good. And, on top of it all, there was the bad harvest...<sup>34</sup>

Both Lanovenko and Stadniuk appear far more comfortable describing the human tragedy wrought by the Famine than enumerating and assessing its causes, and the novels of both authors are replete with scenes of human suffering, although the latter are somewhat sanitized for the benefit of the Soviet censor and have not nearly the same horrifying quality as the eyewitness accounts of actual Famine survivors. This is particularly true of Lanovenko.

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

If the Famine in Lanovenko's *Undying Bread* has an abstract quality to it, it is because none of the major characters actually starves to death, though many go hungry. Only the horses and cattle are described as being emaciated during what Lanovenko euphemistically calls the *nestacha* (shortage or scarcity), and only a single incident hints at the human tragedy wrought by the Famine. Riding through the fields one day Panas Kushnirenko sees a woman picking wheat in the field. "What's the matter with you? ...have you suddenly developed the urge to go to jail?" he cries, referring to the law of August 7, 1932 which elevated the taking of a single shaft of wheat from a collective field to a crime against socialism punishable by ten years in prison or death.<sup>35</sup> When the woman, Domakha Yakymchuk, agitated to the point of speechlessness, is unable to reply, Kushnirenko instead of taking her to prison which 95% percent of the real heads of the village soviet would have, obligingly accompanies her back to her house. There he sees the following picture of squalor:

Panas turned on the electric lamp and held it up to the walls. Three children lay huddled together on the floor. There were no pillows, no blanket, no mats or straw under them, only the naked wooden boards. Domakha stood like a specter holding her ears of wheat and continued to shake. Her widely opened eyes were like those of a madwoman. Kushnirenko leapt from the house like one scalded.<sup>36</sup>

Almost every Famine account features a scene with starving, ragged children, very much like the one Lanovenko portrays above. Yet, the omission of the word hunger as the cause of the children's plight (this, despite the fact that Domakha's gleaning, alluding to the notorious law of August 7, makes the circumstances of the children's starvation patently obvious) leaves the possibility open for other interpretations unrelated to the Famine. Indeed, Domakha, the character who suffers most from hunger, far from being your typical peasant, is the village whore who exists on the verge of destitution even in the best of times. Clearly, the very extent and severity of the Famine cannot be as accurately gauged from a condition reflecting a social problem, as from the depiction of, say, even a moderately prosperous peasant family, the reason for whose decline can only be the Famine of 1932-33. The conclusion to the gleaning episode reinforces its role as a social problem rather than as an illustration of human suffering during the Famine. The very next day following his visit to Domakha's home, Panas, plays out his role of the "good communist fairy" to its inevitable conclusion by rescuing Domakha and her children from their fate. He takes her to the Machine Tractor Station where she is set up as a scrubwoman, while her illegitimate children are removed first to a hospital, then an orphanage where the state takes over their upbringing.

Stadniuk's scenes of human suffering are more extensive and more emotional. The Famine section of his novel, for example, begins with a lengthy lyrical passage describing the poor harvest of 1932:

In Kokhanovka the early Fall of 1932 was not like other Autumns. There were no pumpkins with their heavy heads hanging from the fences on the street. Apples and pears did not remain for long on paths where they had fallen. There were no wheat ears left on the stubble of the

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<sup>35</sup> Petro Lanovenko, *Nevmyrushchyi khlib*, p. 237.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.

personal plots for chickens to pick at. No pungent whiffs of home-brewed beer wafted through the chimneys. And there was a lot more that could not be found which would have confirmed the tranquil course of village life and the peaceful watch for a Winter made dreamy from prosperity.

A scanty crop was collected in the harvest of the collective farm. The threshing had already been completed. People were returning from work in a state of gloom. Some of them furtively looked askance as they reached down into their pocket or wallet to feel a bit of grain surreptitiously seized from the threshing floor... There is nothing more terrifying for a peasant than to feel helpless before the threat of a hungry Winter.<sup>37</sup>

Weather is cited as a factor in the increased severity of the Famine, as the sparse harvest of 1932 turns into an inclement Spring, impeding the Spring sowing:

Nothing agitates the spirit of a farmer more than Spring. He always awaits its coming with trepidation, knowing that March, April and May do not always coexist peaceably. They perfidiously bestow upon one another an excess of either warmth or cold...

That year the earth of Vinnytsia province had already shaken off its snow by March, washed itself in the playful, melodious streams, drank its fill of them, and, intoxicated, dozed in the sunshine. Spring happily stepped onto this quiescent, becalmed land, caught up with April, which usually walked ahead of it.

From the transparent sky the sun shone with all its might. Above Kokhanovka, above the river Buzhanka which washed its banks, above the huge tracts of collective farm lands flowed the warm weather, saturated with the bitter scent of swollen cherry tree buds. In the meadows resounded the first amorous sounds of the cuckoo and buttercups clustered in a golden bouquet. It seemed as if, another day or two of warm sunshine, and spring would generously cast its green finery on every bough and field.

But unexpectedly, when April threw open its door before approaching May, Spring vanished, like a maiden dashing headlong in pursuit of a dowry abandoned in some faraway land. At that moment the cold March wind, whistling roguishly, descended, and fiercely blew away every trace of the bashful April sun. Day and night it raged in drunken revelry, as if rejoicing in the absence of Spring, the mistress of the land. With cries of panic carrion-crows broke their wings on the resilient currents of air. The trees in Kokhanovka's orchards and meadows ceaselessly waved their naked branches as if in supplication toward the sun. The forest groaned pitifully close by. The cold air benumbed the earth before it could cover its nakedness.

There is nothing sadder than the sight of a naked field. The seeds sown during the Spring have not yet sprouted, while the moist verdure of the Winter crop is unable to subdue the blackness of last year's tillage.

The old folks of Kokhanovka moaned and sighed. Accustomed to having seen everything, their weary, faded eyes betrayed sadness and anxiety. The farmers fell ill with the sickness of the soil, which lay all around in a state of submissive listlessness, and which, with each passing day lost more and more moisture and became brown and cracked. The threat of a poor harvest loomed ahead, and was all the more terrible because last year famine had come to Kokhanovka.

Famine ... a black, menacing word that freezes the very soul. He who has never experienced famine hasn't the means to imagine how much human suffering it causes. There is nothing more horrible for a man, the head of a family, than the realization that he is completely powerless before the sad, supplicating look of a wife who does not know what to feed her children. There is nothing more horrible for a mother than the appearance of emaciated, hungry, apathetic children who have forgotten how to laugh.

If it were only for a week, a month that famine had to be endured ... but, for many months now the majority of village families had nothing to put on the table. The granaries were swept clean; the cellars emptied; not one chicken was left in the yards. Even the sugar beet seeds were eaten.

No one waited for anything in his life the way the villagers awaited the advent of Spring.

They awaited the time when the frost would release the earth, and it would be possible to dig the garden in places where potatoes had been planted the previous fall to see if, by any chance,

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<sup>37</sup> Stadniuk, *Liudŭ ne aneļy: roman*, p. 89.

a potato remained, for although destroyed by frost the bag-shaped vegetable nevertheless contained a pinch of starch. The villagers waited for the bark of the linden trees to return to life and for buds to appear. After that would come the young nettle, goosefoot, sorrel, wheat. They hoped that nature would in some way succor man's needs.

But Spring suddenly retreated, plunging the people into a terrible state of despair.

The first to die of hunger were the men. Then the children. After that the women. But before leaving this life, people often lost their sense of reason, in effect, ceasing to be human beings.<sup>38</sup>

As with the Famine's causes, Stadniuk's device for viewing the human tragedy is Platon Yarchuk. The majority of scenes are described through his eyes. Walking through the collective farm fields, he notes that the horses were "thin as skeletons" and that there was nothing anyone could do "to ease their mute suffering."<sup>39</sup>

Driven to the brink of starvation, Platon and his wife discover an unexpected source of sustenance—a trough which in better times was used as a receptacle for freshly slaughtered meat. Platon and his wife break the trough and boil the pieces in a pot, releasing bubbles of fat which, one by one, rise to the surface until they merge into one gigantic bubble reminiscent of a "genuine, huge, festive sun."<sup>40</sup>

Stadniuk mentions other survival strategies. Lack of food forces Platon Yarchuk to exchange three St. George's medals won at Port Arthur (the 1904 battle of the Russo-Japanese War) for groats at the *torgsin*. Here as elsewhere in the novel, only half a concession is made to historical truth. The acronym itself, "trade with foreigners," is left undeciphered, and foreign currency is omitted from the list of items that food could be purchased for at the store. The sanitized version reads:

in the village word had spread that in Vinnytsia a store had opened with the "odd" (*mudrēnyi*) name of *torgsin*. (Why "odd?" It's as if the author were trying to tell us that the choice of name was somehow arbitrary—OS.) For gold and silver, one could buy bread, flour, groats, and sugar.<sup>41</sup>

Omitted also are some of the less basic food items (like smoked fish) which were available at the *torgsin* to those few individuals who had gold wedding bands or earrings. Stadniuk's description of the *torgsin* is misleading in yet another sense. Since the only individual shown patronizing the *torgsin* is Peasant-Everyman, Platon Yarchuk, the assumption is that the *torgsin* was accessible to the average peasant who, in reality, often had never so much as seen gold.

An episode of cannibalism, albeit one of intent rather than actuality, involving Platon Yarchuk seems at first glance to underscore the author's commitment to historical verisimilitude. One day Platon pays a visit to his nephew, the exemplary communist, Stepan Grigorenko, whose post as the head of the village soviet does not prevent him or his family from falling victim to the famine like any other villager. This is, of course, quite typical of socialist realism—state officials (those who are "good communists," that is) willingly share misfortune with the common folk. Ignoring Grigorenko's step-daughter, who tells him that her mother has given

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-97.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

orders not to let anyone in, Platon enters Grigorenko's abode only to discover his nephew lying comatose with a gaping hole in his head. A bloodied hammer lies nearby, signaling foul play. The culprit turns out to be Grigorenko's wife, Khrystia, who in a fit madness tried to kill her husband to feed him to her children.

There is much truth in the scene, for episodes of cannibalism were all too common at the height of the Famine. However, once again, as in the description of the *torgsin*, Stadniuk somehow manages to create a misleading impression. The crazed Khrystia is not your normal peasant woman, but the daughter of the infamous Oliana Basok. She is not as corrupt as her dekulakized mother, who by this time has died, but she is mad, and her madness, Stadniuk suggests is not entirely Famine induced. In fact, there are other episodes in the novel to corroborate that, as preposterous as it may sound, it originates in Khrystia's dubious social origins. The act of attempted cannibalism, common in the Ukrainian countryside during the Famine years, is turned into an example of the flowering of the proverbial *kulak* "bad seed."

This episode of cannibalism, like the episode involving Domakha Yakymchuk and her starving bastards ultimately pays lip service to a historical fact, while subtly providing a *raison d'être* that belies in one way or another the severity, extent or cause of the Famine of 1932-33. In the final analysis Stadniuk and Lanovenko in their novels appear to give just enough of the truth to be palatable to those readers who remember what happened in 1932-33, and just enough falsehood to stave off accusations that they are too sympathetic toward the Famine victims.

Stadniuk, it should be noted followed up the triumph of his novel—the success of which was measured by its numerous reprintings—with a scenario for a play of the same name which appeared in Russian in 1965. Although the success of the play is not known, it is interesting to compare the novel and the play from the standpoint of relevant criteria such as historical verisimilitude, descriptions of Famine victims, significance of the Famine in the world of the particular literary work. In other words, does the author stress its importance by devoting a significant amount of space to it or does he diminish its role?

At first glance the three-act play version of *People Are not Angels* differs little from the novel. All the characters are intact, and most of the situations are the same. The main difference seems to lie in dramatic emphasis. Recalling the fantastic plots involving the character Oliana Basok and her band of counter-revolutionaries as well as the cliff hanger scenes (Khrystia and the axe), further dramatic emphasis seems somehow superfluous, yet Stadniuk, perhaps out of a need to pander to his audiences, stretches the limits of literary taste to suit the uneducated palate of the masses.

This can be seen by taking a look at some of the dramatic devices he uses. The chief vehicle for conveying drama and eliciting the audience's emotion in the play which is mercifully absent in the novel is a pseudo-Greek chorus which speaks at the beginning of the scenes, generally against the background of Soviet "byt" (everyday life). Sometimes the chorus takes on the role of the absent narrator to announce lapses in time between scenes. Thus, in Act I, Scene 2, the chorus announces that Stepan Grigorenko has been away from his village for six years, but has now returned. At the beginning of Act II it is the main channel for expressing patriotic feelings generated by the German invasion of Ukraine. The resultant

blend of ancient Greek tragedy and modern Soviet Ukraine is unsurpassed in the incongruity it generates.

Cliff hangers are present not only at the end of most acts but at the close of almost every scene. Thus, Khrystia, the *kulak's* daughter is shown running on stage with her axe, although the reason is no longer hunger, but a desire to avenge her first husband's death, for which her present husband, Stepan Grigorenko is indirectly responsible (Oleksa hangs himself when villagers, sent on Stepan's orders, come to dekulakize him). The shoot-out between Stepan and Oliana's followers, which culminates in her death is also shown on stage.

Generally speaking, in voicing political propaganda there is no question that the medium of drama is superior to the novel—if only for the reason that it removes the requirement of literacy as a condition of understanding. By definition, plays also have to be shorter, which means that whatever message the playwright wants to get across—and the Soviet playwright, like the Soviet novelist, always needs to get across a message—must be gotten across in as short a space as possible. In *People Are not Angels*, the play, so-called neutral elements (descriptions of nature, physical descriptions of characters) are eliminated, one suspects because they add nothing to the ultimate political message, while the type of narrative which orients the reader to what's going on, is turned into dialogue. This is particularly effective when it comes to describing the villainous activities of Oliana Basok and her toadies, for what is more incriminating, dramatic, and ultimately rabble-rousing (in fulfillment of Khrushchev's requirement of "militant revolutionary art") than *kulaks* incriminating themselves right there on the stage? In any case, Oliana's plans to sabotage the collective farm harvest by burning it at the root, unfold in wave after wave of dialogue, while her daughter, Khrystia's natural affection for Stepan and the conversations she has about him with her mother in the novel are cut or changed. Thus Khrystia's reason for wanting to link her fate to a Communist is motivated in the play not by love, but by her mother's directive to seduce him in order to prevent dekulakization in the village. Ultimately, the "black" (anti-soviet) deeds of the novel are further blackened in the play while neutral actions are either omitted or whitened.

Of particular interest in Stadniuk's play version of *People Are not Angles* is what happens to the Famine. It will be recalled that one of the most important factors contributing to the "humanization" of the Famine in the novel is the likability of the philosopher-grain thief, Platon Yarchuk, and his portrayal not as a class enemy, but as a family man driven to the brink of starvation. Of course, Stadniuk makes sure that everyone knows that Platon does something he shouldn't in stealing the grain. Having him serve a jail sentence takes care of any possible political *faux pas* Stadniuk might have been accused of making. Neither Platon's motives for stealing the bag of grain nor his doubts about the reason why the state is taking away the grain from the peasants is dramatized in the play. A conversation between Platon and his nephew, Stepan Grigorenko in Act I, scene 4, wherein Platon expresses his guilt about "robbing" the land is all that is left of the complex issues surrounding Yarchuk's theft of state property:

**Stepan:** So, what's eating you, Uncle Platon?

**Platon:** You see it before you. In the Fall during sowing, I took and poured it into a seeder. I buried another bag over there. I dragged a practically empty seeder all over the field, and that night I unearthed the bag and took it home.

**Stepan:** You destroyed the field ... sapped the life-giving force from the land. That bag of seeds, which you took home with you, would have come in handy a hundred times over during reaping.

**Platon:** Was I to blame that there was a famine?

**Stepan:** And what about the land? It too wasn't to blame that there was a famine.

**Platon:** I can't bare to look at the black eyes of the land ... it's hard for me to admit that I, a farmer, castrated the land, which fed the people...

**Stepan:** It will not tell of your sin, but it would be better if it screamed of it.

**Platon:** Yes, let everyone know that I, Platon Yarchuk, robbed the land... Let them punish me... And the rest of my life can be spent with a light heart.<sup>42</sup>

Platon Yarchuk, as in the novel, decides to turn himself in. But, instead of serving his term and returning to his land, a contrite but exonerated citizen, Platon Yarchuk dies mysteriously while serving his term. That Oliana Basok has something to do with his demise is darkly hinted. Oliana who, right before she is shot by one of Stepan's aides admits to having known Yarchuk in the camp where she was sent after dekulakization. "Neither was I merciful to my own relative," she tells her assassin, "fate brought us together in the prison infirmary ... I reminded Platon, how he had laughed at me when they were taking me away from Kokhanovka... I reminded him and helped him quit this sinful land." When the assassin asks her if she had strangled him, Oliana cryptically replies that "only God knows."<sup>43</sup>

The elimination of the politically ambivalent Platon Yarchuk reflects Stadniuk's sensitivity to the fact that further criticism of Stalin was falling out of fashion, and he found it more convenient to kill off his most controversial character through an evil *kulak*. Even more indicative of Stadniuk's desire to avoid the controversial topic of Stalinist abuses is the fact that there are no famine scenes in the play. The scene of Platon Yarchuk's wife and children gathered around the trough watching bubbles of rancid animal fat disappears with Yarchuk himself. Ultimately, the dramatic adaptation of *People Are not Angels* is a model of socialist realism at its least critical.

Tendriakov's novella, *The Demise*, set in the Russian village of Pozhary, whose precise location is not given, resembles Stadniuk's and Lanovenko's novels in genre, though, due to its shorter length it is more tightly constructed. It opens with a protracted death-bed scene (so familiar for Russian readers from Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Ilyich*). Evlampii Lykov, long-time head of the village collective farm, hated by most, loved by some, is dying. His life, from the 1920s to the present is given in flashbacks, and there is a definite focus on what Lykov did or failed to do during the usual pivotal points of Soviet history. What little superiority Tendriakov's "mini-epic" achieves over Stadniuk's and Lanovenko's rambling opuses (aside, of course, from the fact that it is supposed to remind the reader of Tolstoy) in depicting history through the tighter perspective of only two characters (Lykov and his arch rival and friend, the bookkeeper, Ivan Slegov) is offset by the author's decision to render his dialogues in a particularly untranslatable regional dialect. One almost suspects that this was done in order to obscure the grossly distorted

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<sup>42</sup> Ivan Stadniuk, *Liudi ne anghely: narodnaia drama v trekh deistviiakh* (People Are not Angels: a Folk Drama in Three Acts) (Moscow, Otdel rasprostraneniia dramaticheskikh proizvedenii VUOAP, 1967), pp. 21-22.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Famine scenes from critical eyes in the West, although a more plausible explanation is probably Tendriakov's desire to bring to life the tough, rough-and-ready village types who pioneer socialism in Pozhary.

To a certain extent, the very fact that Stadniuk and Lanovenko take such great pains to paste together a pseudo-explanation of the Famine's causes is a measure of the importance the issue has for them. By exculpating the government, the two writers draw the reader's attention to existing doubts about the state's role in engineering the Famine. A stark difference between Tendriakov and his colleagues is that he chooses not to suggest the state's guilt even through hints and innuendoes. He begins his story of the Famine in the Russian village of Pozhary with the observation that while in the neighboring villages people were dying in the "hungry year," Pozhary had gathered an excellent harvest, and had plenty of grain reserves. Famine is treated as a distant phenomenon, unrelated to the daily operations of the village collective farm, which, remarkably, prospers throughout the miserable years of 1932 and 1933. Indeed, it is the existence of surplus grain and what to do with it and not a description of the hungry, although they too are present, that constitutes the main story line of the Famine section.

Panning Lykov's suggestion that the surplus grain be given away to the workers before the regional authorities get hold of it, Slegov comes up with a novel alternative—using the grain surplus as a "carrot" to attract some of the hungry folk outside Pozhary to make badly needed improvements on the collective farm. "A temptation," intones Lykov. "It certainly is," replies Slegov,

"all of the collective farms in the vicinity are barely able to hold body and soul together, and here we come up with a path to paradisc—a new horse stable, cattle shed, pig sty; you could hardly hope for these in good times. It certainly is strange; you don't dare dream about such things in good times, yet now with things as bad as they are all around, you have to make dreams a reality—strike the iron while it's hot."<sup>44</sup>

Slegov's plan, once put into action, improves village morale, eliminates sloth, and generally energizes the village. It also takes the readers attention away from why the improvements are being made in the first place—to put the surplus grain into an enterprise that will do the collective farm workers some good rather than line the coffers of the regional authorities. The reason as to why Lykov and Slegov believe that the latter have their eyes set on the surplus grain in Pozhary ultimately becomes a kind of given, since Tendriakov either assumes his readers know all about forced grain requisitions or, better yet, they don't.

Hunger, at first so distant from the everyday life of Pozhary, finally arrives, though not through forced grain requisitions or drought. It is depicted as an unfortunate consequence of an otherwise successful "renovation project" masterminded by Slegov. This is symbolic, since it encapsulates Soviet rationalizations about the hardships of the Stalin years. Simplistically put, for every brick laid in the construction of socialism there is a bricklayer missing a finger.

Ultimately, as the collective farm takes on a new sheen, the grain surplus which keeps hunger at bay in Pozhary, not surprisingly, dwindles, and Slegov warns his boss that payments for the *trudodni* (labor days, calculated according to work

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<sup>44</sup> Vladimir Tendriakov, "Konchina" (The Demise), *Povesti* (Stories) (Moscow, Sovremennik, 1974), p. 185.



done—OS) must be halted temporarily. Since payments for labor days were typically made in grain or other produce, Slegov's suggestion, for readers aware of the mechanics of the Famine, is the equivalent of a sentence of starvation for the villagers.

Whenever faced with a historically catastrophic state policy decision that must be justified, Soviet writers of historical fiction usually bring up its pros and cons in a polemical dialogue in order to defeat the position which happens not to be politically sound at the moment. Possibilities of what might have been had another course of action been taken by the government are pitted against what actually took place, and no matter how awful the latter was in the memory of those who had to endure it the reader is generally coaxed into thinking that the most heinous crime perpetrated by the government was inevitable.

This is precisely what happens to the labor days issue in Tendriakov's novel, whose proponent is the "hardliner" Slegov, whose motto of "suffer-now-for-a-better-tomorrow" is contrasted with the "softer" line of his boss, Lykov, who observes (quite rationally it would seem) that:

"A person's right to his labor day is inviolate. Something which was firmly promised just can't be... It'll look as if we're fleecing our own *muzhik*."

"Oh, really, fleecing, you say? And what do our *muzhiks* subsist on? Unadulterated bread. And what do they stuff themselves with in other villages? ..."

"The people did their job conscientiously and deserve to be paid conscientiously."

"According to whose conscience?" was the icy response.

"What do you mean whose conscience?" Evlampii asks in astonishment. "Do you mean to tell me that the people have one conscience, while I have another?"

"Well, do you agree absolutely in everything, let's say, that Pashka Zhorov says?"

"Well, no, not everything."

"There you have it. According to Pashka's way of thinking, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush—spit on the new horse stable and just grab the extra handful of rye for yourself. Can you, the head of the collective farm live according to Pashka's conscience? If you can, then you're not worth your salt."

"But are we really talking about conscience?" asked Evlampii doubtfully. "Perhaps it's attitudes we're talking about... Pashka's are underdeveloped."

"Yes, but isn't conscience built on attitudes? A thief and a scoundrel, when he shoves his hand into your pocket, also has plenty of attitudes, petty attitudes for his pickpocket conscience. You can be sure of it!"

"Yes-mmm..."

"So, you see, there's no sin if we pull in lucky Pashka's belt."<sup>45</sup>

Ultimately, the whole *raison d'être* of the policy of withholding payment for labor days during the Famine (really the only state policy directly alluded to by the author) is justified on the grounds that it is being withheld from ne'er-do-wells like the peasant Pashka. Although Pashka's social origins are never clarified, the very mention that he is a "pickpocket" suggests that he is a blood relation of the wily "Lunatik" in Stadniuk's novel and an enemy of the people who deserves to starve. Tendriakov clearly does not espouse Stadniuk's generous view of humanity that "people are not angels." Nor, for that matter does he have the latter's light touch when depicting enemies of the state.

The very fact that Slegov emerges as the victor of the above verbal exchange shows that Tendriakov is not sympathetic to Lykov's viewpoint. Like Stadniuk's

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

play, Tendriakov's novella reflects the shift in the wind after Brezhnev's 1969 condemnation of those who wanted to "play up the costs" of collectivization. The creation of the character Lykov personifies the Stalinist myth of the enemy "with a party card in his pocket" who "sabotaged" the general welfare by keeping back too much for the peasants in his own locality, the main target of the 1933 Party purge. Sympathy for starving Famine victims is quite foreign to the author. Of course, neither is it something Stadniuk or Lanovenko wallow in. Yet, it does not take much reading between the lines to figure out that, political whitewashing aside, Stadniuk and Lanovenko feel truly sorry for the starving peasants. Not so Tendriakov.

The first time that the starving are mentioned in *The Demise* is in a description of the exodus of dekulakized Ukrainian peasants from their homeland:

In the district seat of Vokhrovo, in a little square near the train station, dekulakized peasants who had been deported from Ukraine were dying. Seeing dead people there in the mornings had become a habit. A wagon would pull up and the hospital stable boy, Abram, would load it with bodies.

Not everyone died. Many wandered along the unsightly, dusty paths, dragging their bloodless blue elephantine legs swollen with water, devouring each passer-by with their dog-like stares. Bread wasn't given out in Vokhrovo. Town residents got it with ration cards by lining up in front of the store the evening before.<sup>46</sup>

Associating the starving initially with Ukrainian *kulaks* becomes a way of suggesting that the Famine victims deserve little pity. Starving Russian peasants are also mentioned, but these are outsiders who come to Pozhary from neighboring villages to beg for work (and food) at the collective farm. The reader is encouraged to conclude that the reason for their emaciated state is the proverbial bad harvest. Hungry Russians congregate on the doorstep of the head of the Pozhary collective farm:

From Petrakovsky, where at one time the Pozharites were held in contempt, and other surrounding villages, the *muzhiks* and their women started to congregate, either singly or in entire families with their kids holding on to the folds of their clothes. Take us, they offered, we're not asking for much, just a piece of bread for the children and for ourselves. We're ready for any work... No, they didn't fall off their feet; didn't look emaciated, though there was a gloomy dryness in their eyes and their movements were sluggish. They all wanted to see Evlampii Nikitich, you couldn't even run them off of the porch with a stick until they got a glimpse of the head of the collective farm.<sup>47</sup>

Tendriakov's description of the hungry multitudes can hardly be called sentimental. Unlike Lanovenko and Stadniuk, who tread lightly when it comes to offering unsavory naturalistic details (their books were, after all, written in the sixties when this taboo was still more or less in place), Tendriakov does not hesitate to describe the starving as if they were repositories of rotting flesh.

From the town of Vokhrovo crawled the exiled *kulaks*. These were not local *muzhiks* who were able to get something to eat, if only grass. Barefoot and naked they hobbled along in the icy penetrating wind and rain of late Autumn, along puddles covered with an icy crust. Many simply were unable to negotiate the fifteen kilometers to reach the "fairy-tale" village (of

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

Pozhary—OS). They were found on the edges of the fields and in the gutters along the roads. But those who managed to crawl to their destination filled the Pozharites with a sense of horror. Through the holes of their mangy rags you could see their lice-infested bodies and hear the rattle of their hoarse breathing. Seeing them, the *muzhiks* would fall silent and turn away with guilty looks on their faces. The women would wipe their eyes and shyly hand them a piece of bread, without inviting them in, for if you took one in out of pity, the others would give you no rest. And if this weren't enough, the head of the collective farm had cut off the labor day payments, making it difficult for ends to meet.<sup>48</sup>

Whereas the peasants of Pozhary regard the unfortunates with horror, guilt, and certainly pity, the head of the collective farm is relentlessly brutal in disposing of the wraiths cluttering his doorway, "He gave orders for the horses to be harnessed, the unwelcome guests hoisted into the cart and taken back to Vokhrovo."<sup>49</sup> One time, however, Lykov's talent for keeping Famine victims at arms length fails him and he is forced to stare at the face of human suffering:

He bumped into one of them. The man's face resembled a pillow of watery greenish soft flesh. His nose was like an owl's. His legs also looked like pillows with dirty button-like nails visible below. The man was lying on the porch in rags, caught sight of the head of the collective farm, and raised his uncombed head. "Hire me," he said hoarsely, "I'm a bricklayer. I worked in Orël, contracted for construction projects, had my own business and supervised a dozen laborers single-handedly."

Evlampii Lykov wanted to go around him in order to control the urge in his legs to kick the man, but behind him hobbled Ivan Slegov on his crutches, and it was impossible to leave the scene without helping him. The guest sprawled across the porch, blocking his path. Ivan bent over the pile of rags from out of which peered intently a fantastically blown-up face with washed out features, swollen eyes, and a hooked, jelly-like nose. Ivan's face twitched.<sup>50</sup>

Once again through the interference of Ivan Slegov, his alter ego, Lykov, reverses his decision and takes in the bricklayer. The latter is the only Famine victim that is rescued by the collective farm leader, who subsequently explains his change of heart with the rationalization that "even in these scarecrows there are people who may prove useful to us."<sup>51</sup> Mykhailo Cherednyk (clearly a Ukrainian), the bricklayer, does indeed prove useful, eventually becoming, we are told, "the brigadier of a renowned collective farm brigade" who is subsequently "awarded a medal and is written about more than once in the newspapers."<sup>52</sup> The rest of the "rag piles" presumably are left to die.

Many of the lacunae present in Stadniuk's and Lanovenko's depiction of the Famine are filled in by Mikhail Alekseev in his village prose—the collection of short stories, *Bread, the Name of Life*, and the novel, *The Willow Does not Weep*, works contemporaneous with the novels of Lanovenko and Stadniuk, and particularly in the *Fighters*—his magnum opus on the Famine written 20 years later. It is in this novel that Alekseev's wherein early attempts to describe the tragedy reach their fullest expression. It will be recalled that Alekseev's village prose prior

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

to *Fighters* contains many of the Famine scenes and themes which later appear in *Fighters* in a more developed form.

Taken together, three stories in *Bread, the Name of Life* yield a surprising amount of information on the Famine: "Samon'ka" (The Loner), "Astronomiia" (Astronomy), and "Vechnyi deputat" (The Eternal Deputy). Some of the allusions to the Famine are just that, markers designed to orient the reader to the time period of the story. In "The Loner," for example, the Famine is part of the biographical sketch on the hero:

Then Samon'ka, like many others at that time, disappeared from the village. Whether he had died in the terrible year of 1933, forgotten by everyone, or had run away somewhere, driven by hunger, no one knew. Not even his friend, Lion'ka, who apparently had other things besides Samon'ka to worry about...

Almost everyone had forgotten Samon'ka when, about 20 years later, at the time of our story, he reappeared in his native Vyselki. He was now a strapping fellow of about thirty-seven in a military uniform which offered not the slightest clue as to which army its owner belonged.

Samon'ka had no close relatives in the village. His mother and father had died in that very same year, 1933...<sup>53</sup>

The character, "Samon'ka" is an archetype of one of the Famine's greatest victims—the homeless orphan, but the emphasis of this short story does not lie in a further exploration of such a child's psychology.

Alekseev is more expansive in showing the Famine's affect on children in "Astronomy," a story in the collection which deals with the efforts of two little boys to survive the Famine and the condition of being orphaned, a theme which engages Alekseev in much of his prose, and especially in *Fighters*. The more prominent place given the Famine is emphasized, first of all by the fact that it is mentioned in the opening paragraph:

In a single year the youngsters were completely orphaned. Their fathers and mothers died in thirty-three, while the surviving elder brothers and sisters had all dispersed in different directions, God knows where, without ever notifying anyone of their whereabouts.

The Famine is not only a "filler" designed to plump out the biographies of the protagonists, but also an environmental factor which shapes their development:

In everything Vas'ka did he saw only the practical value. He had no desire, indeed, no facility for separating himself from the material world, and, probably because of this, had more difficulty surmounting hard times, although it was precisely this feature in his character that prevented the two friends from starving to death.<sup>54</sup>

And farther on:

Petia's hut was the better one of the two, and the friends settled in. The first thing they did was to teach the cow to perform the duties of a horse, since at that time there was not a single mare remaining in the collective farm—they all had died from lack of food in thirty-three.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Mikhail Alekseev, "Samon'ka," *Khleb—imia sushchestvitel'noe* (Bread, the Name of Life) (Moscow, Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1966), pp. 294-295.

<sup>54</sup> *Idem*, "Astronomiia" (Astronomy), *Khleb—imia sushchestvitel'noe*, p. 325.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

Alekseev returns to the theme of famine orphans in *The Willow Does not Weep*, a novel set in 1938. The novel opens with two sixteen-year old boys, Grisha and Serega (who like Vas'ka and Petia in the aforementioned short story are prototypes for Misha and Van'ka in *Fighters*) making a journey from an unnamed town to their native village Zavidove. Familiar sites trigger the recollection of events that transpired five years before:

From the forest they prepared to make their way to the fields, where half of their sixteen years were spent. In the steppe they would often camp out, listening to the quail, tending the horses, counting the huge, bright evening stars and disturbing the dark calm with their song, "Vzveites' kostrami" (Go Up in Bonfires). But they also had more serious things to do in the fields. In 1933 in Zavidove a detachment of Young Pioneers called the Light Cavalry was formed and placed in charge of keeping watch over the harvest. Serega and Grisha, who were given the rank of commander and commissar respectively, to this day didn't know why the name cavalry had been chosen when the collective farm had only some two or three nags whereas their detachment didn't have a single horse. All that the friends did day in and day out was sit in their watch towers surveying the fields to make sure no *kulak* barbers (*kulatskie parikmakhery*) made off with bags of ripened ears of rye or wheat they had cut off the stalks. Once Grisha and Serega caught Ekaterina Stupkina, a massive old woman who was as rotund as a melon and who had a pock-marked face, at this. No one in the village was more destitute than she. The boys did not make a fuss over the incident, but, taking the burden of her sin upon themselves, let Stupkina go. Anyway, what kind of "barber" and a *kulak* one at that was she when she didn't have anything in her hovel to feed herself or her children, half of whom she had already buried the Summer before. It's true that she was not the only one to endure such grief. There were rumors in the village that Steshka Lugov deliberately starved her twin sons to death—in thirty-three, the year which carried off so many human lives and which has not been deemed worthy of mention in a single textbook of recent history.<sup>56</sup>

One cannot emphasize often enough the extent to which Alekseev uses biographical material in his fiction, for it is precisely this tendency that, when applied to the Famine, endows 20 years of literary work with thematic unity. The above descriptions of the boy living alone after his family has died from hunger, as well as of the cow trained to do the work of a horse, and mention of the boy's companion are all contained in Alekseev's biographical account, "Sower and Preserver":

There was only one inhabitant left in our five-walled hut — me. I was forced rapidly to acquire habits that were not typical of a little boy. I now milked the cow, baked the bread, and got to be so good at these activities that I became the envy of the women in the neighborhood. At first, of course, nothing went right, particularly the milking. The milk, for some reason failed to run into the milk bucket, but instead ran down my sleeve. Sometimes, in an effort to free itself of flies, the cow would step into the bucket with one of its legs, and I had to pour out the milk on the ground. It was difficult in the Winter. I had to go to school and woke up at the crack of dawn in order to have enough time to cook or bake something. True, by winter I had a helper — a boy my age, Vasilii Stupkin, who lost his father, mother, and his siblings in 1933...<sup>57</sup>

The dominant images of the Famine in Alekseev's works prior to *Fighters* and certainly in the latter are almost always children whose lives have been disrupted by the Famine, children who have been left behind to fend for themselves. Part of

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<sup>56</sup> *Idem.*, *Ivushkaia neplakuchaia* (*The Willow Does not Weep*) (Moscow, Voennoe izdatel'stvo, 1975), p. 12.

<sup>57</sup> *Idem.*, "Seiatel' i khranitel'," p. 96.

Alekseev's interest in children, particularly adolescents, doubtlessly has to do with his own experiences during the Famine in the Saratov region, but returning to the theme of children and the Famine again and again over the course of two decades has perhaps less to do with the exorcism of demons within himself than with a desire to be a source of information, to testify about what he saw and experienced.

The difficulty (in addition to the official restraints) of transmitting the memory of the Famine to younger generations is addressed in another short story, "The Eternal Deputy" in *Bread, the Name of Life*:

...affairs at the collective farm for which Akimushka always felt responsible weren't going very well. After the removal of the *kulaks* from the village the middle peasants were moved out, only this time it was voluntarily. According to someone or other's orders all the bread and forage was removed. A massive loss of horses ensued, and then came the terrible famine. Entire families of people died out. Houses caved in. The population on the streets thinned out. More and more windows were boarded up. Those who fled to the towns sealed them tightly with boards and stumps. Now, some thirty years after the terrible famine, only the mounds from the foundations and the pits from the cellars remain as a reminder of what took place. The pearl-like reflections of shells occasionally visible in the ground, which were caught in the river and the lakes and which people ate in an attempt to stave off death from starvation. Today, children looking at those glittering relics of a life vanished and incomprehensible to them ask their mother and father, "Was there ever an ocean here? Where did these shells come from?"

Father, mother, grandmother or grandfather is silent. Indeed what can they tell the little ignoramus? They know that the only sea there was the sea of human tears. Why should they tell this to little ones? Why irritate and upset a child's heart?<sup>58</sup>

The sea-shell passage occurs almost verbatim in *The Willow Does not Weep*:

Their thoughts turned to 1933 only on the second day when they were about to enter Zavidove dragging their bloodied feet and with their heads swimming from thirst and hunger. Even now little hills of sea shells could be seen near many of the huts, their pearly shells glistening in the sun. Five years ago, people caught them in the river and in the forest pools in an attempt to save themselves from death. In many of the huts the windows had been boarded up. Many of the huts were dilapidated. The sites of former courtyards were now overgrown with the gypsy weed—this is what they called a special variety of goose-foot in Zavidove. It appeared on God's earth regularly as the most unerring sign of neglect, its immutable, constant companion.<sup>59</sup>

Earlier attempts by Alekseev to cover the Famine pale in comparison to what may very well be the most exhaustive factual account in Soviet fiction on the famine—*Fighters*, an autobiographical novel set not in Ukraine but in his own village of Monastyrskoe in Saratov Province on the Volga. Unlike the epic novels where time leaps forward at break-neck speed from one historical event to the next, *Fighters* covers a fairly short time span from the late twenties to 1933 and is not a novel of dramatic action, but rather a quiescent, nostalgic (Buninesque is an appropriate term for the atmosphere evoked by Alekseev) look at village life before the five-year plans galvanized and polluted the countryside. In a very real sense it is a celebration of the very last ties with the 19th century that were severed at the end of NEP.

The novel begins with a single, seemingly minor incident, a petty squabble between two eight-year-old boys, Misha Alekseev and Van'ka Zhukov. The

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<sup>58</sup> *Idem.*, "Vechnyi deputat" (The Eternal Deputy), *Khleb*, p. 338.

<sup>59</sup> *Idem.*, *Ivushkaia neplakuchaia*, pp. 8-9.

narrator, the adult Mikhail Alekseev, describes how a minor disagreement, the reason for which is soon forgotten by the boys themselves, rapidly polarizes the entire village into two warring camps. Alekseev, who, unlike either of the two authors previously mentioned, is a writer of some talent, does not hesitate to experiment with the structure of the novel. Time in the novel, for example, is not linear, but constantly fluctuates between the past and the present. Anecdotes of escalating hostilities between Misha and Van'ka, alternate with flashbacks of the idyllic friendship that existed between the two soul-mates in the days before the quarrel. The two pieces of narrative weave in and out of each other, creating an illusion of two intersecting but separate worlds.

The predominant world in the novel is, not surprisingly, the immutable world of Soviet realities. This is the world of the classroom where the boys' quarrel arises, the world of the village soviet, of adults involved in making critical political decisions affecting village life. In this world the irretrievable passage of time is registered by events that change the face of the Soviet village forever—dekulakization, collectivization, the famine. The other world is the timeless world of childhood insulated from the other by its own rules where time crawls at a snail's pace and is measured by a different clock—the arrival of the rooks in the spring, the freezing of the river, playing in the fields during the dog days of summer, watching a water snake glide swiftly across the Balanda River, taming a young fledgling.

The two worlds, or more accurately, two spheres of influence pull at Misha and Van'ka, whose journey toward adulthood corresponds to the maturation of the young Soviet state. The political events of the adult world, many of which are incomprehensible to the little boy Misha, do not escape the critical judgement of the adult narrator. One state policy arousing his indignation is dekulakization, which in 1929 swept away not only the so-called *kulaks*, the official definition of which was never clear, but also the moderately well-off or middle peasants, and *kulak* sympathizers. Alekseev's criticism, however, is not a breakthrough in candor, for both Stadniuk and Lanovenko in their novels also concede that the process was a hatchet job. In *Fighters* the point is very strongly made when Misha's father, the secretary of the village soviet, appalled by the way his superior is marking off people for dekulakization on the basis of the number of domestic animals they possess rather than on the number of mouths they have to feed, undertakes a revision of the list. The point, however, to paraphrase Anna Sergeevna in *Forever Flowing*, is not in the fact that the lists of people marked for dekulakization were made up by scoundrels, but that such lists were made at all.

The markers of socialist progress intrude but rarely into Misha's and Van'ka's world, and only insofar as they affect a change in the boys' daily existence, such as when the first seven-year school opens its doors in Monastyrskoe. Otherwise, the more tragic consequences of socialist progress in Monastyrskoe resound like the rumblings of distant thunder in Misha's and Van'ka's paradise, until the fateful year, 1932.

While for Stadniuk and Lanovenko the Famine is but one of many events in the history of Soviet socialism, for Alekseev it becomes a vital structural component, the denouement which brings the resolution of the novel's main theme—the boys' quarrel. The magnitude of the irretrievable loss wrought by the Famine is symbolized by the fact that it comes precisely at the moment of reconciliation.

Famine becomes a general tragedy affecting everyone in the village more or less equally and, like the serpent in Eden, casts the boys out of their unique paradise.

Ultimately, the Famine cruelly interrupts the boys' renewed friendship, for Van'ka disappears forever from the village after burying his parents. It also destroys the entire system of values informing their boyhood, the main one being the aesthetic appreciation of nature. The Famine strips nature of its lyricism, transforming it from playground to scavenging ground, "Now the vegetable kingdom retained its interest for us all only insofar as it could be utilized as food."<sup>60</sup> Household pets, which throughout the novel form a kind of extended family for the two boys, suddenly become a source of nourishment. Once at the height of the Famine, Misha stumbling upon a pile of equine carcasses, recognizes in their midst Kariukha, the family nag. Only the familiar hoof sets Kariukha apart from the other carcasses. As Misha observes, he sees Van'ka and his father approach:

My eyes involuntarily filled with tears as I watched the dried out, sinewy hand of Grigory Yakovlevich Zhukov, who had lowered himself into the pit somewhat ahead of his youngest son, grab the horse's leg in order to chop it off along with the shank.

"Uncle Grisha, do-o-o-n't!" I yelled in desperation. But the elder Zhukov didn't even look up. Tucking himself in and hunching over, he slowly began his cumbersome ascent out of the pit.<sup>61</sup>

The nag symbolizes the old way of life that begins disappearing in stages after the revolution and which the Famine, primarily because of the unique significance it has for the two protagonists, makes painfully finite. The chief representative of what for Alekseev is clearly the venerated past is Misha's paternal grandfather and spiritual leader, Mikhail. Grandfather Mikhail whose status as a nonconformist is underscored by the fact that he lives apart from society in a wooded glen outside the village, embodies the values that are ultimately inherited by the adult narrator—kindness, compassion, tolerance. Even grandfather Mikhail's religiosity is passed down to his grandson, albeit in altered form as the reverence for all living things. Significantly, the victims of the Famine are buried in a pit over which stands a large wooden cross made from the fence that once guarded grandfather Mikhail's abode, as if to indicate that enemies and friends are equal in death. Also significant is the fact that Mikhail, who is Misha's link with the best that the past has to offer, is, unlike the other villagers of Monastyrskoe, Ukrainian. His language is liberally sprinkled with Ukrainianisms. This is yet another thing inherited by the grandson, who immortalizes them in his artistic creation—the novel itself. Further, the ethnic origin of grandfather Mikhail is a way of signaling to the reader that the story is not merely about what happened in the Volga Basin but also in Ukraine.

As unexpected as Alekseev's identification of positive values with a Ukrainian character is his departure from the usual answers given to the question of culpability. The causes of the Famine are mentioned only twice in the novel and in such a way as to cast doubt on the official reasons given by Stadniuk and Lanovenko. The first mention begins in a typical enough fashion, with the general observation on the infelicitous climate of the Volga region which has taught the

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<sup>60</sup> *Idem., Drachunyy roman (The Fighters: a Novel) (Moscow, Molodaia gvardiia, 1982), p. 280.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*



farmer to juxtapose three words—'drought,' 'bad harvest,' 'hunger,'—each of which flows out of the other in terrible fashion. There are times when the tiller of the soil is no longer gladdened by the bright stars; when he vainly searches the white-hot horizon for even a small cloud; when the very sun itself, eulogized by the poets of the world, becomes accursed. During a friendly Spring the snow disappears in a matter of several days. The naked earth dries out before one hardly has a chance to cast seeds into it. Then days of exhaustive worry set in. May is almost gone, and June is about to arrive, and yet there is not a trace of rain. Vegetation, having matured before its time, dries up; the leaves sharpen, turning an evil yellow. It is then that both the believer and the non-believer turns his head toward heaven in desperation, imploring the priest to beg the almighty to send the earth the salutary moisture. To his prayers they add a chorus of their own, which resounds like a moan, "Send rain to the thirsty earth, Savior!" I don't know of any more tragic procession than these marches of public supplicants...

God, however, generally remained either apathetic toward the ardent prayers of the farmer, or didn't hear them (God being located so far above the earth), and famine approached the peasant's abode. So frequent were the visits of this terrifying guest that they seemed inevitable, like destiny, itself. The first time in my memory that famine gave notice of itself was in 1921. The unwelcome stranger knocked on the peasant's hovels at a time when the country was exhausted by the difficult years of the First World War and the Civil War.<sup>62</sup>

But the Famine of 1932-33, Alekseev goes on to say, was not caused by drought:

In 1933 began the second famine in my memory. It was, if you will, even more horrible than its predecessor, although it had not been caused by drought—that eternal, evil stepmother of the earth. Admittedly, to this very day I try to comprehend the origins of this famine. The harvest of 1932 was, if not the richest, then certainly, quite good. The collective farm workers of our village, having received a hundred grams each for each working day as an advance, hoped to receive an additional kilogram later, after government accounts had been settled. This hope, however, ebbed when quite unexpectedly a "counter-plan" for grain collection, which, thanks to the intemperate efforts of the local authorities and the poorly educated activists, swept clean all of the collective granaries to the last grain, leaving the people without bread and the horses of the collective farm without fodder.

1933 has remained and will remain the most horrible landmark in my memory. And no matter how difficult and how bitter it is to recall it, I, nevertheless, have an obligation to do so before my countrymen. I have an obligation to the people who, though they did not give their lives on the distant frontiers of the Great Patriotic War, nevertheless became heroes, because at their most difficult hour and final hour they did not lose their faith in Soviet power; did not curse it, but transmitted their sacred faith to those who were destined to survive, to struggle, conquer, and fulfill their responsibilities at every sharp corner of history.<sup>63</sup>

In the above passage Alekseev both notes the "counter-plan" of increased grain quotas, and admits the fact that he does not know why it was issued. "I don't know" is once again repeated, this time in a conversation between two characters, little Misha and his father, who having quarreled with the newly appointed head of the village Soviet, accepts a position in another village, Little Ekaterinovka:

"Is there also a famine in Little Ekaterinovka?"

"They're hungry there, too, son. But not like here."

"Are people dying?"

"Sometimes, but less frequently than in Monastyrskoe."

"But, why?"

"It's difficult to say, son..."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 263-264.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 264-265.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

Ultimately, Alekseev's refusal to elaborate further speaks volumes.

The description of famine-related phenomena given by Alekseev reveals the same reluctance on the part of the author to whitewash the facts. Although, as we have seen, Stadniuk and Lanovenko allude to forced grain requisitions both make it clear that the latter were engineered by what ultimately are faceless "higher authorities," who are hopelessly out of touch with the peasant. The individuals, like Kushnirenko in *Undying Bread* who are actually depicted in the act of confiscating grain from the villagers, are "good guys," representatives of the village soviet who have the best interest of the party in mind. On the contrary, it is those peasants who, in a desperate attempt to feed their children, hide a bag of millet under the boards who are viewed as the villains. Not so in *Fighters*. In Alekseev's novel, as in Stadniuk's and Lanovenko's, the major party activist, Voronin (whose name rather blatantly suggests both the word, *vorona* [carrion crow] as well as the more ominous symbol for Stalinist repression, the black secret police vans, *chernye vorony*), is also the head of the village soviet, who personally goes from house to house extracting the last grain from the starving peasants. But in no sense of the word does Alekseev attempt to justify his actions. Notes Fedot, one of the victims of Voronin's political zeal:

"In the early afternoon, Voronin paid me a visit, right before going to Stepashok. He made his way in with a kind of iron stick which he poked in all corners of the house—the basement, under the stove, even the floor. He groped about in all the animal sheds, looking for any pieces of grain which may have been left over, but went away empty handed."<sup>65</sup>

The reason that Voronin gets nothing for his pains is because the shrewd Fedot has the presence of mind to bury a small cache of food supplies in the ground far from his home. At present the hiding place is covered over by a huge mound of snow, but, as Fedot tells his friend, Kol'ko Poliakov, who has come begging for a piece of bread, "Wait until Spring, Fedorych. When the ground dries up a little, I'll dig up some bread and share it with you."<sup>66</sup> The practice of burying food does not in this case signify an anti-soviet act on Fedot's part, as it does in the other novels, but rather is an act of self-preservation. And the need to unite against common enemies, not merely the Famine itself, but also its direct perpetrator, Voronin, forms a common bond between the feuding villagers of Monastyrskoe.

The above scene of human compassion in the face of a common disaster does not exhaust Alekseev's treatment of the subject of the grain seizures by party activists. Elsewhere in the novel the topic surfaces again, this time with an unexpectedly humorous twist. In the Fall of 1932, when the hunger was just beginning, the elder children of the village school, including Misha and Van'ka," are assigned to watch the fields to prevent any grain from being stolen by so-called "*kulak* barbers." Political reasons aside, the occasion provides the boys with an opportunity for an adventure which reaches its climax when the boys catch a thief trying to make off with a bag of wheat ears in broad daylight. The culprit, however, is not only not a "*kulak* barber," as they were led to expect, but one of Voronin's most zealous activists, Karpushka Kotunov (another name with suggestive overtones: "Kotunov" is an obvious play on the Russian word for "cat"—*kot*). The message is difficult to

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

ignore, for Kotunov is depicted doing precisely what an activist was supposed to do and did, that is, steal from the people. Ultimately, Kotunov's treatment in the hands of his young captors is a lot less severe than was given peasants caught hoarding grain. Taking pity on his tears, they release him without telling anyone. Having failed, literally speaking, in doing the work of the state, Misha and Van'ka, nonetheless end up with a medal for their "extraordinary vigilance," perhaps another wry comment on the merit system of the day.

Soviet writers, particularly Alekseev, have made substantial headway in portraying the Famine relatively honestly as long as they limit themselves to a single locality and stop short of describing the Famine's real political and geographical extent. Of course, their efforts are necessarily constrained by the requirements of socialist realism, which in turn is the conduit for official political ideology in Soviet art. An event remembered by so many cannot completely evade the writer's attention—even in the Soviet Union. To the Soviet historian or writer of historical fiction, the Famine of 1932-1933 is inextricably linked to two other human tragedies bound up with "building socialism"—dekulakization and collectivization. It is a fact of utmost importance that in pot-boilers like Stadniuk's and Lanovenko's, which are read by hundreds and thousands of times more people than ever touched a single page of *samizdat*, the Famine has come into its own as one of the above three events associated with the creation of the new Soviet man. That the Famine has secured a tenuous foothold as an acceptable topic of Soviet fiction demonstrates both the fact that it is far more difficult for the Soviets to constrain fiction than history and that the Famine has left an indelible mark on Soviet memory which no effort can erase. The writer can only suggest the Famine's cause. Perhaps the most honest answer is the one given by Alekseev, in the conversation between Van'ka Zhukov and his father in *Fighters*, "I don't know, son." Farther than this no official Soviet writer can go. For more one must turn to fiction written by Soviet authors like Vassily Grossman's *Forever Flowing*, published outside the Soviet Union, and which clearly strive to answer questions that in the Soviet Union it takes courage even to ask.

## Chapter 5

### THE FAMINE OUTSIDE UKRAINE

In the Spring of 1933 the areas where famine raged included not only the Ukrainian SSR but also Kazakhstan, the Don and Kuban areas of the North Caucasus Territory, and the Volga Basin.<sup>1</sup> At that time, the forced collectivization of agriculture and the compulsory seizure of produce guaranteed peasants throughout the Soviet Union, at best, a very lean year. However, there is no evidence of mass mortality due to starvation outside these areas. In order to discern the degree to which the Famine was related to nationality policy in Ukraine and possibly elsewhere, the simultaneous existence of famine outside Ukraine must also be considered.

Chronologically, the first place where large numbers of people starved to death because of the forced collectivization of agriculture was Kazakhstan. The Kazakhs, traditionally nomadic Turkic herdsmen of the Central Asian steppe, were conquered piecemeal by the Russians in the 18th century. By 1917 a nationalist movement was able to assert itself, and the reestablishment of Russian rule was resisted by the local population for years.<sup>2</sup> Operating much as today's Mujahiddin in neighboring Afghanistan, the *Basmachi* revolt lasted for years, was supported by virtually all sectors of the local Turkic society and, in the words of Martha Brill Olcott, constituted "possibly the most pervasive challenge to Soviet rule."<sup>3</sup> Forced collectivization and a simultaneous anti-religious campaign in Central Asia provoked a final sustained outburst of *Basmachi* resistance in 1930-1933.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to rekindling the resistance of the *Basmachi*, the forced collectivization of agriculture—which also included the forced "sedentization" of the nomadic herdsmen—provoked massive slaughter of livestock to prevent their being seized for collective farms. Much more livestock perished in the collective farms because of inadequate fodder and shelter. The number of sheep and cattle in Kazakhstan declined by nearly 80% from 1928 to 1932.<sup>5</sup> The proportion of the population engaged in livestock breeding declined from nearly 80% in 1926 to only

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 189-198, 274-282.

<sup>2</sup> On the history of the Kazakhs, see Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford, Hoover, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> *Idem.*, "The Basmachi or Freemen's Revolt in Turkestan 1918-1924," *Soviet Studies*, XXXIII:3, July 1981, pp. 352-369. Quotation from p. 352.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 363-364. See also Iu. A. Poliakov and A. I. Chuginov, *Konets basmachestva* (The End of the Basmachi) (Moscow, Nauka, 1976), pp. 144-164.

<sup>5</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan," *Russian Review*, XL:3, April 1981, pp. 122-123.

27.4% in the Summer of 1930. The displaced herdsmen were not absorbed elsewhere. The regime provided the collectives with little in the way of food, seed, implements, and technical help.<sup>6</sup> This seems to have been more the result of official neglect than of deliberate policy, but the last reference to *Basmachi* resistance appeared in 1933. Starvation ended resistance.

An official Soviet account from the 1960s describes what happened in the traditional Kazakh *auls* (encampments):

Insufficient consideration by Stalin of the specific conditions of the then backward *auls*, his refusal to heed the signals and thoughtful proposals of local party workers to carry out collectivization in the nomadic and semi-nomadic *auls* at different tempos, to adapt for them other forms of collective farm construction than in settled regions, was the basic cause of the many errors permitted in 1930-1931, which led to the tremendous destruction of productive forces and to many people perishing in the *auls*.<sup>7</sup>

The Kazakh population was devastated. The Soviet census of 1926 counted 3,968,300 Kazakhs in the Soviet Union; the 1939 census, only 3,100,900. This represents an absolute decline of 21.9%, versus a decline of 9.9% for Ukrainians in the same period.<sup>8</sup> Many fled to neighboring parts of the Soviet Union, others to Sinkiang or the Pamir, and still others joined the *Basmachi*. But others simply died, a million and a half according to Naum Jasny's estimate.<sup>9</sup> Thus, measured by the percentage of their population lost, the Kazakhs have the distinction of having suffered even more than the Ukrainians.

But famine in Kazakhstan began earlier and for reasons different from the famine in Ukraine. As Robert Conquest pointed out:

The famine in Kazakhstan was man-made ... in that it was the result of ideologically motivated policies recklessly applied. It was not, like the Ukrainian famine, deliberately inflicted for its own sake...

Nevertheless it has been suggested that the effectiveness of the unplanned Kazakh famine in destroying local resistance was a useful model for Stalin when it came to the Ukraine.<sup>10</sup>

In the fall of 1932, just as Ukraine was being pushed over the precipice, Moscow pulled back in its policies toward the Kazakhs. On September 17, 1932, the All-Union Central Executive Committee issued a resolution limiting the collectivization of agriculture among Central Asian nomads. In nomadic regions, collectivization was to be limited to the loosest form of collective farm, the so-called Societies for Working the Land in Common, and the more restrictive

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129-134.

<sup>7</sup> A. B. Tursunbaev, "Torzhestvo kolkhoznogo stroia v Kazakhstane" (The Triumph of the Collective Farm Order in Kazakhstan), *Ocherki istorii kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva v Soiuznykh respublikakh* (Sketches on the History of Collectivization of Agriculture in the Union Republics), ed. V. P. Danilov (Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1963), pp. 293-294.

<sup>8</sup> V. I. Kozlov, *Natsional'nosti SSSR: etnodemograficheskii obzor* (The Nationalities of the USSR: an Ethno-Demographic Survey) (Moscow, Finansy i statistika, 1982), p. 285.

<sup>9</sup> Naum Jasny, *The Collectivized Agriculture of the USSR* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1941), p. 323.

<sup>10</sup> Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, p. 196.

*artel'*, which was the norm elsewhere, was temporarily banned. This encouraged a limited restoration of private property in livestock, and on October 19 the Kazakh Communist authorities decreed that in specified nomadic areas a single family could own 100 sheep, eight to ten cattle, three to five camels, and eight to ten horses.<sup>11</sup> At about the same time, two million *poods* of grain (72 million pounds) was released by the central government as food and seed to Kazakhstan's nomads and semi-nomads.<sup>12</sup> Conditions seem not to have improved until 1934, but at least Moscow was not actively working to make them worse at the time it was doing everything possible to exacerbate conditions in Ukraine.

In the city of Omsk, close to the current Kazakhstan border and administered together with it before the revolution, American writer Will Durant encountered starvation in the Summer of 1932. He described poverty, the like of which was worse than he had seen in China and India. He mentioned cases of people starving, though not on the same scale as in Kazakhstan or Ukraine. Durant wrote:

Yes, Omsk itself was dying. Its population was falling day by day; within the year it had been surpassed by Novo-Sibirsk, the new capital of Siberia. In the old days it had been a busy center of trade, full of merchants and goods; there was no place or function for it now, since the stores were half empty and the state controlled all the commerce of the land. Perhaps the Soviet remembered how Kolchak had made Omsk his counterrevolutionary capital (during the Civil War—JM); what difference did it make, to a stoic rebuilder of nations, that a few decrepit souls, or cities, died?<sup>13</sup>

Or, one is tempted to add, nations.

The next region to suffer from starvation was the Volga-Ural region, an area on the northwestern flank of Central Asia and historically akin to it. Ethnically heterogeneous at the time of the revolution, the Volga-Ural region was first annexed from the Volga-Ural (Kazan) Tatars by Ivan the Terrible before the Tsardom of Muscovy became the Russian Empire. By the First World War, the Volga Tatars were becoming the cultural leaders of all Imperial Russia's Moslems. Of 16 Turkic periodicals published in the Russian Empire in 1913, all but three were in the dialect of the Volga Tatars, which seems to have been well on the way to becoming the common literary language of the Turkic peoples of the empire. In this and other ways, the Volga Tatars pioneered the cultural and political currents which spread to Central Asia and elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> The Tatars and related Bashkirs were among the first Moslems to come under Soviet rule. Local Moslems hoped to organize Soviet rule in the Middle Volga as a joint Tatar-Volga SSR, but separate Bashkir and Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics were formed in 1919 and 1920 respectively.<sup>15</sup> Even within the Communist movement, the first Moslem

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<sup>11</sup> Olcott, "The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan," p. 134.

<sup>12</sup> Tursunbaev, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

<sup>13</sup> Will Durant, *The Tragedy of Russia: Impressions from a Brief Visit* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1933), p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the USSR: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1954), pp. 14-15.

<sup>15</sup> Azade-Ayse Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars: a Profile in National Resilience* (Stanford, Hoover, 1986), p. 137-138.

national deviation, that of Mir Said Sultan-Galiev in the early 1920s, was the product of a Volga Tatar.<sup>16</sup> A policy of Tatarization, analogous to Ukrainization, was carried out in the Tatar ASSR in the 1920s.

We have no information about the Famine of 1932-1933 specifically in the Tatar and Bashkir areas, as distinct from the rest of the Volga Basin. However, it does appear that prominent communists there were purged on charges that "especially in 1932" they had "completely gone over to the position of Sultan-Galiev, attempted to undermine the party organization's struggle for the general line of the party, the struggle for the grain procurements and suchlike."<sup>17</sup> The fact that Tatar Communist leaders were accused of undermining the procurements indicates that in this area as well more was being extracted from the peasants than the local authorities found acceptable. For alleged "Sultangalievism" and other acts of "treason," the Soviet Moslems lost virtually their entire intelligentsia in the 1930s.<sup>18</sup>

In the 18th century, large numbers of Germans also settled in the Volga Basin. After the revolution, they were given their own Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, but it cannot be doubted that Stalin viewed them as unreliable. Soon after Nazi Germany attacked the USSR in 1941, Stalin had provocateurs parachuted into the Volga German areas. On the grounds that they had not been immediately turned into the state as spies, the Volga German Republic was disbanded on August 28, 1941. All ethnic Germans in the European Soviet Union were immediately rounded up and exiled to the East as traitors to the "Socialist Motherland." They were treated like prisoners and assigned to work battalions until 1948. They were forced to live in "special settlements" until 1955.<sup>19</sup> "Rehabilitated" in the 1960s, they have never been allowed to return from exile, and tens of thousands want only to emigrate.<sup>20</sup>

In the early 1930s, the Volga Basin was still home to the Volga Tatars, a number of other Moslem groups, the Volga German republic, a majority population of Russians and a large admixture of Ukrainians.

In 1931, this area was affected by drought. According to an official Soviet history of droughts, the drought of 1931 was the only significant one to affect the Soviet Union between 1924 and 1934. The drought struck the region between the Lower Volga and the Ural Mountains, affected the Lower and Middle Volga Territories, the southeastern Bashkir ASSR, the Middle and Lower Don, southern and eastern

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<sup>16</sup> His major writings have been collected and published as M. S. Sultan-Galiev, *Stat'i* (Articles) (Oxford, Society for Central Asian Studies, 1984).

<sup>17</sup> M. Razumov, "Pobeda leninskoi natsional'noi politiki (Opyt Tatarii)" (The Victory of the Leninist Nationality Policy: the Experience of Tataria), *Bol'shevik*, 1933, No. 21, p. 40.

<sup>18</sup> Gustav Burbiel, "The Tatars and the Tatar ASSR," *Handbook of Major Soviet Nationalities*, ed. Zev Katz et al. (New York, Free Press, 1975), p. 394.

<sup>19</sup> Ludmilla Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights* (Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan University Press, 1985), pp. 168-169; Alexander Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples: the Deportation and Tragic Fate of Soviet Minorities at the End of the Second World War* (New York, Norton, 1978), pp. 10-11, 98-99, 104, 133.

<sup>20</sup> Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, pp. 171-174.

districts of Ukraine, and northern and eastern districts of the North Caucasus.<sup>21</sup> It was also mentioned by Viacheslav Molotov, who stated at the XVIIth Party Conference, that “the dry weather of 1931, which affected many districts in the east, deprived the USSR of several million *poods* of grain. During the period of the Second Five Year Plan we must take effective measures against drought.”<sup>22</sup>

Thereafter aid was sent to the worst hit areas. For example, in March 1932 40,000 tons of seed grain were collected by “shock-work methods,” i.e., forcibly seized. This grain was sent from the North Caucasus Territory to the Lower Volga Territory, the Middle Volga Territory, the Ural region, Kazakhstan, and Bashkiria. This, it should be noted, was over and above the 1931-1932 grain procurements quota for the North Caucasus, which was also 100% fulfilled. Presumably, other aid was also sent.<sup>23</sup>

In 1975 a Soviet Russian from the Volga town of Saratov wrote in an article against the evils of wasting bread, “The heart remembers the four coffins our family carried to the village cemetery in a single summer during 1933, a terrible year for the Volga.”<sup>24</sup> However, in Ukraine and the North Caucasus, few had coffins, and the bodies were often piled onto wagons, signaling a marked difference in degree.

As we have already seen, the writings of Mikhail Alekseev, the Russian novelist who lived through the Famine in Saratov *Oblast'* in the Volga region, show that 1933 was a far worse year than 1932. We have some indication of what Alekseev himself went through in 1933 from a biographical sketch:

In 1933 the famine began along the Volga (were it only along the Volga!). Quite often the word “famine is replaced by the word “bad harvest.” I confess that even now I try to understand how the famine came to be. The harvest in 1932 was, if not rich, in any case not a bad one. Then what happened? This is not the place for a deep historical inquiry into what caused it. One thing is astonishing: There is not one single textbook of contemporary history where you can find even a simple mention of the year thirty-three, a mark about that terrible tragedy. People died out by whole families. In our village of Monastyrskoe, which had 600 households before that year, only 150 remained, and this was a place no war ever touched...

The year thirty-three left and leaves the most terrible mark on my memory. Many of my relatives, schoolmates and friends ... died before my eyes... I cannot forget the human skeleton who smashed a window in our hut, stuck out his bony hand to grab a kettle of groats, and scooped them burning right into his mouth. I probably would have to write a whole book on thirty-three, but there is no way to summon up the spirit: To do it I would have to relive it all again...

My father and mother died in thirty-four. I cannot say it was from hunger. But thirty-three hastened their deaths.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> A. I. Rudenko, ed., *Zasukhi v SSSR: ikh proiskhozhdenie, povtoriaemost' i vliianie na urozhai* (Droughts in the USSR: Their Origins, Recurrence, and Effect on Harvests) (Leningrad, Gidrometeorologicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1958), pp. 168-169.

<sup>22</sup> *Pravda*, February 6, 1932.

<sup>23</sup> “40 tys. tonn semzerna otguzheno” (Forty Thousand Tons of Seed Grain Have Been Sent), *Pravda*, March 20, 1932, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Nikolai Pal'kin, “Khleb—vsemy golova” (Bread: the Main Thing for All), *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, August 26, 1979, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Mikhail Alekseev, “Sciatel' i Khranitel'” (Sower and Preserver), *Nash sovremennik* (Our Contemporary), 1972, No. 9, p. 96.



Conquest, however, points out that the Volga German Republic “seems to have been the main target” of the Famine in the Volga Basin.<sup>26</sup>

Most of the information we have about the Famine in the Volga comes from German settlers. The German Evangelical Church received 100,000 letters from Soviet Germans, mainly appeals for assistance, which was effective only through the official *torgsin* apparatus. Conquest describes these letters:

A number of the letters are from the North Caucasus or the Ukraine and they tell the familiar story. But most are from the Volga German Republic itself—there too famine conditions prevailed, and for the same reason: ‘We had to give it all to the State’. (February 1933). Letter after letter speaks of no bread for four, five, six months. On the State farms, indeed, ‘Those who work for the State get 150 grams of bread a day, to neither die nor live’.

But in the ordinary villages—‘Four of Brother Martin’s children have died of hunger, and the rest are not far from it’ (March 1933); ‘the big village (of about 8,000 inhabitants) is half empty’ (March 1933); ‘We have had no bread, meat or fat for five months already... Many are dying; ‘dogs are no longer to be found, nor cats’ (April 1933); ‘So many are dying that there is no time to dig graves’ (April 1933); ‘In the village all is dead. Days pass when one does not see a soul ... we have shut ourselves in our house to prepare for death’ (February 1933). One starving evangelical writes ‘When I look into the future, I see a picture before me, as of a mountain which I cannot climb.’

Occasional letters note the arrival of parcels from the West. For this reason, and perhaps for other reasons, the death roll seems not to have been as great as in the Kuban. Nevertheless, the German dead in the famine are reported as 140,000. And it is estimated that by now some 60,000 further Germans were in prison camp.<sup>27</sup>

This would seem to indicate that the Famine literally decimated the USSR’s Germans, if we accept the estimate Conquest cites. The figure was published in 1934 by German relief agencies in reference to Germans throughout the USSR—well before any Soviet census figures, admittedly questionable, were available.<sup>28</sup> According to the 1939 Soviet census, the number of Soviet Germans had actually increased 15.2% since 1926—from 1,238,500 to 1,427,200.<sup>29</sup> This is quite close to the simultaneous population growth of the USSR as a whole, which was 15.7%, and indicates that the estimate of Soviet German famine mortality may well be exaggerated. Still, Conquest’s calculation of the number who perished outside Ukraine and the North Caucasus, mainly in the Volga Basin and adjacent Western Siberia, about 1,000,000, is as good as any estimate we are likely to get.<sup>30</sup>

The area most similar to Ukraine in its fate is the North Caucasus Territory, since broken up into smaller territories and non-Russian districts. Lying between the Black Sea and the Caspian, it is a traditional borderland where Slavs from the North and West meet the indigenous peoples of the Caucasus. Here the Slavic and non-Slavic worlds met, collided, and made war. Like the Ukrainian steppe, the North Caucasian steppe was long a frontier where a Slavic peasant could till the

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<sup>26</sup> Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, p. 281.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 281-282.

<sup>28</sup> Ewald Ammende, *Human Life in Russia* (reprint: Cleveland, Zuba, 1984), p. 98, citing *Nation und Staat*, No. 40, 1934.

<sup>29</sup> Kozlov, *Natsional'nosti SSSR*, p. 287.

<sup>30</sup> Conquest, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

land without a landlord only if he could defend it. Out of this soil grew the Cossacks, who could fight and farm with equal success. The three "hordes" of the North Caucasus were named after the rivers along which they lived. The Don Cossacks, the northernmost and first Cossack settlers in the area, spoke a Russian dialect with substantial Turkic influence. This area was conquered by Peter I in the early 18th century. Next came the Kuban Cossacks, formed in 1860 by a never-quite-successful amalgamation of the Ukrainian Black Sea Cossacks, descendants of the Zaporozhian Cossacks and sent to the region after Catherine II abolished their host in Ukraine, and the so-called *lineitsy* (line Cossacks), Russian speakers originally descended from Don Cossacks and who subsequently formed the senior officer corps. The third and smallest host was that of the Terek, whose dialect was similar to that of their relatives along the Don.

Over time the Cossacks became a sort of military service caste, obligated to give the tsar 20 years of military service. In return they received land allotments which were generous by Russian standards. Both the tsar and the Provisional Government on occasion employed the well-disciplined Cossacks as mounted police, for which the latter earned a reputation for brutality, especially toward the Jews. Moreover, in no province did the Cossacks make up an absolute majority of the population, although they came close in the Don, where they made up 49% of the inhabitants in 1914, and the Kuban, where they were 44%. Most of the remaining inhabitants of the North Caucasus were *inogorodnye*, literally, people who came from other towns but perhaps best conveyed as "newcomers" (48% along the Don and 53% along the Kuban). These "newcomers" had far less wealth than their Cossack neighbors and no political rights. The rest of the population was made up of non-Slavic peoples left over from before the Cossacks came.<sup>31</sup> Along the Terek, the proportion was reversed: 20% Cossacks, 20% "newcomers," and 60% indigenous inhabitants—the Kabardinians, Ossetians, Chechens, and Ingush—known collectively as *gortsy* (mountaineers).<sup>32</sup>

After the Bolsheviks seized power in central Russia, the Cossacks defied them and the North Caucasus became the base for the anticommunist Volunteer Army. However, as Peter Kenez, the leading historian of this movement, pointed out:

The Volunteer Army was an organization of officers. They created the Army, set its tone, determined its ideology, and always retained leadership of it. However, it was neither officers nor Russian soldiers but Kuban and Don Cossacks who made up the majority of the fighting men. The Cossacks, men who differed in background and ideology from the officers, came to fight the Bolsheviks for reasons of their own.<sup>33</sup>

A principal reason the Cossacks opposed the Bolsheviks was the desire to maintain their privileges against the "newcomers" who were eyeing the Cossack landholdings and demanding political rights. According to Kenez,

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<sup>31</sup> Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918: the First Year of the Volunteer Army* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971), pp. 37-40. For a Cossack nationalist view, see, Wasili G. Glaskow, *History of the Cossacks* (New York, Speller & Sons, 1972).

<sup>32</sup> Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919-1920: the Defeat of the Whites* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977), pp. 123-124.

<sup>33</sup> *Idem.*, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918*, p. 37

The Cossacks' unwillingness to share their wealth and power with the fellow inhabitants of their rich districts made their protestations of democracy, autonomy and self-government hollow. In fact they took arms against the Bolsheviks in order to defend their feudal estate privileges against their neighbors. In order to justify themselves in their own eyes, they created a bogus nationalism based on a mythical past.<sup>34</sup>

Scholars more familiar with the history of the Slavic nations would be more reticent in classifying any nationalism as "bogus," least of all because its adherents created a mythical past, since almost all nations have done so at one time or another. For whatever reason, the Cossacks evolved the rudiments of a national ideology and demanded autonomy. This led to strains with the leadership of the Volunteer Army who fought for "Russia united and indivisible" and who opposed any concession to regional particularism on principle.

This was above all the case in the Kuban, where Cossack nationalism competed with Ukrainian nationalism. This area was "the heartland of the anti-Bolshevik South," and its Cossacks constituted "the backbone of the Volunteer Army."<sup>35</sup> Even the Russian *lineitsy* hoped for some sort of regional autonomy, while the majority, the former Black Sea Cossacks, were conscious of their Ukrainian heritage and actively sympathized with the national movement led by Symon Petliura in Ukraine and many of these sought an independent Kuban.<sup>36</sup> In January 1920, the various Cossack hosts proclaimed a common government for all three hosts.<sup>37</sup>

The Bolsheviks, for their part, had trouble deciding whether to try to recruit Cossacks or attempt to destroy them as a homogenous counterrevolutionary stratum. In early 1919, when the Bolsheviks held the Don, they adopted a policy of massive terror called "decossackization."<sup>38</sup> Later they created Cossack Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics, but abolished them on July 18, 1923, along with the very name Cossack.<sup>39</sup> Lack of trust in the Cossacks is evident from the fact that they were not conscripted into the Red Army until 1936.<sup>40</sup>

After 1923, Cossacks were designated as either Russians or Ukrainians, depending on their ancestry. In largely Ukrainian areas like the Kuban, the Ukrainization policy was carried out under the supervision of the Ukrainian

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<sup>34</sup> *Idem*, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919-1920*, p. 112.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 112-120, 132-139. For the viewpoint of those seeking an independent Kuban, see: Vasyi' Ivanya, *Borot'ba Kubani za nezalezhnist'* (The Kuban's Struggle for Independence) (Munich, Ukraïns'kyi tekhnichno-hospodars'kyi instytut, 1968).

<sup>37</sup> Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919-1920*, pp. 227-236. Glaskow, *History of the Cossacks*, pp. 121-127.

<sup>38</sup> Sergei Starikov and Roy Medvedev, *Philip Mironov and the Russian Civil War* (New York, Knopf, 1978), pp. 101-132.

<sup>39</sup> Glaskow, *History of the Cossacks*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>40</sup> Nobuo Shimotomai, "A Note on The Kuban Affair (1932-1933): the Crisis of *Kolkhoz* Agriculture in the North Caucasus," *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, vol. I, 1983, p. 40.

Commissariat of Education, as it was throughout the Soviet Union.<sup>41</sup> To an even greater extent than in Ukraine, anti-Soviet guerrillas operated there until the mid-1920s.<sup>42</sup> In 1929-1930, at the same time that thousands of members of Ukraine's noncommunist intellectual, cultural, and spiritual elites were arrested in connection with the so-called Union for the Liberation of Ukraine, Kuban Cossacks were also rounded up for alleged participation.<sup>43</sup>

Revolts against collectivization began in the Kuban in 1929 and lasted into the following year. According to a Soviet source, one of the so-called "bands" in the Kuban had 4,000 "bandits" under arms, which is the largest we know of anywhere in the Soviet Union.<sup>44</sup> A similar revolt in the Kuban was reported in the Western press in 1932-1933. According to *Literary Digest*, 6,000 armed Kuban Cossacks fought the Soviet government:

Desperate to death for lack of food, the people of the Kuban region of the North Caucasus rose up in fury against the Soviet government. The uprising lasted for almost two weeks, and cost unnumbered hundreds of lives. Conflict between the starving people and the authorities had been going on for months.<sup>45</sup>

Soviet historiography, however, states only that "in 1932 hostile elements were able to organize *kulak* sabotage in the Kuban and in some other districts of the North Caucasus."<sup>46</sup> For once the Soviet version seems to be the correct one, since no eyewitness from the Kuban specifically mentions a widespread revolt in the second half of 1932.<sup>47</sup>

More is known about how the Soviets responded and particularly how this response was directed against the largely Ukrainian Kuban. As early as January 1931, the All-Union Central Committee passed a special resolution on collectivization in the North Caucasus, which was designated the first region of the USSR to have achieved total collectivization, citing "brutal class struggle" and

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Mykola Skrypnyk, *Statti i promovy* (Articles and Speeches) (Kharkiv, Derzhvydav Ukraïny, 1930-1931), vol. II, pp. 69-70, 246-247.

<sup>42</sup> Glaskow, *History of the Cossacks*, p. 129.

<sup>43</sup> M. Verbytskyi, ed., *Naibil'shyi zlochyn Kremliia: stvorenyi sovets'koiu Moskvoiu shuchnyi holod v Ukraïni 1932-33 r.* (The Kremlin's Greatest Crime: the Man-Made Famine Created by Soviet Moscow in Ukraine in 1932-1933) (London, DOBRUS, 1952), p. 77.

<sup>44</sup> Iu. S. Kukushkin, "Osushchestvlenie sel'skimi sovetami politiki likvidatsii kulachestva kak klassa" (The Carrying Out of the Policy of the Liquidation of the *Kulaks* as a Class by Village Soviets), *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta* (Moscow University Herald), 1966, No. 4, p. 27.

<sup>45</sup> "The Hunger Revolt in Northern Caucasia," *Literary Digest*, January 28, 1933, p. 12.

<sup>46</sup> S. A. Iudachev, *Bor'ba KPSS za organizatsionno-khoziaistvennoe ukreplenie kolkhozov (1933-1934 gg.)* (The CPSU's Struggle for the Organizational-Economic Strengthening of the Collective Farms, 1933-1934) (Moscow, Vyshaia shkola, 1962), p. 39.

<sup>47</sup> Had such an armed revolt occurred, it would undoubtedly have affected the most famous of the deported *stanitsas*, Poltav's'ka, but an eyewitness account from this *stanitsa* mentions no such revolt. See: M. Verbytskyi, *Naibil'shyi zlochyn Kremliia*, p. 47.

“acute *kulak* resistance” there.<sup>48</sup> And no wonder. In terms of grain requisitions, the North Caucasus was ravaged as much as Ukraine. In 1930, 38% of all the grain produced there was seized by the state to fulfill the compulsory procurements quota, and in 1931 the quota took up 44% of the harvest. The burden was even greater on the collectivized sector: 45.6% of the total harvest in 1930 and 63.4% in 1931.<sup>49</sup>

In 1932 the grain procurements campaign fell below targets much as it did simultaneously in Ukraine. But top levels of the Party structure were willing to go along with Moscow’s policies with less complaint than in Ukraine. At least, there is no evidence of active resistance to the quotas from high North Caucasus authorities as occurred in Ukraine in mid-1932. And, since the territorial authorities had more limited authority vis-à-vis Moscow than their counterparts in the Ukrainian SSR, some repressions began even earlier there. Whole districts were blacklisted as early as October 1932, two months before such steps were taken in Ukraine.<sup>50</sup>

Soon after intervening in Ukraine in the Fall of 1932, the central authorities turned their attention to the Kuban. A top level commission from Moscow, consisting of the ubiquitous Kaganovich, Supply Commissar Mikoian, Deputy Defense Commissar and the Red Army’s Chief *Politrak* Gamarnik, Procurements Committee Vice-Chairman Chernov, *Sovkhoz* Commissar Iurkin, OGPU Vice-Chairman Iagoda, Shkiriakov of the Presidium of the Central Control Commission, and Communist Youth League head Kosarev, arrived in the North Caucasus on November 2 to deal with the crisis. Meeting with the North Caucasus Territorial Committee, they immediately decided to reduce the quotas while stepping up efforts to meet them: The grain procurements quota was reduced from 136 million *poods*, the figure set in May,<sup>51</sup> to 97 million *poods*. Simultaneously, prominent officials of the territorial party and government were dispatched to the 31 districts most behind in their quotas to take charge and see to it that grain seizures were intensified.<sup>52</sup> The “concession” of a lower quota was by now clearly

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<sup>48</sup> “Kolektyvizatsiia na Pivnichnomu Kavkazi: postanova TsK VKP(b) vid 10 sichnia 1931 r. na dopovid’ Pivkazkraikomu” (Collectivization in the North Caucasus: Decision of the All-Union Communist Party Central Committee from January 10, 1931, on the Report of the North Caucasus Territorial Committee), *Visti VUTsVK*, January 13, 1931, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Nobuo Shimotomai, “A Note on the Kuban Affair: the Crisis of Kolkhoz Agriculture in the North Caucasus,” *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, I (1983), p. 40.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>51</sup> *Vazhneishie resheniia po sel'skomu khoziaistvu* (Most Important Decisions of Agriculture) (Moscow, Sel'khozgiz, 1934), p. 534.

<sup>52</sup> “O vypolnenii plana khlebozagotovok po Severo-Kavkazskomu kraiu: postanovlenie biuro Sev.-Kaz. kraevogo komiteta VKP(b), sovместно s predstaviteliami TsK VKP(b) tt. Kaganovichem, Iagodoi, Chernovym, Iurkinym i Kosyrevym ot 2-go noiabria 1932 goda” (On the Fulfillment of the Grain Procurements Plan in the North Caucasus Territory: Decree of the Bureau of the North Caucasus Territorial Committee of the All-Union Communist Party together with Representatives of the All-Union Communist Party Central Committee Comrades Kaganovich, Mikoian, Gamarnik, Shkiriakov, Iagoda, Chernov, Iurkin, and Kosarev from November 2, 1932), *Slomit' sabotazh seva i khlebozagotovok, organizovannymi kulachestvom v raionakh Kubani* (Crush the Sabotage of the Sowing and Grain Procurements Organized by the *Kulaks* in the Districts of the Kuban) (Rostov on the Don, Partizdat, 1932), pp. 16-17.

bogus: It represented only what party officials decided was possible to seize with the maximum effort. A former Soviet journalist later recalled that before dawn on the day after the arrival of Kaganovich's mission, "the newsboys shouted the horrible headlines, " 'The Petliurist *kulak* saboteurs of Kuban must be finished off' and 'The Petliurist-Cossack counterrevolutionary work in Kuban must be uprooted'."<sup>53</sup>

On November 4 another decree ordered repression intensified in an effort to meet the quota, stating:

the especially disgraceful failure of the grain procurements plan and Winter sowings in the Kuban places before the party organizations of the fighting task—to smash the sabotage of the grain procurements and sowing which is organized by *kulak* counterrevolutionary elements, to destroy the opposition of a segment of the village communists who have become *de facto* leaders of the sabotage, and to liquidate the passivity and complacency toward sabotage that is incompatible with party membership.<sup>54</sup>

Specifically, three large Cossack settlements (*stanitsas*) were blacklisted, and their inhabitants were warned that "further sabotage" would compel district authorities to "raise before the government the question of their exile ... to the northern districts" of the Soviet Union and the resettlement of their homes by colonists brought in from other territories. In eleven districts no further goods were sent to state and cooperative stores, while in ten other the goods already in the stores were ordered immediately seized and sent to other districts. Individual farmers who refused to plant had their property seized and were threatened with deportation to the Far North. "Criminal underfillers" and those failing to obey decrees on proper use of livestock were arrested. Recent cases under the law of August 7 on socialist property were speedily reexamined and prosecutions speeded up. Local Communist Party organizations were purged of members who had "united with the *kulak* organizers of the counterrevolutionary sabotage" and become "mouthpieces for the class enemy in the party," that is, not seizing food energetically enough.<sup>55</sup> Simultaneously, Moscow appointed Shkiriakov to head the commission in charge of carrying out this purge.<sup>56</sup>

On November 12, territorial party chief Boris Sheboldaev gave an extremely tough speech, in which he again raised the issue of exiling whole *stanitsas* from the Kuban:

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<sup>53</sup> Yurko Stepovy, "The Tragedy of Kuban," *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: a White Book*, ed. S. O. Pidhainy et al. (Toronto-Detroit, DOBRUS, 1953-1955), vol. II, p. 554.

<sup>54</sup> "O khode khlebozagotovok i seva po raionam Kubani: reshenie biuro Kraikoma sovместo s predstaviteliami TsK VKP(b) ot 4 noiabria 1932 g." (On the Course of the Grain Procurements and Sowing in the Kuban Districts: November 4, 1932 Decree of the North Caucasus Bureau together with Representatives of the All-Union Communist Party Central Committee), *Slomiti' sabotazh seva i khlebozagotovok*, p. 18.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-20.

<sup>56</sup> "O chistke sel'skikh partorganizatsii Sev. Kavkaza: postanovlenie TsK VKP(b) i prezidium TsKK ot 4 noiabria" (On the Purge of Village Party Organizations of the North Caucasus: November 4 Decision of the All-Union Central Committee and Central Control Commission Presidium), *Slomiti' sabotazh*, p. 21.

We have stated publicly that we will exile to the northern regions criminal saboteurs and *kulak* supporters who do not want to sow. But can it be that we have not already exiled the *kulak* counterrevolutionary elements from this same Kuban in preceding years? We did exile them and in sufficient quantity. And now, when these *kulak* remnants try to organize sabotage and oppose the Soviet government's demands, it is more right to give the most fertile Kuban land to collective farmers who live with little land and on poor land in other regions. And they not only work it better but appreciate it more. And those who do not want to work and sully our land to the limits, we will exile them to other places. This is just. We may be told, "How is it that you earlier exiled the *kulaks* and are now talking about a whole settlement, in which there are collective farms and in which individual farmers of good will reside; how can this be?" Yes, we have to raise the question of a whole settlement, or a collective farm, or collective farmers, or individual farmers who really are of good will, who must in present circumstances answer for the attitudes of their neighbors. What kind of support of Soviet power is this—the collective farm, if together with another collective farm, or if a whole group of individual farmers actively oppose the actions of the Soviet authorities? What kind of support is this, which does not try to smash quickly and decisively and which does not break its opposition? We demand that, if there are elements there who really are loyal to the Soviet power and the collective farm, then they must go forward with us in order to smash immediately the sabotage organized by the *kulaks* and thereby to correct the situation, then there will be no question of exile.<sup>57</sup>

Sheboldaev's demand could not be met because the *kulaks* had already been exiled long before and there was probably little left for the state to take. According to later Soviet scholarship, the entire population of the Kuban *stanitsas* of Poltav's'ka, Medvidiv's'ka, and others was exiled to the North.<sup>58</sup> From a Western account, we learn that a total of thirteen *stanitsas* were exiled and the names of two more: Umans'ka and Mishativ's'ka.<sup>59</sup> This was a major operation; Poltav's'ka, which was ordered exiled on December 17, had a population of 27,000 and a Ukrainian pedagogical institute, while the population of Umans'ka was 30,000.<sup>60</sup> An eyewitness recalled, "Farm implements and personal belongings which people had prepared to take along with them were taken away when they were loaded into trains. Departures were usually conducted with public shootings and bloodshed."<sup>61</sup>

Simultaneously, "massive repressions were carried out against Party, Soviet, and collective farm workers as well as against rank and file collective farmers." Fifteen more Kuban *stanitsas* were put on the "blacklist." Delivery of goods was stopped, collective farm trade was forbidden, and credit and tax payments were immediately called due. About 45% of all party members in the Kuban were purged.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> B. Sheboldaev, "Slomit' sabotazh seva i khlebozagotovok, organizovannyi kulachestvom v raionakh Kubani" (Smash the Sabotage of the Sowing and Grain Procurements Organized by *Kulaks* in the Kuban Districts), *Slomit' sabotazh*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>58</sup> V. P. Danilov, N. A. Ivnit'skii, "Leninskii kooperativnyi plan i ego osushchestvlenie v SSSR" (The Leninist Cooperative Plan and Its Realization in the USSR), *Ocherki istorii kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khozaistva v Soiuzykh respublikakh*, ed. Danilov, p. 55.

<sup>59</sup> Petro Ver, "Devastation of Kuban," *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: a White Book*, ed. S. O. Pidhainy et al., vol. I, p. 441.

<sup>60</sup> Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, p. 277. The pedagogical institute is mentioned in Stepovy, "The Tragedy of Kuban," p. 555.

<sup>61</sup> Petro Ver, *op. cit.*, p. 441.

<sup>62</sup> V. P. Danilov, N. A. Ivnit'skii, "Leninskii kooperativnyi plan..." p. 55.

Three hundred and fifty-eight of the Kuban's 716 secretaries of collective farms and *stanitsa* party organizations—a majority—were purged, and some party organizations were entirely disbanded.<sup>63</sup>

As a special threat to local officials, the Kotov affair was reopened under the November 4 decree. Kotov, who had headed a *stanitsa* party committee in the Kuban and had secretly advanced the local Cossack farmers more food than the amount prescribed by law, was expelled from the party and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in October 1932. When the case was reopened, however, 15 additional members of the party committee were purged, while Kotov was executed as a counterrevolutionary. As Nobuo Shimotomai has noted, "Such behavior on the part of local officials was so popular and prevalent that only such harsh measures (as execution) could prevent them."<sup>64</sup> Kotov became a symbol of the "enemy with a party card in his pocket," the main target of the 1933 All-Union purge.

Stalin's January 1933 intervention in Ukraine was also paralleled in the North Caucasus. As a result of the various repressive measures taken in late 1932, the revised procurements quota for the North Caucasus was actually fulfilled, albeit at tremendous human cost.<sup>65</sup> On January 23, 1933, the day before Stalin's appointment of Postyshev to take the reins in Kharkiv, a special Committee on the Conduct of the Sowing in the North Caucasus was appointed. The decree establishing the committee stated, in part, that

The Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party warns the party and Soviet organizations of the North Caucasus as well as workers in agricultural organs, machine tractor stations, and state farms, and also members of collective farm administrations and brigades, that their primary obligation is to combat all symptoms of *kulak* sabotage and wrecking activities which could be repeated ... any indulgence shown to the enemies of the people who destroy the sowings will be considered assistance to the *kulaks* and counterrevolutionary elements...

In order to carry out in a successful and timely manner the sowings in the North Caucasus in all sectors, a Committee on the Spring Sowing is to be formed with Comrade Sheboldaev as chairman and consisting of Comrades Larin, Zimin, Evdokimov, Iurkin, and Ishchenko. The committee is to be given the complete administrative authority, necessary for the successful completion of the sowing campaign, and regulations issued by the Committee are to be considered absolutely binding upon all organs, establishments, and administrative entities of the Territory without being subject to appeal.<sup>66</sup>

Although the territorial secretary, Sheboldaev, was named chairman, this special committee was given absolute authority over all extant territorial bodies. The committee thus was a body whose decisions were to be obeyed without question or appeal to higher authorities; it was responsible only to Moscow.

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<sup>63</sup> Shimotomai, "A Note on the Kuban Affair," p. 47.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>66</sup> "O meropriiatiakh po organizatsii vesennego seva na Severnom Kavkaze: postanovlenie Sovnarkoma Soiuza SSR i Tsentral'nogo Komiteta VKP(b)" (On Measures for the Organization of the Spring Sowings in the North Caucasus: Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party), *Pravda*, January 24, 1933, p. 1.



The consequences of the policies carried out by Stalin's immediate subordinates in the Kuban's *stanitsas* in 1933 were identical to events in Ukraine. Accounts by eyewitnesses from the Kuban are identical with those from the Ukrainian SSR. One recalled, "Krasnodar, the capital city of the Kuban region, was strewn with corpses which no one bothered to pick up."<sup>67</sup> A Kuban Cossack named Dmytro Fesenko, from Starokorsuns'ka *stanitsa*:

After dekulakization, mass arrests, and the exile of individuals with or without their families, the artificially created famine of 1932-1933 came to pass. After it, out of a population of 14,000, only about a thousand remained half-alive. In this act of murder both collective farmers and non-collective farmers died; also village schoolteachers and even activists died. Russians from Tula, Kursk, and other regions were (then) brought into our *stanitsa*.

The neighboring *stanitsas* of Voroniz'ka and Dins'ka were put on the black list, and their fate was the same as our *stanitsa*.<sup>68</sup>

A former Soviet journalist added that soon after the Kaganovich mission of November 1932:

the whole of Kuban was drenched in blood and tears as the Muscovite gangs mercilessly swept away the last kernels of grain from the Cossacks' granaries, arrested the survivors of previous arrests and packed the Krasnodar GPU dungeons, while the Kuban grain flowed into Moscow.

In the late Fall of 1932 Kuban was finally completely annihilated. The once-prosperous villages were now ravaged and desolate. All Ukrainian national life in Kuban was liquidated. Ukrainian schools were compelled to teach Russian only.<sup>69</sup>

Much of what transpired in the Kuban has been recorded in the modernistic novel by Famine eyewitness Vasyly' Barka, *The Yellow Prince*.<sup>70</sup>

Less information is available on the Don region of the North Caucasus, partially because the Soviet press of the period does not indicate the existence there of special "problems" as in the Kuban. That the man-made famine did affect the Don Cossacks is clear from this account:

The Salsk Steppes, situated in the southern part of the Don region, are renowned for their fertile wheat fields. The harvest of 1932 was excellent.

However, in 1932 the state took away all the grain from the collective farms. The Polyviansk Machine Tractor Station where I was employed as a bookkeeper, serviced 18 collective farms. The collective farms had hogs, sheep, some milch cows and very few horses...

By the Spring of 1933 all food products were exhausted and famine came to the famous wheat-producing steppes. Bread could not be obtained at any price. People swelled with hunger and died. Hardly anybody thought of working at the collective farm, because the predominant worry was to save one's life. People left their villages, stations (*stanitsas*?) and hamlets and journeyed to the Salsk regional center seeking some relief. Others took trains to various destinations in the hope of finding something to eat. There were droves of swollen, emaciated children who had lost their parents, but no one paid any attention to them.

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<sup>67</sup> P. Petrenko, "They Ruined and Starved Kuban," *Black Deeds*, vol. II, p. 545.

<sup>68</sup> M. Verbyts'kyi, ed., *Naibil'shyl' zlochyn Kremlia*, p. 78.

<sup>69</sup> Stepovy, *op. cit.*, II, p. 554.

<sup>70</sup> Available in French translation as Vassil Barka, *Le prince jaune* (Paris, Gallimard, 1981). The original is Vasyly' Barka, *Zhovtyi kniaz'* (Munich, Suchasnist', 1968).

### *The Famine outside Ukraine*

By the Summer most of the villages of the Polyviansk Machine Tractor Station had lost half their inhabitants as a result of the famine.<sup>71</sup>

According to another account, the Salsk Railroad Station was filled with starving villagers in the Spring of 1933. Unable to buy tickets, many fell dead and their bodies were carted off for burial, while nearby warehouses were filled to overflowing with grain. Furthermore:

Whatever grain could not be squeezed into the warehouses was simply dumped on the ground and covered with canvas. A lot of the grain thus piled up was rotting. The warehouses were enclosed by a board fence and were guarded by armed secret policemen.

None of the grain was allowed to be given to those starving people who had produced it. It was loaded under guard into box-cars for shipment to ports on the Black and Azov seas for export abroad.<sup>72</sup>

Thirty years after the fact, Khrushchev revealed that the famous writer Mikhail Sholokhov wrote to Stalin about the mass terror accompanying the procurements in one district of the Don Region. A Lenin prize winner, Sholokhov was a native of the Don Cossack region. According to Khrushchev:

In the Spring of 1933 our esteemed Mikhail Sholokhov raised his voice in protest against the arbitrary rule that reigned on the Don at that time. Not long ago two letters to Stalin and Stalin's replies were found in the archives. One cannot remain calm reading Sholokhov's truthful words, written with a bleeding heart, about the shocking deeds of people who engaged in criminal activities in the Veshenskaia and other districts of the Don.<sup>73</sup>

Khrushchev cited excerpts from Sholokhov's letter of April 16, 1933:

Countless such examples could be cited. These are not isolated instances of deviation but of a legalized "method" on a district scale of conducting grain procurement. I have heard about these facts either from communists or from collective farmers themselves, who came to me asking "to have this printed in the papers" after having been subjected to all these "methods."

Joseph Vissarionovich, do you remember Korolenko's article, "In a Pacified Village?" The same kind of "disappearance" has been the fate of tens of thousands of collective farmers – not three peasants suspected of having stolen grain from a *kulak* – and, as you see, with a wider use of technical means and in a more refined way... The cases not only of those who have committed outrages against collective farmers and Soviet power, but also those whose hand directed them should be investigated... If everything I have described merits the attention of the Central Committee, send to the Veshenskaia district real Communists who will have enough courage to expose, irrespective of the person concerned, all those responsible for the mortal blow delivered to the collective farm economy of the district, who will investigate properly and show up not only all those who have applied loathsome "methods" of torture, beating up, and humiliation to collective farmers, but also those who inspired them.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> S. K., "Famine in the Salsk Steppes," *Black Deeds*, II, pp. 547-548.

<sup>72</sup> M. T., "People Dying near the Grain Elevators," *Black Deeds*, II, pp. 559.

<sup>73</sup> N. S. Khrushchev, "Vysokaia ideinost' i khudozhestvennoe masterstvo: velikaia sila Sovetskoï literatury i iskusstva" (High Idealism and Artistic Mastery: the Great Strength of Soviet Literature and Art), *Pravda*, March 8, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

Khrushchev did not reveal the contents or date of the second letter, but did read Stalin's response to both:

I thank you for the letters, for they expose a sore in our Party-State work and show how our workers, wishing to curb the enemy, sometimes unwittingly hit friends and descend to sadism. But this does not mean that I agree with you *on all points*. You see only *one* side, though you see it quite well. But this is only *one* side of the matter. In order not to go adrift in politics (your letters are not *belles lettres* but 100 percent politics), one has to observe and to be able to see the other side as well. And the *other* side is that the esteemed grain-growers of your district (and not only of your district alone) carried on a sabotage campaign and were not loath to leave the workers and the Red Army without bread. That the sabotage was quiet and outwardly harmless (without bloodshed) does not change the fact that the esteemed grain-growers waged what was virtually a "quiet" war against Soviet power. A war of starvation, dear Comrade Sholokhov... This, of course, can in no way justify the outrages which, as you assure me, have been committed by our workers... And those guilty of these outrages must be duly punished. Nevertheless, it is clear as day that the esteemed grain-growers are not so harmless as they could appear to be from afar.<sup>75</sup>

Khrushchev's account of the exchange is tantalizingly incomplete. While Khrushchev chose not to recite the specific abuses Sholokhov was referring to, neither Sholokhov nor Stalin mentioned the word "famine." At the same time, it is one of the few clues we have about Stalin's state of mind during the Famine, indicating that he saw himself engaged in a war in which food was the major weapon. If the grain producers had proclaimed a quiet "war of starvation" against the government, so be it; the government would win.

Yet, the fact remains that we know of direct interventions by Stalin only in ethnically Ukrainian areas. Even in the North Caucasus, the Kaganovich delegation was sent specifically to deal with sabotage in the Kuban, even if its powers then extended over the entire territory. That the central authorities' most direct and invasive interventions during the Famine were specifically directed against the Ukrainian SSR and the ethnically Ukrainian Kuban region of the North Caucasus Territory indicate a specifically anti-Ukrainian aspect to Soviet policies during the period.

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter 6

### THE AMERICAN RESPONSE TO THE FAMINE

Despite ample and timely knowledge about the man-made Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine, the US government did not publicly acknowledge what it knew or respond in any meaningful way. Similarly, a number of members of the American press actively denied in public what they confirmed in private about the Famine.

Lacking a diplomatic presence in the USSR until late 1933, the State Department monitored Soviet developments through both the official Soviet press and a variety of other sources. Followed especially closely were issues dealing with grain production because of direct competition between American and Soviet wheat exports on the world market. Less notice was taken of developments in nationality policy, but here too information was certainly available.

Robert F. Kelley, chief of the State Department's Division of Eastern European Affairs from 1926 until its abolition in 1937, oversaw research and processed intelligence on the USSR. The single most important post for reliable, timely intelligence was the Russian affairs section at the US Legation in Riga, Latvia, which had monitored the Soviet Union since 1922.<sup>1</sup>

As early as 1931, the excessive seizure of agricultural produce had led to localized outbreaks of famine in Ukraine. An early indication of the hardships wrought by the Soviet state was the number of refugees fleeing to Poland and Rumania, which was duly reported to the State Department.<sup>2</sup> Surprisingly, in 1931 two letters, addressed in English to the "Department at the City at Washington, the

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Maddux, *Years of Estrangement: American Relations with the Soviet Union, 1933-1941* (Tallahassee, University Presses of Florida, 1980), pp. 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> "The illegal crossing of the frontier became intense with the increased collectivization activity of the Soviet Government reaching its peak somewhere in the Spring of last year." The refugee camps, established by the Polish government to house over 2,000 peasants in 1930, had been liquidated that Autumn, but a renewed influx in 1931 had forced the opening of a new camp at Tulchyn (Tuczyn in Polish, now a *raion* center in Vinnytsia oblast). John C. Wiley, Chargé d'Affaires *ad interim*, US Embassy, Warsaw, Poland, to Secretary of State, April 13, 1931, pp. 1-2; 861.48-Refugees-60C/4, T1249, Records of the Department of State, National Archives, Washington, DC. Almost a year later a similar report was filed from Bucharest, "1,000 Soviet Moldavians had fled across the frozen Dniester River to Rumania, where the authorities had set up refugee camps. Rumanian public security chief Cadere, charged with screening out possible spies, went there, spoke with many of the refugees, and told a US diplomat, 'All of them complained that they were treated in a most brutal and inhuman way by Soviet authorities. They declared that their live-stock and other property had been confiscated, that they had been forced to join collective farms, that they were forcibly prevented from attending religious meetings, and that lately large numbers of their compatriots had been sent against their will to remote parts of the Soviet Union to perform various kinds of forced labor. Rather than continue to suffer such persecution, they preferred to run the risk of being shot by the Soviet guards during an attempted flight to Rumanian territory.'" C. S. Wilson, US Legation, Bucharest, to

District of Columbia," arrived in Washington from Zhashkiv, now a *raion* center in Cherkassy *Oblast'*, UkSSR.<sup>3</sup> The letters were delivered to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia and forwarded to State. Kelley described the first letter as "apparently written from Russia, with regard to alleged conditions in Russia."<sup>4</sup> To

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Secretary of State, March 12, 1932; pp. 2-3; 861.48-Refugees-71/2; T1249; Records of the Department of State; National Archives; Washington, DC.

<sup>3</sup> The first, written in semi-literate Ukrainian and dated June 24, 1931, read, "A Request of the Entire People of Ukraine to the President and the Senate, and to all the Citizens of America. Please be so good as to come to our aid, in the name of humanity and brotherly love, and do not ignore this our plea and protest against the Red executioners who at the present time are masters of Ukraine. We have all been robbed of everything and now they force us, to work naked in the sugar beet fields, and those who do not go to harvest the sugar beets, although they are naked and starving, have to pay a fine of from 10 to 100 rubles for each day that they refuse to go. They have taken our clothing and cattle and everything that we had, and we are now left without shelter, and we sleep wherever we can, in the ruins of our houses; and in the morning they drive us like cattle to harvest the sugar beets the whole day long. There are houses filled with people who cannot stand to work hungry and naked, and have been imprisoned in these houses for a long time, and many have died from hunger. In the city of Uman', in Kievshchyna, thousands have died in prison. In Zhashkiv, where there once was a bath house, thousands of people are suffering and dying from hunger. Therefore, we come to you with a plea not to ignore our situation, and to stand up to these executioners, or declare war on them. The mass of the people will not fight, and at that time it will be easy to get rid of these executioners. Farewell. We are waiting for your help. Sh. Khudialyi, Dudnyk, P. Korol(?), Talishonchyk, I. Iakymych, K. Hliiun, P. Drach(?). Written down by Ch. Sh." Enclosure to: Daniel E. Gargas, Secretary, Board of Commissioners, District of Columbia, to Secretary of State, July 13, 1931; 861.4016/345; T1249.

A similar letter, dated July 2 and in semi-literate Russian, was sent to the State Department from the D.C. Commissioners a week later, "Appeal and Plea of the whole people to the President of the U.S.A. and also to the Senate. Mr. President and Senators of the U.S.A.: Show your kindness to us who are surviving the force of terrible destruction in the town of Zhashkiv, Uman' *Okrug*, Kievshchyna. All of us, hungry and almost naked, without distinction, are being forced to cultivate sugar beets. Our wheat was taken from us this Spring and sent abroad; our cattle was also taken. Our people, hungry and unclothed, are being forced to work in timber forests, factories, and sugar beet fields. Those that have no strength to go are taxed, and if the taxes cannot be paid, their houses are torn down and the wood is either taken away or sent to the brick kiln to be used as firewood or thrown into a pile and burned in order to spite the owner who did not pay his taxes. And those found guilty are sent to mines and forced to work and are tortured there, or they are sent to mines that cave in, and they die there. And so we are destroyed by the thousands daily, or at night they come and take us away, mercilessly violating young girls, butchering us. The Communists tell us openly, 'Those who are not for us are against us, and we will destroy from the root up everyone who is against us.' And so it is done. Or we are put in prisons and kept there until we agree to join the collective and to give them what we own, and to work in the said collective voluntarily; mention pay and the one who does is immediately regarded as an enemy and can be eliminated at night without a trial. We, hungry and naked, beg your fraternal help. Do not let our appeal go unanswered. You from America can send a protest, so that the communists would not treat us inhumanely and drive us hungry to forced labor. There is no feed for cattle but if there is some it is taken by the communists. Bread is very expensive because there is none at all. We have no *kasha* and if it does happen to appear they take it for themselves. They sell practically nothing to us and so all of Ukraine and the Kiev region begs you in the name of humanity and brotherly feeling to do something to help us and civilization. Iu. Hliiun, I. Babrii, P. Korol(?), Dudnyk, and written down by Ch. A. Sh." Enclosure to: Daniel E. Gargas to Secretary of State, July 20, 1931; 861.4016/346. The translations in these files are inaccurate and have been corrected by Dr. Olga Samilenko.

<sup>4</sup> Robert F. Kelley, Chief, Division of Eastern European Affairs, to Daniel E. Gargas, Secretary, D.C. Board of Commissioners, July 20, 1931; 861.4016/345.

the second he responded similarly; it also concerned "alleged conditions," but "in the Ukraine."<sup>5</sup>

When the Soviets announced the "May Reforms" of 1932, the Riga post was initially optimistic, but evolved a more reserved attitude over time.

On July 11, the Riga Legation sent its survey of Soviet economic conditions during the second quarter of 1932:

At the beginning of the quarter the agricultural situation was scarcely favorable. There was a general lack of agricultural products, which made itself felt in numerous difficulties with the food supply and with the supply of seed grain to certain districts. There seems to be no doubt that these difficulties in the food supply were of a more serious nature than any that have occurred in several years, particularly in the Ukraine and in those districts which had poor crops last year...

The sowings of the individual peasants fell far below the planned figures. The situation in the Ukraine was particularly unfavorable, and if it had not been for successful sowing operations in some of the newer agricultural regions, the failure of the Ukraine would have presented the country with a very serious situation. As it is, the sowing of cereal crops for the country as a whole appears to have been very unsuccessful... As far as the harvest is concerned, weather conditions are said to have been favorable up to the present time... It has already resulted in a certain increase in the supply of agricultural commodities to the towns, although at prices considerably higher than those prevailing in the state and cooperative distributive systems. Nevertheless ... there seems to have been a certain reluctance among large elements of the peasantry to credit the good faith of the government in making these concessions. Only the progress of the harvest will give an indication as to the real results of the change in policy.<sup>6</sup>

By August, it was clear that the 1932 grain crop would fall short of the state's demands and that the May Reforms were largely illusory:

Taking into account the fact that grain production in Russia is still below pre-war both in respect to total volume and supply per capita, and the fact that the country's population increases at the rate of 2 per cent per annum, the decline of the grain area is a phenomenon the economic significance of which cannot be underrated...

Despite the impression to the contrary created by the wording of the decree of May 6, 1932 ... the grain procurement plan for 1932 embodied in the above-mentioned decree provides no relief to the peasants, since the grain deliveries which they are obliged to make out of the 1932 crop are practically as high as those actually made in 1930 or 1931. In view of this, the right to sell on the free market surplus grain after completing deliveries to the Government and putting aside a stock of seeds for planting the next crop ... may prove illusory, unless the crop is unusually plentiful.<sup>7</sup>

The illusory nature of the May Reforms was confirmed by the Polish journal, *Rosja Sowiecka* (Soviet Russia). As early as March, Kelley showed special interest in the journal, and thereafter virtually complete translations of each issue were made.<sup>8</sup> In late March, it described Stalin's policy as one "of maximum

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<sup>5</sup> Robert F. Kelley to Daniel E. Garga, July 24, 1931; 861.4016/346.

<sup>6</sup> Felix Cole, *Chargé d'Affaires ad interim*, Riga, to Secretary of State, July 11, 1932, pp. 2, 3, 4, 5-6; 861.50/785; T1249.

<sup>7</sup> W. J. Gallman, *Chargé d'Affaires ad interim*, Riga, to Secretary of State, August 12, 1932; pp. 6-7; 861.6131/253.

<sup>8</sup> John N. Willys, Warsaw, to Secretary of State, March 9, 1932, p. 1; 860C.917/19.

centralization in the economic and political fields, with the maintenance of certain pretenses in regard to national policy or matters of (the) Communist Party and disregard of appearances in economic stipulations.”<sup>9</sup> In September, it pointed out that the May Reforms had removed the last traces of collective farm autonomy and that this was far more long lasting than their “liberalizing” aspects. An additional decree of September 3, 1932, which affirmed the integrity of collective farm land, attempted to render withdrawal from the collective farms impossible by making it illegal for the *kolkhoz* to return to a farmer leaving the collective “any land which has ever been used by the *kolkhozes*.”<sup>10</sup> In October, *Rosja Sowiecka* traced the process by which the May promise of free trade in foodstuffs had been abolished *de facto* by prohibiting free market prices and banning any private trade in food within 50 km. of major cities.<sup>11</sup>

*Rosja Sowiecka* also pointed out something that was quite obvious to the peasants but which long escaped many Western observers: The collective farm system was actually a return to feudalism in that it freed the state from direct administrative responsibilities while still controlling the collective farmers. This first became evident in connection with the September 3 ban on any extension of state farms at collective farm expense. While state farms had to be run directly by the state,

It is a much simpler task to supervise the small feudal farms, from which contributions in kind are collected by the Soviet government, which does not care whether enough grain for provisionment and sowings has been left the peasants living on those farms. Therefore the Soviet government does not intend by any means to increase the area of the *Sovkhoz*s...<sup>12</sup>

Reports of conversations between US diplomats and travellers to the USSR also provided information about the rapid impoverishment of the populations of Ukraine and the North Caucasus.<sup>13</sup> On October 27, 1932, Riga sent a

<sup>9</sup> “The Organization Problems of the USSR on the Basis of the Constitution of 1923,” *Rosja Sowiecka*, No. 17, March 30, 1932; 860C.97/21.

<sup>10</sup> “Decrees for the Protection and Control of the *Kolkhozes*,” *Rosja Sowiecka*, No. 28, September 28, 1932; translation; 860C.917/31; continued in No. 29; 860C.917/32.

<sup>11</sup> “The Actual Abolishment of the Decrees of May Concerning Free Trade in Foodstuffs,” *Rosja Sowiecka*, No. 30, October 19, 1932; 860C.917/33.

<sup>12</sup> “Feudalization or Nationalization of USSR Agriculture?” *Rosja Sowiecka*, September 30, 1932; 860C.917.32.

<sup>13</sup> Two such travelers, who had spent six weeks there, were cartoonist Jay Darling and Ivy Culbertson, who was fluent in Russian, “Mr. Culbertson visited old Russian friends in the Kuban. This region, he said, was almost completely collectivized. The Soviets had succeeded in exiling to Siberia the entire male Kuban Cossack population (this is exaggerated: The Kuban Cossacks were still fighting the Soviets in 1933—JM) who were notoriously anti-Soviet. Nevertheless, there were “thousands” of Soviet sentinels and guards everywhere—even the bridges were guarded. It resembled a country under foreign military occupation. The food ration in the Ukraine and Southern Russia, they said, was very small. Even tobacco and tea were no longer included. The black bread was unwholesome and the tiny meat ration was ‘disgustingly bad’.” US Embassy, Berlin, “Memorandum,” August 31, 1931, 1-2; 861.5017-Living Conditions/319.

The impoverishment of the Ukrainian population was also confirmed in late October by Dr. Morris Ingall, who visited his sister in Vinnytsia (Vinnitza), Ukraine, “I saw bread lines and the bread is so

memorandum of a conversation with one of America's leading academic experts on the USSR, Prof. Samuel Harper, who had just spent two months in the Soviet Union and returned with disturbing news, "The food situation has become very serious and may become catastrophic in a year from now if no improvement takes place. Worst of all is the situation in the Ukraine which last year has been milked dry by the excessive government grain procurements."<sup>14</sup>

Information on Soviet nationality policy usually came secondhand. Poland, which fought a war with the Soviets in 1920 and had its own restive Ukrainian minority, always kept an especially close eye on developments to the east.

On November 14 the US Embassy in Warsaw sent Washington a translation of an analysis of Soviet agriculture prepared by the Polish Consul in Kiev. Obtained by the Americans through a "strictly confidential source," it indicated that during July, August, and September, Ukraine had achieved only 28.6% of its annual grain procurements plan; any expectations of sufficient grain to meet Moscow's demands were unrealistic. Local officials and press adopted a "tone of depression" at "the really bad state of affairs" in the Ukrainian countryside.<sup>15</sup>

The next day, Skinner sent State its first report that the Famine had begun:

While the Moscow press is silent on the subject of food shortage in Russia, other sources of information indicate that the new harvest has failed to alleviate to any appreciable extent the acute insufficiency of supply which existed in 1931. The German specialist on Russian agriculture, Otto Auhagen, writing in the generally well-informed Berlin *Osteuropa* for August, 1932, goes as far as to describe the situation in rural districts of the Ukraine ... as "famine in the full sense of the word."<sup>16</sup>

Reports continued to confirm the worsening situation. At the end of November, Kendall Foss of the Hearst Press confirmed to the Berlin consulate that the

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bad that I got sick when I ate it. My sister purchased white bread for me. For one loaf of bread she had to pay 3 rubles and 50 kopeks. In the large centers life is better than in the smaller places. When I came to Vinnitza I at once changed clothes so as to have the same appearance as all the other people... The peasantry is not with the Bolsheviks. I saw a group of 50 peasants who had been arrested and taken out of their village... There will be a lot of suffering this winter." Ernest L. Harris, American Consul General, Vienna, "Stenographic Notes of Statements Made by Dr. Morris Ingall M.D., of Russian Origin, of the Boston City Hospital, October 29, 1931;" 861.5017-Living conditions/363.

There were, of course, occasional exceptions to this kind of report. Some Americans who traveled to the USSR returned singing its praises. See, e.g., "Interview with Spencer Williams, December 17, 1931;" 861.5017-Living Conditions/401.

<sup>14</sup> "Notes on a Conversation with Professor Samuel N. Harper," p. 2; October 27, 1932; 861.5017-Living Conditions/550.

<sup>15</sup> "The above state of affairs is all the more dangerous for Ukraine, as the figures which have been cited are final, which means that no more grain will be reaped or stacked. Facts we have been able to observe, information which reaches us from all parts of the country, and the depressed tone of the press and of the representatives of local authorities, are enough to convince us of the really bad state of agricultural conditions ... the prospects for the execution of this year's plan for grain reserves are very poor for Ukraine." "Grain Crops in the Ukraine and the Prospects for the Grain Reserves," November 14, 1932, p. 7; 861.6131/263.

<sup>16</sup> Robert P. Skinner to Secretary of State, November 15, 1932, pp. 4-5; 861.6131/261. The full citation of the statement to which Skinner referred is Otto Auhagen, "Wirtschaftslage der Sowjetunion im Sommer 1932," *Osteuropa*, VII, 1932, p. 645.



food situation was steadily deteriorating "and in some villages people are actually starving."<sup>17</sup>

The election of Franklin Roosevelt as President made American recognition of the Soviet government a real possibility, and those State Department officials with knowledge of the actual situation in the USSR stepped up their reporting. Robert D. Murphy, an American consul in Paris, on December 16 sent a voluntary report prepared by the former Russian finance minister under Kerensky in 1917. The report was designed to show that "any talk that the U.S.S.R., where agriculture is ruined, where industry is on the verge of anarchy, and where the population is starving, will make enormous purchases in the United States, is nothing else than Soviet propaganda."<sup>18</sup> The report also cited evidence of famine from the émigré press and from private letters. One such letter, received in Paris in August, said, "It is hell now in the Ukraine. The famine has reached large cities. Scores of people die daily in Kiev. The population of Odessa is decimated by famine. Workmen desert the dockyards in Nikolaeff (Mykolaïv). In Poltava there is typhus..."<sup>19</sup>

On January 5, 1933, Skinner reported the decree creating a permanent "State Commission for the Determination of the Yield and Crop of Grain." This decree introduced the so-called biological yield and made it the duty of the Commission's local branches to determine the size of the sown area, yield, and crop, as well as to institute legal action against anyone who "attempts to deceive the Soviet state by furnishing untruthful data concerning yields, sown areas, and gross crop." This decree, Skinner wrote, was indicative of "the political significance which the Soviet Government appears to attach to crop figures, realizing that they represent indicators of the degree of success or failure of its present policy."<sup>20</sup> What he failed to realize was the significance of the biological yield concept, which meant that henceforth grain quotas would be determined not on the basis of the actual harvest in the barns but on inflated estimates of what was supposedly in the field. *Rosja Sowiecka* was more astute:

The official statistics of crops in the U.S.S.R. are so questionable that they cannot be considered. The system for their compilation is the following: The number of hectares sown is multiplied by the amount of an average crop and thus satisfactory results are obtained, regardless of when and how sowings were made and when and how crops were collected.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Raymond Geist, American Consul, Berlin, "Memorandum of Conversation with Kendall Ross, Representative of the Hearst Press in Moscow," November 22, 1932; 861.5017-Living Conditions/569.

<sup>18</sup> Prof. B. M. Bernatzky, "The Economic Situation of the U.S.S.R. and the Development of Soviet Foreign Trade," p. 10, December 16, 1932; 861.50/793.

<sup>19</sup> Bernatzky, "The Economic Situation...," p. 4; 861.50/793.

<sup>20</sup> Robert P. Skinner, US Legation, Riga, to Secretary of State, January 5, 1933; pp. 2-3; 861.6131/266.

<sup>21</sup> "The Only Reliable Source of Agricultural Statistics in the U.S.S.R. Has Ceased to Exist," *Rosja Sowiecka*, No. 38, March 7, 1933; 860C.917/43.

On January 27, 1933, Riga sent its report on Soviet economic conditions during the final quarter of 1932. The report noted that "there is an acute lack of food in many districts, and the demands on agriculture are tremendous."<sup>22</sup>

Riga filed only a brief report on the decree of January 24, 1933. The report noted only that the appointment of Postyshev as Ukraine's new ruler clearly "was not received with too much welcome" and meant that Moscow held the CP(b)U "either incapable or unwilling to carry out the peasant policy with the required energy."<sup>23</sup>

On March 1, Frederic Sackett in Berlin sent a confidential memorandum written by Economics Professor Calvin Hoover of Duke University, who had formerly been highly optimistic about Soviet developments. Now he believed that Russia was "headed for chaos and ruin."<sup>24</sup> Kelley found the memorandum so valuable that a month later he referred it to the Undersecretary, adding, "When the Secretary has a few minutes to spare, I believe that he would be interested in glancing through" it, which the new Secretary, Cordell Hull, evidently did.<sup>25</sup> Hoover cited the large numbers who had perished from starvation in Kazakhstan since 1930 and added that there was "a very bad shortage of food in the North Caucasus and the Ukraine," with guerrilla warfare in the North Caucasus and, some months earlier, numerous village uprisings in Ukraine. Censorship of Western correspondents had become much stricter, and two American correspondents had recently been refused permission to go to Ukraine.<sup>26</sup>

On March 27, Robert Skinner reported from Riga the execution of 35 Soviet agricultural officials and the imprisonment of 40 others. According to the OGPU communiqué, the punishments had been meted out for "the organization of counterrevolutionary sabotage in the machinery and tractor stations and the state farms of a number of regions of Ukraine ... and the disorganization of sowing, harvesting and threshing campaigns with the purpose of undermining the material conditions of the peasantry and of establishing a famine in the country." Noting that his post had reported on the "unsatisfactory state of Soviet agriculture since 1931," Skinner commented with diplomatic restraint:

The study of these developments over a period of several years leaves the indelible impression that the present condition of Russian agriculture is not the result of any criminal acts of a group of persons but are the effects of the reaction of the peasantry as a whole (and in Russia that means the preponderant majority of the country's population) to a Government policy which has deprived it of individual ownership in respect of most of its property and which has robbed it of the incentive to work. Viewed in this light, the severe punishment which has been meted out to the 75 officials appears essentially as an act of terror undertaken with the double

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<sup>22</sup> US Legation, Riga, "Economic Conditions in Russia in the Fourth Quarter of 1932," January 27, 1933, p. 3; 861.50/799.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Clarence B. Hewes, Chargé d'Affaires *ad interim*, US Legation, Riga, Latvia, to Secretary of State, February 17, 1933; 861.6131/270.

<sup>24</sup> Frederic M. Sackett, US Embassy, Berlin, to Secretary of State, March 1, 1933, p. 2; 861.5017-Living Conditions/595.

<sup>25</sup> Robert F. Kelley to Undersecretary of State William Phillips, April 5, 1933; 861.5017-Living Conditions/595. Stamped "Noted by the Secretary of State, April 27, 1933."

<sup>26</sup> Calvin Harper, "Memorandum," March 1, 1933, pp. 1-2, 8-9; 861.5017-Living Conditions/595.

object of crushing criticism of Stalin's policy among Government executives and concealing the true reasons of its failure by shifting the responsibility to quarters where it does not properly belong.<sup>27</sup>

*Rosja Sowiecka* pointed out the unprecedented fact that among the accused were Party members. According to the journal, that the trial should be understood as part of "a systematic persecution of the rural administration and the extermination of employees of the Commissariats of Agriculture, and the Commissariats of State domains." Its goal was to "destroy or to put in second place all of the higher agricultural officers ... and to turn over the rural administration of collectivized agriculture to communist companies in the political sections of the machine-tractor stations."<sup>28</sup>

On April 7, Ernest Harris, Consul General in Vienna, sent translations of letters received by a servant of an Austrian countess from her sister in Ukraine. One dated March 12, begged for a dollar to be sent through *torgsin*:

"How one has to hunger here! Many have already died of starvation. We are not yet dying, however; since Christmas I have baked no bread ... to die of hunger is very difficult. ...We have always had up to now a few potatoes and we will soon be at the end of those. ...If the beloved God does not have mercy, we must die."<sup>29</sup>

A May 5 Helsinki report of a conversation with an American resident of the Soviet Union also confirmed the existence of the Ukrainian Famine, then at its height:

In Ukraine, the formerly flourishing granary of Europe, utter starvation faces the population. ...Conditions are growing worse, especially in the Ukraine. There in the open market one must pay 50 rubles for a loaf of bread. But the loaf is not really a loaf of bread. When one takes a knife and cuts a slice it is impossible to be sure whether it is made of grass, ashes, or other materials. It has no resemblance to bread made of cereal.<sup>30</sup>

On June 8, the Second Secretary of the Latvian Legation in Moscow told the Americans in Riga that in Ukraine, North Caucasus, and the Volga region, "the entire population is undernourished and actual famine is experienced. Conditions are worst in Odessa, Kiev and Kharkov."<sup>31</sup>

On August 29, *Le Matin*, in Paris printed the story of a Ukrainian-American, Martha Stebalo, who had just returned from a month in Ukraine, and Robert Murphy, an American consul in Paris, summarized her statement that in the vicinity of Kiev, the population generally shows outward physical signs of starvation

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<sup>27</sup> Robert P. Skinner to Secretary of State, March 27, 1933; pp. 3-4; 861.61/322.

<sup>28</sup> "The Case of the 75 Employees," *Rosja Sowiecka*, No. 39, April 11, 1933; 860C.917/44.

<sup>29</sup> Enclosure; Ernest L. Harris, American Consul General, Vienna, to Secretary of State, April 7, 1933; 861.5017-Living Conditions/640.

<sup>30</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. (Leon Cackowski) on April 24, 1933, at the American Consulate at Helsinki, Finland," pp. 2, 4; 861.5017-Living Conditions/655.

<sup>31</sup> "Memorandum of a Conversation with a Member of the Staff of a Foreign Legation in Moscow on Russian Conditions," June 8, 1933, pp. 1-2; 861.5017-Living Conditions/671.

(swollen legs, ulcers, boils, apathy, etc.). She claims that in the villages near Kiev, many people are obliged to subsist on trees, wood pulp, and grass. Sentries posted on platforms guard many fields and shoot poachers at sight. In Podolia, Mrs. Stebalo learned that her parents had died of starvation. In Pysarivka, a village of 800 inhabitants, 150 persons had died from that cause since last Spring. The account affirms that in the region of Kiev, as well as that of Odessa, cannibalism is a common practice.<sup>32</sup>

In September Undersecretary William Phillips was given a radiogram from a visitor to the USSR, sent to the latter's son. Calling the situation "one of the world's greatest famines," it read,

The present famine is so directly due to (the communists' policies) that they are trying in every possible way to deny and cover it up. This the people know... Seed grain is state property and any withholding it is stealing from the state and punishable with death. Children are given Soviet honors for revealing any concealment even by their parents.<sup>33</sup>

Further confirmation of the existence of the Famine came on October 4 from a member of the Latvian Legation in Moscow. In reply to a direct question about whether there was a famine, the Latvian said that it was "an actual fact" and

that last winter and spring its existence was frankly admitted on several occasions by officials of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to members of the Moscow diplomatic corps. In the general opinion of the Moscow diplomats the present famine is even more severe than that of 1921-22, and the number of people who have died from starvation is estimated at 7 to 8 millions. While shortage of bread and other food is prevalent throughout Russia, it is most acute in the southern wheat belt, i.e., in the North Caucasian Krai, the Ukraine, and the Lower Volga Krai, where practically all peasants have been assembled into collective farms.<sup>34</sup>

On October 10, the Warsaw embassy dispatched translations from the Polish journal *Soviet Russia and its International Organization*. The July issue reported:

Conditions in the Ukraine, autocratically ruled by Postyshev, Stalin's representative, are not satisfactory... Not long ago the Moscow press did not disguise its indignation against the local authorities of the Soviet Ukraine who showed, it was alleged, great leniency toward anti-state elements.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Robert D. Murphy, Voluntary Report: "Distress Conditions in the Ukraine," September 5, 1933, pp. 1-2; 861.5017-Living Conditions/710. The article referred to is Suzanne Berillon, "L'effroyable détresse des populations de l'Ukraine," *Le Matin*, August 29, 1933.

<sup>33</sup> William Phillips, Undersecretary of State, to Robert F. Kelley, September 25, 1933, with accompanying radiogram; 861.48/2448. The allusion of the penultimate sentence is to the law of August 7, 1932, popularly known as the law of the ear of grain (*zakon kolosky*), authorizing the death penalty or 10 years imprisonment for pilfering state property; that of the last sentence is to the much publicized case of Pavlik Morozov, who turned his parents into the authorities. The parents were arrested, but their fellow villagers killed the little Judas. The state made him something of a martyr, and he is still held up as a role model for Soviet children.

<sup>34</sup> "Memorandum of a Conversation had by Mr. Cole and Mr. Lehrs with a Member of a Legation in Moscow," p. 1; October 4, 1933; 961.48/2450.

<sup>35</sup> "Forecasts on the Autumn Struggle for Grain in the Ukraine," *Soviet Russia and Its International Organization*, No. 11, July 1933; 861.00/11538.

Analyzing and quoting extensively Postyshev's denunciation of Skrypnyk's so-called national deviation at the June plenum of the CC CP(b)U, the journal observed that "the real object of Postyshev's dictatorship" was the "pacification" of Ukrainian nationalism, an allusion to the Polish pacification of Western Ukraine, which had been designed to knock out Ukrainian nationalism there.<sup>36</sup>

The August issue pointed out that even before Postyshev's "mission," the communists in Ukraine had "vigorously enforced the decrees of the central government" and "squeezed out of the peasants the largest possible quantities of grain." It also considered Soviet allegations against the Ukrainization policy, which Skrypnyk had overseen. According to the journal, Ukrainization was merely the continuation of Lenin's policy. Its abandonment had merely led "all of the pro-Russian servile elements ... to raise their heads." Also noted was the fact that the "anti-peasant policy" of excessive grain seizures, which had caused so much suffering before Postyshev's arrival, had been "the policy of the central authorities imposed upon Skrypnyk."<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, *Rosja Sowiecka* indicated that the amount of grain procured from Ukraine in 1932 was over three times the amount seized at the height of War Communism in 1920, which had also contributed to the famine that began in 1921, while the 1932 crop was no more than 40% greater than that of 1920. The portion of the total Ukrainian crop requisitioned had risen from 8.9% in 1929 to an estimated 70%, while in the North Caucasus it was close to 100%. If one adds grain retained by the collective farms for reserves and expenses, "What is then left for the peasants?"<sup>38</sup>

Further confirmation of the Ukrainian Famine came from the US Legation in Athens, Greece, which reported on October 14:

In view of the many published statements denying the seriousness of famine conditions in Russia, I have the honor to report that, in a conversation I had the other day with the Turkish Minister here, the Minister informed me that the Turkish Envoy at Moscow reported that famine conditions ... are at the present time very bad indeed, as bad, he said, as during the worst post-war years.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "We begin to understand not only the problems imposed by the Central Committee for the allegedly faithful Ukraine, but also the real object of the dictatorship of Postyshev. The speech of Postyshev discloses the 'pacification' action which was supposed to have been terminated but there still remains 'the leprosy which must be eradicated,' and the 'remnants of the defeated enemy which must be rooted out'..."

"For the time being Postyshev, the pacificator, feels safe and therefore he does not hesitate to admonish forcefully the Commissar of Education, Skrypnyk... The liquidation of the remnants of the autonomy of the Ukraine, carried out in the present cynical manner, must have its effect on this year's grain delivery campaign." "Forecasts..." Enclosure No. 1, pp. 8, 9; 861.00/11538.

<sup>37</sup> "The Ukrainian Problem," *Soviet Russia and its International Organization*, No. 13, August 1933; 861.00/11538.

<sup>38</sup> "Agriculture in the Ukraine and the Northern Caucasus," *Rosja Sowiecka*, September 30, 1933; 860C.917/52.

<sup>39</sup> Lincoln MacVeagh, American Minister, Athens, to Secretary of State, October 14, 1933, pp. 1-2; 861.48/2451.

Given that recognition of the Soviet government was a lively issue in the Administration in 1933, it is difficult to believe that the President was not briefed on the nature and causes of the Famine. Yet, even if he was not, there was another source of information reaching the White House. Letters about the Famine had been received at the White House since the first days of the Roosevelt Administration. The first was dated March 13:

Dear Master of our Country President Roosevelt

I have a Step Sister in Russia alon with 4 smal Children and Starving if we cannot help her a little have heard that you gave Orders not to send money out of our Country is it Possable that I Could get your Permision to send an Order for her to the Amarican Store out ther not far from her home town to get things to eat its not so Easie to know you have Sisters thats Starving and you Cant Rais a hand to help so Im asking you to help if possible so I Can do what little I Can and God will Reward you for your Kindnes Im Sure I will pray for your Protection of your enemies God alone Can Save you and no man on earth Can Stand Before Him.

Closing with Gods Blessing to you and the Mrs. I thank you

Truely yours

Anna Witkopp

1513 Taylor St.

South Bay City Michigan

Wont you Pleace answer this Im waiting Pastionly though.

This letter was the first of many referred by FDR's secretary to the State Department where it was then sent to Kelley's Division.<sup>40</sup> Kelley politely informed her that she could legally send small sums abroad for specified purposes and enclosed a list of banks prepared to transmit funds to the Soviet Union.<sup>41</sup>

Among the first American groups to raise the issue of the Famine were Germans who had emigrated from the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. German colonists, Mennonites and others, were first brought to the Russian Empire by Catherine the Great and have lived in Ukraine and the Volga Basin since the late 18th century. Many fled during the revolution, and the Germans quickly responded to pleas from those they had left behind. The chairman of a privately organized relief committee, the Mennonite Central Committee, P. C. Hiebert, wrote to Secretary of State Cordell Hull on March 27, making clear the urgency of the situation and announcing his intention to send a Mennonite delegation to Washington.<sup>42</sup> The letter was also referred to Kelley, who replied that

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<sup>40</sup> Anna Witkopp to President Roosevelt, March 13, 1933; 861.48/2432.

<sup>41</sup> Robert F. Kelley to Anna Witkopp, April 3, 1933; 861.48/2432.

<sup>42</sup> "Permit us as Mennonites of the U.S.A. to bring a plea before you in behalf of our co-religionists in Russia, who are now dying in large numbers from actual starvation. We receive thousands of letters pleading in the most pitiable manner for bread. According to testimonies verified by thousands of letters, the people are dying in large numbers for want of food. The conditions must be decidedly worse than in 1921-1922, when America carried on very extensive relief operations in that country.

"In spite of the hard times our people are willing to sacrifice and send food to their brethren over the seas, but political situations in Russia make an effective relief-work impossible under present conditions.

"If you think it advisable we shall be glad to have a delegation call on you and explain conditions and situations sufficiently so as to give a fair insight into the situation. I have myself been in Russia and

you are informed that although the Department appreciates the anxiety of American citizens whose relatives in Russia are suffering from lack of food, it is of the opinion that there are no measures which the Government may appropriately take at the present time in order to facilitate relief work being carried on in Russia. In view of this circumstance, it is believed that the sending of a delegation to Washington to discuss this matter, as suggested by you, would serve no useful purpose.<sup>43</sup>

Dr. Hiebert, understandably, was not satisfied. On April 7, he wrote a similar letter directly to the President, hoping that the energy Roosevelt had shown in domestic affairs might be channeled to help Famine victims abroad. One passage was particularly urgent, "Even though America has not officially recognized the Soviet government, IS THERE NOT SOME WAY BY WHICH IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO SEND FOOD TO THOUSANDS OF STARVING INNOCENT CHILDREN?"<sup>44</sup>

Hiebert also prevailed upon his Senator, Arthur Capper, to write FDR on his behalf.<sup>45</sup> Roosevelt promised to take the matter up with the Secretary of State.<sup>46</sup> Secretary of State Cordell Hull answered Senator Capper:

I can well understand the concern of the Mennonites in this country, for their relatives and friends in Russia who are suffering from lack of food. Unfortunately, there do not appear to be any measures which this Government may appropriately take at this time in order to alleviate the sufferings of these unhappy people.<sup>47</sup>

The response to Hiebert, again from Kelley, stated that "there is unfortunately little to be added" to the letter of April 5:

Although sympathy is felt for those American citizens who are so deeply concerned for their relatives and friends in Russia, there appears to be no effective measure which this Government can appropriately take at the present time for the purpose of alleviating the sufferings of persons in Russia who are in lack of food.

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understand conditions, therefore I am convinced that if the atrocities committed in Russia were featured by the American press as they did the treatment of the Jews in Germany, the American people would be horrified.

"Prompt action will be most highly appreciated because thousands of our citizens in this country have bloodrelations among the starving in Russia, and therefore very anxious to have the way cleared for effective relief work.

"Trusting that I may soon hear from you that the matter is taken up in the effective Rooseveltian way which the whole nation has learned to appreciate in the last few weeks, I am,

In the Name of the American Mennonites,

Very respectfully yours, (signed)."

P. C. Hiebert, Chairman, Mennonite Central Committee, Hillsboro, Kansas, to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, March 27, 1933; 861.48/2433.

<sup>43</sup> Robert F. Kelley to P. C. Hiebert, April 5, 1933; 861.48/2433.

<sup>44</sup> P. C. Hiebert to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, April 7, 1933; 861.48/2433. Original emphasis.

<sup>45</sup> Senator Arthur Capper to President Roosevelt, April 10, 1933; 861.48/2433.

<sup>46</sup> President Roosevelt to Senator Arthur Capper, April 14, 1933; 861.48/2433.

<sup>47</sup> Secretary of State Hull to Senator Capper, April 26, 1933; 861.48/2433.

Kelley included the name and address of Am-Deruta Transport Corporation which purchased foodstuffs for Soviet citizens through *torgsin* stores. He added:

Although the Department cannot assume any responsibility for the integrity of the organizations mentioned, it is suggested that you may desire to communicate with the Am-Deruta Corporation with a view to ascertaining whether it is possible for your co-religionists to enter into satisfactory arrangements with that corporation whereby foodstuffs and other necessities may be furnished to their friends and relatives in Russia.<sup>48</sup>

Hiebert's group continued to lobby on behalf of the starving. On May 20, he wrote his freshman Congressman, Randolph Carpenter, asking that he assist a Mennonite delegation coming to Washington in June.<sup>49</sup> Carpenter approached the White House and was referred to the Department of State.<sup>50</sup> Kelley answered that while the delegation could "serve no useful purpose if the object of its journey is to endeavor to influence this Government to intervene or to take other steps on behalf of Mennonites residing in Russia," it would be received at the State Department "with every courtesy and will be given a full opportunity to discuss with appropriate officials of the Department" any matters within the department's jurisdiction. Meeting the President, however, would be "difficult, if not impossible."<sup>51</sup>

Rev. Charles H. Hagus, a German Evangelical, wrote to Cordell Hull in June, expressing the anxiety felt by Colorado's community of "Russian" Germans for the "untold sufferings" endured by their friends and relatives left behind.<sup>52</sup> Again Kelley replied:

While sympathy is felt for the sufferings of the persons referred to, and for the anxiety of their American relatives and friends, there appear to be no effective measures which this Government can appropriately take at the present time for alleviating the conditions alluded to in your letter.<sup>53</sup>

On September 7, President Roosevelt received a letter from the United Russian National Organizations in America, which proposed offering aid through the Red Cross or another charitable institution. But, the letter pointed out, "It seems evident that a matter of so delicate a nature cannot and will not be acted upon by either the American Red Cross or by any other body without the approval of the President of the United States and his Administration."<sup>54</sup> At the same time, the

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<sup>48</sup> Robert F. Kelley to P. C. Hiebert, April 26, 1933; 861.48/2433.

<sup>49</sup> P. C. Hiebert to Rep. Randolph Carpenter, May 20, 1933; 861.404/358.

<sup>50</sup> Hon. Randolph Carter, M.C., to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, May 31, 1933; 861.404/358. Hon. Randolph Carter to State Department, June 1, 1933; 861.404/359.

<sup>51</sup> Robert F. Kelley to Hon. Randolph Carpenter, M. C., June 1, 1933; 861.404/359.

<sup>52</sup> Charles H. Hagus, Sterling, Colorado, to Secretary of State, June 17, 1933; 861.4016/358.

<sup>53</sup> Robert F. Kelley to Reverend Charles H. Hagus, Sterling, Colorado, June 26, 1933; 861.4016/358.

<sup>54</sup> Executive Board of the United Russian National Organizations in America to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, September 7, 1933; 861.48/2446.



group wrote similar letters to Cordell Hull and the American Red Cross.<sup>55</sup> Not even a *pro forma* response was sent.

The first Ukrainian group to send an appeal to a member of the Administration was the US World War Veterans of Ukrainian Descent of New York. On September 18 the organization wrote and sent a number of photographs and press accounts to Postmaster General James J. Farley, who was also chairman of the Democratic Committee in Roosevelt's home state.<sup>56</sup> The letter went through various hands in the New York Democratic Committee, who noted that it contained possible "political dynamite." It was then sent to the State Department, where it too went to Kelley, who wrote:

There has been referred to this Department for attention your letter of September 18, 1933, addressed to the Postmaster General, and its enclosures, certain photographs and newspaper clippings relating to the sufferings of persons living in the Ukraine and to the communist movement in the United States. Your letter and its enclosures have been read with interest.<sup>57</sup>

Many letters came from the large and active Ukrainian community in Canada. On October 2, representatives of the Ukrainian community in Ward, Manitoba, write the President, asking that he "give a helping hand" and support the starving millions of Ukraine and the North Caucasus.<sup>58</sup> On the same day, the Ukrainian National Council in Canada also appealed to him.<sup>59</sup> Attached to the latter appeal was a detailed statement by Mrs. Marie Zuk of Kalmazivka in Odessa Oblast',

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<sup>55</sup> Executive Board of the United Russian National Organizations in America to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, September 7, 1933, 861.48/2446.

<sup>56</sup> Volodimir Jurkowsky, Secretary, US World War Veterans of Ukrainian Descent, New York, New York, to Postmaster General James J. Farley, September 18, 1933; 861.48/2449.

<sup>57</sup> Robert F. Kelley to Volodimir Jurkowsky, October 11, 1933; 861.48/2449.

<sup>58</sup> N. Yaroway and N. Bilash, Ward, Manitoba, Canada, to President F. Roosevelt, October 2, 1933; 861.4016/362.

<sup>59</sup> "We are taking the liberty of directing your attention to the deplorable fact that for a considerable time the population of Eastern Ukraine ... are being systematically starved by the Moscow authorities... Thousands of letters are being received in Canada continuously, containing gruesome details of the vast number dying; there are settlements in Ukraine where only one-third - sometimes one-fourth - of the original population are still alive.

"Crop failure is not the reason for this famine, but the brutal policy of the Moscow rulers who ... pitilessly take everything from the farmers, already proletarianized. Especially in Ukraine, where the peasants are opposed to the foreign Russian rule, are they being deprived of literally everything, being left without even the smallest ration for daily meals, under the excuse that they are hiding food. With such tactics, even a bumper crop, of huge yield, could not save these people from starvation.

"Having in mind the tragic plight of their compatriots, and realizing their moral duty in the matter, the Ukrainian National Council in Canada turns to you, as to a leader of a great civilized nation, with an urgent request to take the necessary steps to arrange for an immediate neutral investigation of the famine situation in Ukraine, with a view to organizing international relief action for the stricken population. Any private action even on the largest scale, would prove inadequate owing to the magnitude of the calamity. We are prepared to supply you, if necessary, with original documents and information giving details of the famine conditions." Ukrainian National Council in Canada, Winnipeg, to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, October 2, 1933; 861.48/2452.

who had been permitted to leave Ukraine on August 7 to join her husband, a farmer in Alberta.<sup>60</sup> The Consul General in Winnipeg was directed to inform the organization's leaders that, since these conditions "do not appear to directly affect

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<sup>60</sup> "There were several cases in our district where parents have eaten their own children in a state of insanity caused by extended starvation. ...The most remarkable case of this kind happened this spring in the village of Oleahky, where a young married couple, Ivan Chuhan and his wife, killed and consumed their two small children. The gruesome crime was discovered when a pig was stolen from the *kolhosp* (collective farm) and the members of the militia organized a search of all the houses in the vicinity in an endeavor to locate the stolen 'treasure'. Finally they found some meat of a particular appearance at Chuhan's home and, pressed to the wall, the man admitted having murdered both his children in order to still the unbearable hunger. The head of the second child was found in the oven, where it was being prepared for consumption. The couple were arrested.

"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 bazaar (markets) are closed and empty. All cats and dogs have disappeared, having perished or been eaten by the hungry farmers. The same is the case with 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 teaspoon 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 the 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 make 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 fifty 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 the 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 Kalmazivka was one of the more fortunate ones, but in the adjoining villages of Olshanka 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 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 the 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.

"In crass contrast to this terrible condition of mass death from starvation is the real condition of the crops. Last year the wheat crop in our district was good, and this year it is even better still. Unfortunately the peasants derive no benefit from it, as the grain fields are watched day and night by armed guards, to prevent theft of grain ears, and after threshing the grain is immediately removed to the government storehouses, or to the nearest port.

"There are two classes of farmers in Ukraine. Most of them are already 'collectivized' and are working on the state or collective farms. A limited number still work on individual farms, but the taxes in kind, imposed on them by the authorities, render their existence a permanent privation. Cow milk—and there are only very few fortunate enough to possess a cow—must also be delivered to the government creameries at a nominal price. The only exception in this general suffering are the members of the Communist Party, and the various officials, mostly non-Ukrainians, as they receive their 'paioks' or rations of food from the government depots...

American citizens or interests, the Department is not in a position to take any action."<sup>61</sup>

On October 13, the Ukrainian Community in Oshawa, Ontario, held a mass meeting to protest the Famine and Soviet policies responsible for it. Its resolutions were also sent to the US State Department.<sup>62</sup> The Consulate in Hamilton was directed merely to acknowledge receipt of the communication and nothing further.<sup>63</sup>

On October 20, a White House press release announced an exchange of letters between FDR and USSR President Mikhail Kalinin regarding normalization of relations. Formal recognition of the Soviet government was extended on November 16.

The letters from those who wrote about the Famine out of humanitarian concerns continued to arrive. Ukrainians throughout the world wrote to President Roosevelt and the State Department. On October 28, Paul Skoropadsky, who had been Ukrainian Hetman (monarch) in 1918, appealed to FDR not to recognize the Soviets and, failing that, to insist that the Soviets acknowledge "the right of the U.S. to organize a relief committee for the starving on Ukrainian territory."<sup>64</sup> No response was sent. On October 29, Henry Bayne of Edmonton, Alberta, sent a handwritten letter to the President asking his help.<sup>65</sup> On November 3, the Ukrainian Deputies and Senators in Poland sent a telegram which begged him to "consider the tragic situation in Ukraine where (the) population starves" in his negotiations with the Soviets.<sup>66</sup> Only after recognition was extended did the Warsaw Embassy receive orders to even acknowledge receipt of the communication.<sup>67</sup>

On November 6, the Czechoslovakian Committee for the Salvation of the Ukrainians wrote to President Roosevelt, describing the situation in Ukraine and the North Caucasus and asking that a special American mission be sent to Ukraine in order to study Soviet policy toward non-Russians in the Soviet Union. No response is recorded.<sup>68</sup> On November 11, the Committee for Aid to the Starving

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"What a different picture did I find in Moscow on my way to Canada! The markets there were flooded with the most delicious foodstuffs! Only Ukraine seems to have been sentenced to death by starvation by the central government in Moscow..." Ukrainian National Council in Canada, Bulletin No. 1, Winnipeg, September 15, 1933; 861.48/2452.

<sup>61</sup> Robert F. Kelley to US Consul General, Winnipeg, November 20, 1933; 861.48/2452.

<sup>62</sup> Michael Petrowsky, Oshawa, Ontario, to Department of State, October 13, 1933; 861.4016/361.

<sup>63</sup> Robert F. Kelley to US Consul, Hamilton, Ontario, November 22, 1933; 861.4016/361.

<sup>64</sup> Paul Skoropadsky, former Hetman of Ukraine, Berlin, to President Roosevelt, October 28, 1933; 861.48/364.

<sup>65</sup> Henry M. Bayne, Edmonton, Alberta, to President Roosevelt, October 29, 1933; 861.4016/366.

<sup>66</sup> Dmytro Lewitsky, Chairman, Ukrainian Deputies and Senators in Poland, to President Roosevelt, November 3, 1933; 861.4016/363.

<sup>67</sup> Robert F. Kelley to US Chargé d'Affaires *a.l.*, Warsaw, November 24, 1933; 861.4016/363.

<sup>68</sup> G. H. Bobishkovsky, Chairman, and J. Palyvoda, General Secretary, Committee of Salvation for Ukraine, Prague, to President, November 6, 1933; 861.48/2458.

Ukrainians sent a telegram from Brussels, asking that an American Committee of Inquiry be sent to Ukraine.<sup>69</sup> The US consul in Brussels was instructed to give the now standard response that “although sympathy is felt for the sufferings of the persons referred to, there does not appear to be any measure which this Government can appropriately take at the present time to alleviate their sufferings.”<sup>70</sup>

Even Eleanor Roosevelt was approached in November with a request to exert some influence to pressure the Soviet government to allow duty-free admission of relief packages through *torgsin*. Mrs. Roosevelt replied that although she realized “that the need was very great, she deeply regretted” that she could do nothing to help.<sup>71</sup>

The Soviets did everything in their power to deny the existence of the Famine. When the London *Daily Express* reported a Soviet purchase of a modest 15,000 tons of wheat from abroad to alleviate the shortage of bread at home, *Pravda* on May 27, 1933, published an indignant denial.<sup>72</sup> Stalin denied the existence of the Famine and continued to export grain, albeit at a lower rate. In 1931, the USSR exported 5.06 million metric tons of grain. In 1932 this fell to 1.73 million and in 1933 to 1.68 million.<sup>73</sup>

Yet, complete concealment of the Famine was impossible. Early in 1933, Gareth Jones, a reporter and former aide to Lloyd George, traveled to Ukraine. In March he reported what he had seen there, “I walked alone through villages and twelve collective farms. Everywhere was the cry, ‘There is no bread; we are dying.’” Jones estimated that a million people had perished in Kazakhstan since 1930, and now in Ukraine millions more were threatened.<sup>74</sup> The United Press Moscow correspondent, Eugene Lyons, later called this the first reliable press report in the English-speaking world.<sup>75</sup> Moscow responded by forbidding journalists to travel there.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Yakovliv, President, Comité Belgique de Secours aux Affamés en Ukraine, Brussels, to President Roosevelt, November 11, 1933; 861.48/2455.

<sup>70</sup> Robert F. Kelley to US Consul, Brussels, November 23, 1933; 861.48/2455.

<sup>71</sup> The writer of this letter summarized it and Mrs. Roosevelt’s response. Dr. Lubow Margolena Hansen to Dr. Nellie Pelecovich, January 30, 1934, pp. 2-3; Archives of the Ukrainian National Women’s League of America, New York, New York. The archives are uncataloged, and the Commission is indebted to the organization’s president, Mrs. Iwanna Rozankowsky, for making available this and other documents available to the Commission.

<sup>72</sup> Felix Cole, Chargé d’Affaires *ad interim*, Riga, Latvia, to Secretary of State, June 2, 1933; 861.6131/275; T1249; Records of the Department of State; NA.

<sup>73</sup> *Vneshniaia torgovlia SSSR za 1918-1940 gg.* (The Foreign Trade of the USSR in 1918-1940) (Moscow, Vneshtorgizdat, 1960), p. 144.

<sup>74</sup> “Famine in Russia, an Englishman’s Story: What He Saw on a Walking Tour,” *Manchester Guardian*, March 30, 1933, p. 12.

<sup>75</sup> Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia* (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1937), p. 572.

<sup>76</sup> Lyons recalled, “We were summoned to the Press Department one by one and instructed not to venture out of Moscow without submitting a detailed itinerary and having it officially sanctioned. In

Jones had actually based his account largely on information gleaned from other Western correspondents and diplomats in Moscow.<sup>77</sup> Diplomats were forbidden to publish their observations in the press, and censorship made many journalists far more circumspect than Jones. For example, in January 1933, Ralph Barnes reported to the old *New York Herald Tribune* from Kharkiv, mentioning only the officially acknowledged "abuses" of the previous year:

Grain needed by the Ukrainian peasants as provisions was stripped from the land a year ago by grain collectors desirous of making a good showing. The temporary or permanent migration of great masses which followed, alone prevented real famine conditions. All those persons with whom I have talked, in both town and village, agree that the food situation in this vast area is worse than it was last year. It is inconceivable, though, that the authorities will let the bread shortage on the collective farms reach a stage comparable to that of the late winter and spring of last year.<sup>78</sup>

Malcolm Muggeridge, Moscow correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*, also went to Ukraine during the Famine and wrote about it. He later recalled:

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 people were eating the seed grain and cattle... I realized that that was the big story. I could 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... Ukraine was starving, and you only had to venture out to smaller places to see derelict fields and abandoned villages.<sup>79</sup>

Muggeridge's account appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* at the end of March. He reported on the Famine in both Ukraine and the North Caucasus. In both:

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effect, therefore, we were summarily deprived of the right of unhampered travel in the country to which we were accredited.

"This is nothing new,' (press censor Konstantin) Umansky grimaced uncomfortably. 'Such a rule has been in existence since the beginning of the revolution. Now we have decided to enforce it.'

"New or old, such a rule had not been invoked since the civil war days. It was forgotten again when the famine was ended. Its undisguised purpose was to keep us out of the stricken regions. The same department which daily issued denials of the famine now acted to prevent us from seeing it with our own eyes. Our brief cables about this desperate measure of concealment were published, if at all, in some obscure corner of the paper. The world press accepted with complete equanimity the virtual expulsion of all its representatives from all of Russia except Moscow. It agreed without protest to a partnership in the macabre hoax." *Ibid.*, p. 576.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 574.

<sup>78</sup> Ralph W. Barnes, "Grain Shortage in the Ukraine Results in Admitted Failure of the Soviet Agricultural Plan," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 15, 1933, sec. II, p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> Marco Carynyk, "Malcolm Muggeridge on Stalin's Famine: 'Deliberate' and 'Diabolical' Starvation," *The Great Famine in Ukraine: the Unknown Holocaust* (Jersey City, The Ukrainian National Association, 1983), p. 47. Originally published in *New Perspectives* (Toronto), February 19, 1983, pp. 4-5.

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it was the same story—cattle and horses dead; fields neglected; meagre harvest despite moderately good climatic conditions; all the grain that was produced taken by the Government; now no bread at all, no bread anywhere, nothing much else either: despair and bewilderment.<sup>80</sup>

In May 1933, Muggerridge gave the following description of what he saw:

On a recent visit to the North Caucasus and Ukraine, I saw something of the battle that is going on between the Government and their peasants. The battlefield was as desolate as in any war, and stretches wider... On one side, millions of peasants, starving, often their bodies swollen with lack of food; on the other, soldiers, members of the GPU, carrying out the instruction 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 and exiled thousands of peasants sometimes whole villages; they had reduced some of the most fertile land in the world to a melancholy desert.<sup>81</sup>

Despite mounting and increasingly irrefutable evidence of raging famine in Ukraine, two American correspondents in Moscow, Walter Duranty of the *New York Times* and Louis Fischer of *The Nation* took the lead in denying its existence.

Duranty's attitude vacillated during the Famine. He initially viewed the developing crisis in foodstuffs with considerable alarm. By the end of the Summer of 1932 he seemed to have hoped that Stalin would offer further concessions, perhaps even a return to something like the New Economic Policy of the preceding decade. In late Fall, however, it became apparent that there would be no new concessions. Duranty began to rationalize difficulties as "growing pains," the results of peasant lethargy in some districts and the "marked fall in the living standards of a large number of peasants." By mid-November he stressed that there was "neither famine nor hunger." While there were "embarrassing" problems, they were not "disastrous." Two days later he conceded "an element of truth" to reports of a food shortage, but the problem was "not alarming much less desperate." He suggested that Soviets might not eat as well as in the past, but "there is no famine or actual starvation, nor is there likely to be." "The food shortage," Duranty explained on November 26, "must be regarded as a result of peasant resistance to rural socialization." The situation would not have been serious if world food prices had not fallen "which forced the Soviet Union to increase the expropriation of foodstuffs at a time when the shoe was beginning to pinch and the distribution of the food at home would have corrected many difficulties." Still, Duranty concluded, "It is a mistake to exaggerate the gravity of the situation. The Russians have tightened their belts before to a far greater extent than it is likely to be needed this winter." Even the *New York Times* editorialized on November 30 that collectivization was nothing but "a ghastly failure." As if in reply, Duranty reported that the Soviets could always release stockpiled grain if the problem became more acute.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> (Malcolm Muggerridge), "The Soviet and the Peasantry: an Observer's Notes. II. Hunger in the Ukraine," *Manchester Guardian*, March 27, 1933, p. 10.

<sup>81</sup> *Idem.*, "The Soviet's War on the Peasants," *Fortnightly Review*, XXXIX, May 1933, p. 564.

<sup>82</sup> James William Crowl, *Angels in Stalin's Paradise: Western Reporters in Soviet Russia, 1917 to 1937, a Case Study of Louis Fischer and Walter Duranty* (Washington, University Press of America, 1982), pp. 150-152, 159.

## Chapter 6

Next to Duranty, the American reporter most consistently willing to gloss Soviet reality was Louis Fischer, who had a deep ideological commitment to Soviet communism dating back to 1920.<sup>83</sup> But when he traveled to Ukraine in October and November of 1932, he was alarmed at what he saw. "In the Poltava, Vinnitsa, Podolsk, and Kiev regions, conditions will be hard," he wrote, "I think there is no starvation anywhere in Ukraine now—after all, they have just gathered in the harvest—but it was a bad harvest."<sup>84</sup> Fischer was initially critical of the Soviet grain procurements program because it created the food problem, but by February he had adopted the official Stalinist view, blaming the problem on Ukrainian counterrevolutionary nationalist "wreckers." It seemed "whole villages" had been contaminated by such men, who had to be deported to "lumbering camps and mining areas in distant agricultural areas which are now just entering upon their pioneering stage." These steps were forced upon the Kremlin, Fischer wrote, but the Soviets were, nevertheless, learning how to rule wisely.<sup>85</sup>

Fischer was on a lecture tour in the United States when Gareth Jones's Famine story broke. Asked about the million who had died since 1930 in Kazakhstan, he scoffed:

Who counted them? How could anyone march through a country and count a million people? Of course people are hungry there—desperately hungry. Russia is turning over from agriculture to industrialism. It's like a man going into business on small capital.<sup>86</sup>

Speaking to a college audience in Oakland, California, a week later, Fischer stated emphatically, "There is no starvation in Russia."<sup>87</sup>

The Jones story also caught Duranty by surprise. Duranty claimed that Jones had concocted a "big scare story" based on the "hasty" and "inadequate" glimpse of the countryside consisting of a forty mile walk through villages around Kharkiv. Duranty claimed to have made a thorough investigation and discovered no famine. Although he admitted that the food shortage had become acute in Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and the Lower Volga Basin, he attributed it to mismanagement and the recently executed "conspirators" in the Commissariat of Agriculture. Still, he wrote, "There is no actual starvation, but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition." And it was worth it, "To put it brutally, you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs."<sup>88</sup> Jones replied that he stood by his story, and took to task the journalists whom "the censorship has turned ... into

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<sup>83</sup> Crowl, *Angels in Stalin's Paradise*, pp. 22-25 *et passim*.

<sup>84</sup> Louis Fischer, "Soviet Progress and Poverty," *The Nation*, CXXXV:3516, December 7, 1932, p. 553. Cited in Crowl, *Angels in Stalin's Paradise*, p. 153.

<sup>85</sup> *Idem.*, "Soviet Deportations," *The Nation*, CXXXVI:3529, February 22, 1933, p. 39.

<sup>86</sup> "New Deal Needed for Entire World, Says Visiting Author," *Denver Post*, April 1, 1933, p. 3. Cited in Crowl, p. 157.

<sup>87</sup> "Too Much Freedom Given to Russia's Women Says Writer," *San Francisco News*, April 11, 1933, p. 2. Cited Crowl, p. 157.

<sup>88</sup> Walter Duranty, "Russians Hungry but not Starving," *New York Times*, March 31, 1933, p. 13.

masters of euphemism and understatement,” giving “famine the polite name of ‘food shortage’ and ‘starving to death’ is softened down to read as ‘widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition.’”<sup>89</sup>

The “containment” of the Jones story is perhaps the most telling event in what Eugene Lyons called “the whole shabby episode of our failure to report honestly the gruesome Russian famine of 1932-33.”<sup>90</sup> The Soviets were able to elicit tacit collaboration from the American press because of an upcoming show trial of British engineers employed by the Metropolitan Vickers corporation. Following the publication of the Jones story, Lyons recalled how the matter was settled in cooperation with Konstantin Umansky, the Soviet censor:

We all received urgent queries from our home offices on the subject. But the inquiries coincided with preparations under way for the trial of the British engineers. The need to remain on friendly terms with the censors at least for the duration of the trial was for all of us a compelling professional necessity.

Throwing down Jones was as unpleasant a chore as fell to any of us in years of juggling the facts to please dictatorial regimes—but throw him down we did, unanimously and in almost identical formulas of equivocation...

The scene in which the American press corps combined to repudiate Jones is fresh in my mind. It was in the evening and Comrade (Soviet censor Konstantin—JM) Umansky, the soul of graciousness, consented to meet us in the hotel room of a correspondent. He knew he had a strategic advantage over us because of the Metro-Vickers story. He could afford to be gracious. Forced by competitive journalism to jockey for the inside track with officials, it would have been professional suicide to make an issue of the famine at this particular time. There was much bargaining in a spirit of gentlemanly give-and-take, under the effulgence of Umansky's gilded smile, before a formula of denial was worked out.

We admitted enough to soothe our consciences, but in round-about phrases that damned Jones as a liar. The filthy business having been disposed of, someone ordered vodka and *zakuski*, Umansky joined in the celebration, and the party did not break up until the early morning hours.<sup>91</sup>

Only in August 1933, in a story denouncing “exaggerated” émigré claims, did Duranty admit, “In some districts and among the large floating population of unskilled labor” were there “deaths and actual starvation.”<sup>92</sup> Later that month, he reported that while the “excellent harvest” of 1933 had made any report of famine “an exaggeration or malignant propaganda,” there had been a “food shortage,” causing “heavy loss of life” in Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and Lower Volga Basin.<sup>93</sup> In September, Duranty was the first Western reporter allowed to go to Ukraine and the North Caucasus after the imposition of the ban on travel there by journalists. William Stoneman of the *Chicago Daily News* had managed to enter Ukraine without permission and had sent out an accurate account, leading the Soviets to send their most favored journalist to sweeten the pill.<sup>94</sup> Now able to

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<sup>89</sup> Gareth Jones, “Mr. Jones Replies,” *New York Times*, May 13, 1933, p. 12.

<sup>90</sup> Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia*, p. 572.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 575-576.

<sup>92</sup> Walter Duranty, “Russian Émigrés Push Fight on Reds,” *New York Times*, August 13, 1933, p. 2.

<sup>93</sup> *Idem.*, “Famine Toll Heavy in Southern Russia,” *New York Times*, August 24, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> Joseph Alsop, *FDR, 1882-1945: a Centenary Remembrance* (New York, Viking, 1982), p. 249.



report truthfully a good harvest, he also belatedly reported what he had known all along:

hard conditions had decimated the peasantry. Some had fled. There were Ukrainian peasants begging in the streets of Moscow last winter, and other Ukrainians were seeking work or food, but principally food, from Rostov on Don to White Russia and from the Lower Volga to Samara.<sup>95</sup>

Duranty, in short, admitted the truth only after others had done so more explicitly and always in a context designed to show his readers that things were not as bad as others might indicate.

He was more explicit in private—as early as December 1932, he told an American diplomat in Paris he was deeply pessimistic because of “the growing seriousness of the food shortage.”<sup>96</sup> In September 1933, after returning from Ukraine and the North Caucasus, he shared his impressions with a British diplomat who reported to London, “Mr. Duranty thinks it quite possible that as many as 10 million people may have died directly or indirectly from lack of food in the Soviet Union during the past year.”<sup>97</sup>

Eugene Lyons, recalled that at dinner with Duranty,

He gave us his fresh impressions in brutally frank terms and they added up to a picture of ghastly horror. His estimate of the dead from famine was the most startling I had as yet heard from anyone.

“But, Walter, you don’t mean that literally?” Mrs. McCormick exclaimed.

“Hell I don’t ... I’m being conservative,” he replied, and as if by way of consolation he added his famous truism, “But they’re only Russians...”

Once more that same evening we heard Duranty make the same estimate, in answer to a question by Laurence Stallings... When the issues of the *Times* carrying Duranty’s own articles reached me I found that they failed to mention the large figures he had given freely and repeatedly to all of us.<sup>98</sup>

Duranty also admitted, then denied the Famine to John Chamberlain, book critic for the *New York Times*. Chamberlain wrote in his autobiography:

To a group in the *Times* elevator Duranty had almost casually mentioned that three million people had died in Russia in what amounted to a man-made famine. Duranty, who had floated the theory that revolutions were beyond moral judgement (“You can’t make an omelet without breaking eggs”), did not condemn Stalin for the bloody elimination of the *kulaks* that had deprived the Russian countryside of necessary sustaining expertise. He just simply let the three-million figure go at that.

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<sup>95</sup> Walter Duranty, “Big Soviet Crop Follows Famine,” *New York Times*, September 16, 1933.

<sup>96</sup> US Embassy, Paris, “Memorandum of Remark Made by Mr. Walter Duranty,” December 8, 1932, p. 2; 861.5017-Living Conditions/752; T1249; Records of the Department of State; NA.

<sup>97</sup> William Strang, British Embassy, Moscow, to Sir John Simon, September 30, 1933, p. 2; Archive No. 8; FO7182/14/38; Public Records Office; London. I am indebted to the Ukrainian Famine Research Committee of Toronto for their sharing the fruits of their research in the British Public Record Office.

<sup>98</sup> Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia*, p. 580.

### *The American Response to the Famine*

What struck me at the time was the double iniquity of Duranty's performance. He was not only heartless about the famine, he had betrayed his calling as a journalist by failing to report it.<sup>99</sup>

On the basis of Duranty's remark, Chamberlain, then a Communist fellow traveler, decided to review a book entitled *Escape from the Soviets*. Written by Tatiana Tchernavina, who had escaped via Finland, the book had earlier been rejected because it presented the Soviet Union in too negative a light. Chamberlain's mention of peasants starving immediately won him the censure of American Communists and their sympathizers. "Duranty, with his visa hanging fire, denied ever having said anything." Chamberlain's job was saved only by the fact that Simeon Strunsky, a fellow book reviewer and former socialist, confirmed that he had heard Duranty make the same statement.<sup>100</sup>

The issue of Duranty's career raises extremely important issues of journalistic ethics. In 1932, when Duranty was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, the Committee said that "Mr. Duranty's dispatches ... are marked by scholarship, profundity, impartiality, sound judgment and exceptional clarity and are excellent examples of the best type of foreign correspondence."<sup>101</sup> In the words of James Crowl, who wrote the standard work on Duranty,

What is so remarkable about Duranty's selection for the Pulitzer is that, for a decade, his reports had been slanted and distorted in a way that made a mockery of the award citation. Probably without parallel in the history of these prestigious prizes, the 1932 award went to a man whose reports concealed or disguised the conditions they claimed to reveal, and who may even have been paid by the Soviets for his deceptions.<sup>102</sup>

Careful reading of Duranty's dispatches from Moscow shows that he attempted to represent the official point of view as he understood it, simultaneously trying to write so as to protect himself. Muggeridge provided a telling vignette of Duranty during this period:

He'd been asked to write something about the food shortage, and was trying to put together a thousand words which, if the famine got worse and known outside Russia, would suggest that he'd foreseen and foretold it, but which, if it got better and wasn't known outside Russia, would suggest that he'd pooh-poohed the possibility of their being a famine. He was a little gymnast... He trod his tightrope daintily and charmingly.<sup>103</sup>

Half a century later Muggeridge put it less elegantly:

Duranty was the villain of the whole thing... It is difficult for me to see how it could have been otherwise that in some sense he was not in the regime's power. He wrote things about the

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<sup>99</sup> John Chamberlain, *A Life with the Printed Word* (Chicago, Regnery Gateway, 1982), pp. 54-55.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in Crowl, *Angels in Stalin's Paradise*, p. 143.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Malcolm Muggeridge, *Winter in Moscow* (Boston, Little Brown, 1934), p. 162.

famine and the situation in Ukraine which were laughably wrong. There is no doubt whatever that the authorities could manipulate him...<sup>104</sup>

Why did Duranty alter his reporting with each shift in Soviet policy? Duranty's own words make it clear that he considered himself a virtual public relations man for the Soviets. In 1931 on one of his trips outside the Soviet Union, Duranty had a conversation with A. W. Kliefoth of the American Embassy in Berlin. The memorandum of this conversation states, "Duranty pointed out that, 'in agreement with the *New York Times* and the Soviet authorities,' his official dispatches always reflect the official opinion of the Soviet regime and not his own."<sup>105</sup> No such disclaimer ever appeared in the *Times*.

Rumors of food shortages persisted, however. Writing in the *New Republic*, Joshua Kunitz, quoting Stalin almost verbatim, put the blame not on collectivization but on the "the lack of revolutionary vigilance" and the "selfishness, dishonesty, laziness, and irresponsibility" of the peasants.<sup>106</sup>

There was an additional flurry of publicity about the Famine following the August 19 appeal by Cardinal Innitzer of Vienna to the International Red Cross. The cardinal asked for international aid to the starving, announced his intention of creating an interfaith relief committee, and urged all those currently negotiating for expanded ties with the Soviet government to make those negotiations dependent upon recognition of the necessity of help for the famine-stricken areas of the Soviet Union.<sup>107</sup>

William Henry Chamberlin, the initially pro-Soviet Moscow correspondent of the *Christian Science Monitor*, had as early as July 1933 reported that, while there was no actual starvation in Moscow, "Grim stories of out-and-out hunger come from

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<sup>104</sup> Interview with Bohdan Nahaylo, Robertsbridge, England, March 1, 1983.

<sup>105</sup> A. W. Kliefoth, US Embassy, Berlin, "Memorandum, June 4, 1931," p. 2; 861.5017-Living Conditions/268; T1249; Records of the Department of State; NA.

<sup>106</sup> "Content with their relatively easy victory in collectivizing the village, the Bolsheviks switched their entire attention and energy to the heavy industries... The point is, that not all *kulaks* have been 'liquidated.' The cleverest ones managed to remain, to enter the collective farms and to demoralize them from within... Though socialist in form, a collective farm does not really become a socialist economic unit until the peasants become psychologically adjusted to the demands of a socialist community. Selfishness, dishonesty, laziness, irresponsibility, cannot be easily eradicated. The peasant often feels that by having joined a *kolkhoz* he has shifted all responsibility to the collective. 'Let others work,' he thinks, 'I have joined the *kolkhoz* so that I may take a rest.'

"The peasant, albeit he has joined a collective, does not think in terms of giving. He knows only one thing, his wants. He wants credit, exemption from taxes, preferential treatment; he wants tractors, shoes, clothes; he wants sugar, tobacco, kettles, trucks, spoons, forks, knives, fertilizer, everything. Above all he wants to keep as much as he can of what he produces for himself." *The New Republic*, May 10, 1933, p. 360.

Compare with Stalin's January 11, 1933 joint plenum speech, in which he blamed the difficulties in carrying out the procurements on the laxity of Party officials who were allowing the collective farmers to set up "all kinds of reserves," who had not realized that the collective farmer was still at heart a petty bourgeois, and that the collective farms themselves were full of hidden class enemies. I. V. Stalin, "O pabote v derevne," *Sochineniia* (Moscow, Gosizdat, 1946-1952), XIII, pp. 216-233.

<sup>107</sup> "Cardinal Asks Aid in Russian Famine," *New York Times*, August 20, 1933, p. 3; Ralph Barnes, "Million Feared Dead of Hunger in South Russia," *New York Herald Tribune*, August 21, 1933, p. 7; Patrick Birchall, "Famine in Russia Held Equal of 1921," *New York Times*, August 25, 1933, p. 7.

southern and southeastern Russia, from the Ukraine, the North Caucasus and from Kazakhstan, where the nomadic natives seem to have suffered very much as a result of the wholesale perishing of their livestock.”<sup>108</sup> Refused permission to visit Ukraine and the North Caucasus until the Famine ended, he was allowed to go a few weeks after Duranty. In April 1934, after leaving the Soviet Union, he published an article in *Foreign Affairs*, confirming yet again that the Famine had taken place. He gave ample “refutation of the idea that as a result of collectivization, Russian agriculture will leap forward...”<sup>109</sup> In May Chamberlin reported that during the preceding year “more than 4 million peasants are found to have perished...”<sup>110</sup> In his book *Russia's Iron Age*, published in October, he estimated the death toll in 1932-33 at not less than 10% of the population of the areas affected, according to the local officials with whom he had spoken.<sup>111</sup>

The State Department remained silent. When Frank Roberts, Managing Editor of the Fort Wayne (Indiana) *Journal-Gazette* asked State about claims from responsible authors that 10,000,000 Russians had starved to death during one recent Winter, because the Stalin government had withdrawn from them all opportunity to earn a livelihood,” Hull’s assistant replied that “it is the practice of the Department to refrain from commenting on the accuracy of statements of this character.”<sup>112</sup>

Meanwhile, Louis Fischer continued to deny the Famine’s existence and extol the virtues of Soviet life. “The first half of 1933 was very difficult indeed,” he admitted in August of 1933. “Many people simply did not have sufficient nourishment. The 1932 harvest was bad, and to make matters worse, thousands of tons of grain rotted in the fields because the peasants refused to reap what they knew the government would confiscate under the guise of “collection.”<sup>113</sup> But Fischer also wrote in January 1934, that

during all those hard years ... the state endeavored to beautify life... The opera, the ballet, and many theaters displayed a dazzling richness of scene and costume incomparably greater than elsewhere in the world. Parks of culture and rest were established throughout the country to provide sensible recreation and civilized leisure...

Fischer also adopted a line often used to justify evil:

All governments are based on force. The question is only of the degree of force, who administers it, and for what purpose... Force which eliminates oppressors and exploiters,

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<sup>108</sup> W. H. Chamberlin, “Rations Given U.S. Jobless Enough for Soviet Official, Amazed Russian Workers Say,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 3, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>109</sup> *Idem.*, “Ordeal of the Russian Peasantry,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 1934, p. 506.

<sup>110</sup> *Idem.*, “Famine Proves Potent Weapon in Soviet Policy,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 29, 1934, p. 1. Second of thirteen articles serialized under the heading “Russia without Benefit of Censor,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 28-June 18, 1935.

<sup>111</sup> *Idem.*, *Russia's Iron Age* (Boston, Little Brown, 1934), pp. 367-368.

<sup>112</sup> Frank Roberts, Managing Editor, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, to Cordell Hull, April 21, 1934. Harry A. McBride, Assistant to the Secretary of State, to Frank Roberts, May 12, 1934; 861.48/2465; T1249; Records of the Department of State; NA.

<sup>113</sup> Louis Fischer, “Russia’s Last Hard Year,” *The Nation*, CXXXVII:3553, August 9, 1933, pp. 154-155.

## Chapter 6

creates work and prosperity, and guarantees progress and economic security will not be resented by the great masses of people.<sup>114</sup>

The Ukrainian-American community, its kin dying by the millions, did not remain silent in November and December of 1933, they marched in a number of cities to protest against US recognition of a government which was starving millions of Ukrainians. American Communists sometimes used force in an attempt to silence the Ukrainians. On November 18, 1933, in New York, 8,000 Ukrainians marched from Washington Square to 67th Street, while 500 Communists ran beside the parade, snatched the Ukrainians' handbills, spat on the marchers and tried to hit them. Five persons were injured. Only the presence of 300 policemen prevented serious trouble.<sup>115</sup>

In Chicago on December 17, several hundred Communists mounted a massed attack on the vanguard of 5,000 Ukrainian-American marchers, leaving over 100 injured in what the *New York Times* called "the worst riot in years:"

Brick, clubs, rotten eggs and other missiles rained on the marchers from the Hermitage Avenue elevated station bridging Madison Street. The street fight which followed saw brass knuckles, blackjacks, fists and rifle butts used until a dozen squads of police restored order.<sup>116</sup>

One of the most active organizations in the Ukrainian-American community was the Ukrainian National Women's League of America. At their national congress, held in Chicago on November 12, 1933, the League unanimously adopted a memorandum to the American Red Cross and appointed an emergency relief committee.<sup>117</sup> Miss Nellie Pelecovich of New York chaired the committee. She wrote to the President, his wife, Cordell Hull, Bishop Manning of New York, and a host of newspapers.<sup>118</sup> Miss Pelecovich prevailed upon the Ukrainian sculptor Alexander Archipenko to donate a bronze statue to serve as first prize in a raffle organized to raise funds to purchase foodstuffs through *torgsin*.<sup>119</sup> The League also published a pamphlet and sent it for comment to the Soviet Embassy on January 3, 1934. A month later it received a reply from Boris Skvirsky, Embassy Counsellor, who replied that the idea of the Soviet Government was "deliberately killing off the population of the Ukraine" was "wholly grotesque." Claiming that

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<sup>114</sup> *Idem.*, "Luxury in the U.S.S.R.," CXXXVIII:3578, *The Nation*, January 31, 1934, pp. 120-121.

<sup>115</sup> "Communists Boo Ukrainian March," *New York Evening Post*, Nov. 18, 1933, p. 3; "5 Hurt as 500 Reds Fight Parade Here," *New York Times*, Nov. 19, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>116</sup> "One Hundred Hurt in Communist-Ukrainian Riot as Reds Attack Paraders in Chicago," *New York Times*, December 18, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>117</sup> "Memorandum of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America, to the American Red Cross, concerning the Famine of the Ukrainians in Soviet Russia," Archive of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America, Inc. (hereafter UNWLA Archive), New York, New York. These files are uncataloged, and I am indebted to the organization's president, Mrs. Iwanna Rozankowsky, who graciously provided these documents to the US Commission on the Ukraine Famine.

<sup>118</sup> UNWLA Archive.

<sup>119</sup> Alexander Archipenko to Mrs. Helen Lototsky, President of UNWLA, December 6, 1932; Nellie Pelecovich to Alexander Archipenko, February 21, 1934; UNWLA Archive.

the Ukrainian population increased at an annual rate of 2% during the past five years, Skvirsky dismissed UNWLA evidence as spurious. The death rate in Ukraine "was the lowest of that of any of the constituent Republics composing the Soviet Union," he concluded "and was about 35 percent lower than the pre-war death rate of Tsarist days."<sup>120</sup>

The Ukrainian-American community then sought congressional action. On May 28, 1934, Congressman Hamilton Fish of New York, one of FDR's most indefatigable critics, introduced H.R. 399, blaming the Soviet government for bringing the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-33 about, expressing the sympathy of the American people, and appealing for the admission of food aid by the Soviet government.<sup>121</sup> The resolution never even came up for a vote.

Meanwhile, information also continued to arrive at the State Department. In January 1934, the Warsaw embassy sent its translation of the November 30 issue of *Rosja Sowiecka* (Soviet Russia), containing an astute analysis of what had transpired in Soviet Ukraine. It began by noting that the Central Committee decree of January 24, 1933, represented "the beginning of the destruction by Moscow of the independence of the Ukraine and of the opposition of the Ukrainian communists" on grounds that really meant "that the Ukrainian communist organizations have not undertaken all the measures necessary to deprive the rural districts of grain."<sup>122</sup> But the real reason, the journal observed, lay deeper:

On the surface the decision of January 24, 1933, does not change the structure of the Soviet Federation nor does it decrease the rights of the Kharkov Government. However, ... it has become clear that it was the beginning of the destruction of the independence of the Ukraine and the indicating sign for the removal of the most independent functionaries of the Communist Party of the Ukraine in order to subordinate this party entirely to the orders of the Politburo delegated from Moscow... Since the beginning of February 1933, Postyshev has been an autocratic ruler in Ukrainian organizations as well as Stalin's representative as Governor of the Ukraine. The dismissal of the chief Ukrainian officials has since taken place at an increased tempo.<sup>123</sup>

The journal pointed to the July suicide of Mykola Skrypnyk as "the best illustration of the passive resistance of the communist intelligentsia against the 'general line' of the party." It correctly noted that Skrypnyk had never formed any Ukrainian national fraction within the party as other Ukrainians had done in the previous decade; rather, Skrypnyk had always defended the "general line." In reality, he had fallen victim to an on-going witch-hunt for "counter-revolution wherever there are Ukrainian influences."<sup>124</sup> In surveying the balance sheet of Postyshev's mission, it pointed out that "Postyshev has indicated that the assistance given to agriculture consisted in 'the cleansing of the Communist Party of class

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<sup>120</sup> *Famine in Ukraine* (New York, United Ukrainian Organizations, 1934), pp. 6-7.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>122</sup> "The History of the Execution of the Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of January 24, 1933," *Rosja Sowiecka*, No. 8, November 30, 1933, p. 1; 860C.917/54; T1249; Records of the Department of State; NA.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 3; 860C.917/54.

<sup>124</sup> "The Political Crises in Soviet Ukraine;" 860C.917/54.

enemies'." At least one-fourth of the total membership of the CP(b)U had been purged. Three-fifths of the leading functionaries in the districts had been removed. Virtually the entire personnel of the central offices of the Ukrainian commissariats had been removed and replaced by Postyshev's men.<sup>125</sup> Meanwhile, Territorial First Secretary Sheboldaev had carried out a similar operation in the traditionally Cossack territories of the North Caucasus, where 35% of the *Komsomol* membership were purged.<sup>126</sup> *Rosja Sowiecka* observed:

As a result of the increasing chaos in Soviet agriculture, the Soviet authorities can less and less rely upon local communist organizations in the agricultural districts. These communist organizations cease to be the tools of the agricultural policy of the Kremlin; as a result, their outstanding men are dismissed and replaced by intruders having nothing in common with the rural population.<sup>127</sup>

Simultaneously, there was "a systematic Russification of the communist parties of the various nationalities inhabiting the USSR." This involved not only the agricultural conflict, but also the hierarchial reorganization of the party. Territorial and elected bodies were bypassed by political sections. Party organizers were sent from above. This resulted in the centralization of the national organization of the USSR through the diminution of the power of the republics and the growth of Moscow's. As a result:

The "national"—according to Soviet terminology—communist parties, i.e., the Ukrainian, White Russian, Georgian, etc., have changed into organizations, the heads and most intelligent members of which are coming from abroad in order to rule over the very unreliable ranks recruited from the local population which stir up great mistrust in the Politburo of Moscow.<sup>128</sup>

This "Russification or, at least, denationalization" of the leadership of the non-Russian organizations was supported by a great migration of party personnel extending even into the lowest ranks, especially in Ukraine and the Northern Caucasus. The ranks of the local population thinned by famine or expulsion were filled by personnel from ethnic Russia who did not know the local language. This, in turn, undermined a major foundation of the Ukrainization policy, and put the latter's future in doubt.<sup>129</sup> Soon, of course, Ukrainization would completely become a dead letter.

In June 1934, the US Legation in Riga prepared a detailed 105-page analysis for the State Department on "The Russian Peasant Policy, 1932 to 1934." It too left no doubt that there had been a famine, "According to foreign observers (the Soviet press has been persistently silent on this subject), the shortages of food in these

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<sup>125</sup> "The Balance Sheet of Postyshev's Mission;" 860C.917/54.

<sup>126</sup> "The Soviet Government and the Communist Organization of the South-Eastern Districts of the U.S.S.R.;" 860C.917/54.

<sup>127</sup> "The Political Sections as a Result of the Crises in the Communist Party;" 860C.917/54.

<sup>128</sup> "Discussion of the Causes of the Breaking Up of the Communist Parties in the Soviet Republics and in the National Districts;" 860C.917/54.

<sup>129</sup> "National Problems in the U.S.S.R. in 1933;" 860C.917/54.

parts (Ukraine and the North Caucasus—JM) reached toward the spring of 1933 the stage of famine.”<sup>130</sup>

William Randolph Hearst made a final attempt to use the Famine to attack FDR. His newspaper chain ran a series of articles on the Famine in 1935, in the style for which the term “yellow journalism” was coined. Written by Thomas Walker, the articles may have been a “reworking” of authentic material from 1933 which Hearst either bought or borrowed. Undoubtedly at Hearst’s behest, Walker “updated” the story by placing the Famine in 1934 rather than 1932-33.<sup>131</sup> Knowing an easy target, Fischer accused Walker of “inventing” a famine. Fischer had been to Ukraine in 1934 and, of course, saw no famine. He interpreted the whole affair as merely as an attempt by Hearst to “spoil Soviet-American relations” as part of “an anti-red campaign.”<sup>132</sup>

Fischer was challenged by Chamberlin who wrote from Tokyo, chiding Fischer for his failure to mention that 1932-33 had seen “one of the worst famines in history:”

I feel justified in recalling my personal observations of this famine because, although it happened two years ago, I think it will probably still be “news” to readers of *The Nation* who depend on Mr. Fischer for their knowledge of Russian developments. I have searched brilliant articles on other phases of Soviet life for a single, forthright, unequivocal recognition of the famine although he was in Russia during the period of the famine and was scarcely ignorant of something that was common knowledge of Russians and foreigners in the country at the time.

Fischer responded that he had not been in the USSR during the Famine, that he had mentioned it in his book, *Soviet Journey*, but that he, unlike Chamberlin did not put all of the blame on the Soviet Government.<sup>133</sup> This is how he had described it, “History can be cruel... The peasants wanted to destroy collectivization. The peasants used the best means at their disposal. The government used the best means at their (*sic*) disposal. The government won.”<sup>134</sup>

Hearst then fell back upon more reliable accounts which had been available for some time. In April, Harry Lang, who had earlier published an account of his 1933 journey to Ukraine in the *Jewish Daily Forward*, was serialized in April. Most interesting about Lang’s account was that he reported being told by a Soviet official that 6,000,000 had perished.<sup>135</sup> Richard Sanger, later a distinguished career diplomat but a Communist in his youth, went with his wife to the Soviet Union

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<sup>130</sup> US Legation, Riga, “The Russian Peasant Policy, 1932-1934” 861.61-Collective Farms/16.

<sup>131</sup> Serialized in five installments in the *New York Evening Journal*, February 19-27, 1935. See also *The Chicago American*, March 1-6, 1935.

<sup>132</sup> Louis Fischer, “Hearst’s Russian ‘Famine,’” *The Nation*, CXL:3636, March 13, 1935, pp. 296-297.

<sup>133</sup> *The Nation*, May 29, 1935, p. 629.

<sup>134</sup> Cited by Eugene Lyons, *The Red Decade: the Stalinist Penetration of America* (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1941), p. 118.

<sup>135</sup> *The New York Evening Journal*, April 15-23, 1935.



in 1933 and gave the figure of four and a half million. Hearst serialized his story after Lang's.<sup>136</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting of these accounts, however, was that of Adam Tawdul, a Ukrainian-American whose family had known Skrypnyk in the Bolshevik underground before coming to the US in 1913. Tawdul returned to Ukraine in 1931, and thanks to this acquaintance, was able to move in high circles. Tawdul claimed that before Skrypnyk committed suicide the latter had told him that 8-9,000,000 had perished from starvation in Ukraine and the Caucasus, and that another official had told him another million or two had died in the Ural Region, the Volga Basin, and western Siberia.<sup>137</sup>

All this led people to make inquiries to the State Department, which was of little help. An economics professor, R. W. France, wrote to the State Department regarding reference to Chamberlin's statement by a popular lecturer that

due to the exactions of the Russian government more than 4,000,000 persons starved to death in the Russian areas affected by the drought in 1932. This seems to be a rather incredible statement since no such condition was reported in the papers at the time...<sup>138</sup>

In spite of all the information which, as we have seen, was in State's possession, Kelley responded that "insofar as the Department is aware, the Soviet Government has made no official announcement pertaining to the question of deaths resulting from starvation in connection with a drought in 1932," and enclosed a list of relevant English-language references.<sup>139</sup>

Ignored at the time it took place, the Famine in Ukraine was so quickly forgotten that it presents history's most successful case of the denial of genocide by the perpetrators. "Years after the event," Lyons wrote 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>140</sup>

As for those who denied the existence of the Famine most strenuously, Fischer, who broke with the Soviets following the Spanish Civil War, later admitted that the Ukrainian Famine had cost the lives of millions.<sup>141</sup> Looking back, he recalled that even at the time,

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<sup>136</sup> *New York Evening Journal*, April 29-March 9, 1935; on his subsequent career, see his obituary, *The Washington Post*, March 30, 1979.

<sup>137</sup> Adam J. Tawdul, "10,000,000 Starved in Russia in Two Years, Soviet Admits," *The New York American*, August 18, 1935, pp. 1-2; *idem.*, "Russia Warred on Own People," *The New York American*, August 19, 1935, p. 2. The Tawdul series continued until August 31.

<sup>138</sup> R. W. France, Rollins College, Florida, to Secretary of State, February 8, 1935; 861.48/2472; T1249; Records of the Department of State; NA.

<sup>139</sup> Robert F. Kelley to Prof. R. W. France, March 6, 1935; 861.48/2472.

<sup>140</sup> Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia*, pp. 571-578.

<sup>141</sup> In Richard Crossman, ed., *The God that Failed* (New York, Bantam, 1959), p. 188.

My own attitude began to bother me. Was I not glorifying steel and kilowatts and forgetting the human being? All the shoes, schools, books, tractors, electric light, and subways in the world would not add up to the world of my dreams if the system that produced them was immoral and inhuman.<sup>142</sup>

Duranty, never an idealist like Fischer, could not be disillusioned because he had no illusions in the first place. In later years, when Sovietophilism had gone out of fashion, Duranty lied about ever having lied in the first place. In his last book, published in 1949, he wrote, "Whatever Stalin's apologists might say, 1932 was a year of famine," and he claimed that he had said so at the time.<sup>143</sup> And, as we have seen, he had, but not in his dispatches to the *New York Times*.

There can also be no doubt that both the State Department and the White House had access to plentiful and timely intelligence concerning the Famine of 1932-33 in Ukraine and made a conscious decision not only to do nothing about it, but never to acknowledge it publicly. For political reasons largely related to FDR's determination to establish and maintain good relations with the USSR, the US Government participated, albeit indirectly, in what is perhaps the single most successful denial of genocide in history. And in this we were hardly alone: The British record, for example, has also been partially told and was, if anything, worse.<sup>144</sup>

The US Government was made aware of conditions in the USSR by its embassies and legations throughout Europe, which sent extensive reports based on interviews with American workers and visitors to the USSR, Soviet officials, the foreign press, Soviet citizens, and foreign nationals, all of whom underscored the gross inefficiency of the Soviet system, the mediocrity of local Soviet management, and increasing hostility of the peasants. Long before diplomatic relations were established with the USSR, State Department officials were aware of thousands of Soviet citizens fleeing to Poland and Rumania and of soldiers and civilian brigades being sent into Ukraine to assist with the harvest. Washington even received letters from hungry Ukrainian peasants, asking for assistance. The official response to all queries regarding the horrors of life in the Soviet Union was to refer to them as "alleged conditions."

The term "famine" was used in diplomatic dispatches as early as November 1932. Inundated by queries and information regarding the Famine, the State Department sought and received confirmation from Athens and from Riga, the premier US listening post for Soviet affairs, a month before FDR recognized the Soviet government.

There can be little doubt that American journalists collaborated with the Soviets in covering up the Famine. Duranty, who privately admitted his role as a semi-official Soviet spokesman as early as 1931 and who after the Famine told British diplomats that as many as 10,000,000 might well have perished, seems to have played an especially crucial role. Even as a candidate, it was Duranty with

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>143</sup> Walter Duranty, *Stalin and Co.: the Politburo—the Men Who Run Russia* (New York, Sloane, 1949), p. 78.

<sup>144</sup> Marco Carynnyk, "The Dogs that Did not Bark: the Western Democracies and the Famine of 1932-3," *The Idler*, January 1985, pp. 14-20; February 1985, pp.17-21.

whom FDR first publicly broached the issue of recognition.<sup>145</sup> Duranty seems to have been determined that American public opinion not be negatively influenced on the eve of the Roosevelt-Litvinov negotiations. He thought it imperative that the United States and the USSR establish diplomatic relations and the Famine, especially if it was the result of Stalin's malevolence, was a stumbling block that had to be removed. His influence on Roosevelt's perception of the Soviet Union was profound. As Joseph Alsop wrote:

*The authority on Soviet affairs was universally held to be the New York Times correspondent in Moscow, Walter Duranty... The nature of his reporting can be gauged by what happened in the case of the dire Stalin-induced famine in the Ukraine in the early 1930s... The Duranty cover-up, for that was what it was, also continued thereafter; and no one of consequence told the terrible truth.*

*This being the climate in the United States, Roosevelt and Hopkins would have had to be very different men to make boldly informed judgments of the Soviet system and Stalin's doings and purposes in defiance of almost everyone else who was then thought to be enlightened.*<sup>146</sup>

Yet, Duranty was only the most evident symptom of something far more pervasive, a climate of opinion which made telling the truth about Stalinism almost an offense against good taste in "enlightened" circles. Eugene Lyons, who initially went to the Soviet Union with every intention of defending it, described the ambivalence felt by most Western observers of the day:

*I returned to the United States in April, 1934. More sharply than ever before I faced the dilemma: To tell or not to tell.*

*By 1934 exaggerated faith in the Soviet experiment had become the intellectual fashion among the people for whose good opinion I cared most. It was clear to me what sort of account of Russia the intellectual elite preferred to hear.*

*The editors of a liberal weekly invited me to a staff luncheon. It would have been the polite and kindly thing to bolster up their eager misconceptions. I was given an opening to denounce books about Russia that had told too much. News had just come through that the G.P.U. had been converted into a Commissariat for Internal Affairs. By stretching my conscience, I might have assured them that a new era of liberalism had dawned under the Soviets. But the Ukrainian famine, the *valuta* horrors, the death decrees and heresy hunts still smarted in my memory. I alluded to a few of these things. A chill seemed to come over the luncheon; apparently I had committed the offense of puncturing noble illusions. The Olympian irony of the situation—I could not help thinking of it—was that these men, their exact kind, were being stamped out in the Soviet land like so many insects. They fitted perfectly into the category of pre-revolutionary intellectuals, who must hide in the dark cracks, praying for only one boon—not to be noticed.*

*Other intellectuals were no less frightened of the truth. They asked questions about Russia and appeared horrified if I failed to give the prescribed answers. Indeed, it seemed to me that*

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<sup>145</sup> Already in July 1932, soon after winning the nomination, FDR had lunch with Duranty, indicating that he was "contemplating, in the event of being elected, a new policy toward the Soviets." His stand was not clear, but "the Governor's international advisers feel that the United States could profit by adopting an attitude different from that taken by the Republican administrations of the last decade... The Governor for some time has manifested deep interest in the Soviet's experiment and today he spent several hours asking Walter Duranty ... about his many years of experience in Russia. 'I turned the tables,' said the Governor. 'I asked all the questions this time. It was fascinating.'" *New York Times*, July 26, 1932.

<sup>146</sup> Joseph Alsop, *FDR, 1882-1945: a Centenary Remembrance*, p. 249.

*The American Response to the Famine*

these men and women, insulted to the marrow by the iniquities of bourgeois society, were wiping out the insult Japanese fashion by committing intellectual hara-kiri...

The desire to "belong," not to be a political dog in the manger, was a powerful inducement to silence, or at least to cautious understatement.<sup>147</sup>

The Roosevelt Administration was part of the same intellectual climate as Lyons and so many others. Not having seen the horrors of Stalinism, Roosevelt seems to have had the same blind spot as so many others in his day.

Poignant, often agonizing pleas for some type of intervention or assistance for famine victims from the Mennonite, Russian, Jewish, and Ukrainian communities in America were treated with courteous indifference. Reflecting the portion of the recognition agreement regarding mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, the State Department responded that since neither American citizens nor interests were involved, no action was possible and there was "considerable doubt whether there is any measure which this Government could take at the present time which would be helpful."

From an American public policy point of view, however, a disturbing aftermath to the Roosevelt Administration's failure to come to terms with "unenlightened" but accurate intelligence about the Famine was a purge of the State Department's "Russian hands" almost identical to the purge of its "China hands" in the early 1950s. Disappointed with US-Soviet relations, FDR came to dislike certain career diplomats, especially those who didn't share his views on the Soviet Union.<sup>148</sup> First among them was Robert Kelley. Following Department policy to make no public acknowledgement of the Famine, Kelley remained sharply critical of Soviet policies and methods and was never convinced that the USSR was willing to abandon its revolutionary aims. William Bullitt, America's first ambassador to the USSR, went with high expectations of friendly relations but was quickly disillusioned. By 1935, he was describing it as "a nation ruled by fanatics who are ready to sacrifice themselves and everyone else for their religion of Communism." He reported to State that "neither Stalin nor any other leader of the Communist Party has deviated in the slightest from the determination to spread communism to the ends of the earth." Bullitt was ostracized by both the Soviets and the State Department.<sup>149</sup>

Roosevelt attempted to improve sagging relations with the Soviets by replacing Bullitt with Joseph Davies in 1936 and, the following year at Davies insistence, eliminating the Division of Eastern European Affairs and sending Kelley into diplomatic exile in Istanbul. The Riga Legation's Russian affairs section was also downgraded. Even this failed to satisfy Soviet Ambassador Alexander Troyanovsky, who continued his complaints that all American foreign service officers who dealt with the USSR were "reactionaries."<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Eugene Lyons, "To Tell or not to Tell," *Harper's*, CLXXI, June 1935; reprinted in *American Views of Soviet Russia, 1917-1965* (Homewood, Ill., Dorsey Press, 1968), ed. Peter G. Filene, pp. 107-108.

<sup>148</sup> Maddux, *Years of Estrangement*, p. 55.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46-47.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

The big exception, of course, was Ambassador Davies, who described Stalin as “clean-living, modest, retiring” and a “stubborn democrat” who insisted on rights for his people “even though it hazarded his power and party control.”<sup>151</sup> Davies never even believed Stalin’s show trials of the late 1930s were staged.<sup>152</sup> His last dispatch from Moscow went so far as to state, “There is no danger from Communism here, so far as the United States is concerned.”<sup>153</sup>

The Man-Made Famine, given the absence of internationally recognized human rights norms and an Administration committed to closer ties with the Soviets, was seen as an internal Soviet affair, viewed with skepticism, or simply not mentioned. Politicians and opinion makers either turned a blind eye toward Stalin’s famine out of expediency or saw sympathy for the Soviet Union as a litmus test of one’s commitment to a more just society in this country. The tragedy is that the reality of mass starvation and collective victimization became politicized such that the question of fact concerning whether there was a famine was subordinated to the question of one’s political values. This is ever the case when human issues are viewed through the prism of one’s commitment to the Right or the Left. If there is one lesson to be learned from this tragedy, it must reside in the universality of human rights and human suffering. If the quest for a “greater good” or the struggle against some “greater evil” is seen to require a double standard of blindness toward the injustice and evil perpetrated by those who claim to be on our side of the political spectrum, the victims will always be ignored.

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<sup>151</sup> Joseph Davies, *Mission to Moscow* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1941), pp. 191-192.

<sup>152</sup> Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba* (New York, Harper Colophon, 1983), p. 164.

<sup>153</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: the Soviet Union, 1933-1939* (Washington, GPO, 1952) p. 557.

## Chapter 7

### SUMMARY OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

Hearings of the Commission on the Ukraine Famine were held in Washington, D.C.; Glen Spey, New York; Chicago, Illinois; Warren, Michigan; San Francisco, California; Phoenix, Arizona; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Testimony from 57 eyewitnesses to the Famine of 1932-1933 was heard. Thus, the hearings were instrumental in collecting an impressive body of material on the Famine. Moreover, since all testimony was either given in or immediately translated into English, it was far more accessible to the members and to the public at large than the more in-depth Ukrainian language oral histories.<sup>1</sup>

Commission hearings have met a number of goals, including:

- 1) The collection of an impressive and valuable body of eyewitness material, facilitating a factual understanding of the Famine.
- 2) The promotion of understanding by members of the Commission of the living, human dimension of the Famine.
- 3) The focusing of greater public awareness of the Ukrainian Famine through public attendance and press coverage.
- 4) The forging of a link between the Commission and the Ukrainian-American community, particularly that segment which personally survived the Famine.

Finding witnesses willing to testify in public presented a major task in the organization of the hearings. Public Members, local community leaders, and the Ukrainian Orthodox clergy aided in locating witnesses. Fear of reprisals against themselves or relatives still residing in the Soviet Union made many potential witnesses reluctant to testify in public. When such witnesses left the USSR, Soviet law provided for the punishment of the relatives of "traitors," even if the relatives lacked foreknowledge of the "traitor's" intent or action.<sup>2</sup> The reluctance to pay the inevitable emotional cost of recalling traumatic events was also a major deterrent. Witnesses who were unwilling to testify for whatever reason were in no way pressured to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> Full transcripts of these hearings have been made available to the public as *First Interim Report of Meetings and Hearings of and before the Commission on the Ukraine Famine Held in 1986* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1987); *Second Interim Report of Meetings and Hearings of and before the Commission on the Ukraine Famine Held in 1987* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> For an English text of this legislation, repealed after Stalin's death, see James H. Meisel and Edward S. Kozera, *Materials for the Study of the Soviet System*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, Mich., Wahr Publishing Company, 1953), pp. 196-197.

Since witnesses who had agreed to testify often have had second thoughts, the staff invariably attempted to have more witnesses than necessary and occasionally brought in persons wishing to testify from areas where no hearings were scheduled. Thus, three of the five witnesses who testified in Glen Spey traveled substantial distances; two witnesses (out of eight) who testified in Warren came from Cleveland; one witness (out of six) who testified in San Francisco came from Los Angeles; four witnesses (out of 13) who testified in Phoenix came from San Diego.

In addition to scheduled witnesses, almost every hearing outside Washington featured so-called "spontaneous" witnesses who simply appeared without previously informing either staff or members of their desire to testify. Such witnesses generally testified anonymously, without a previously prepared statement. Despite time constraints imposed by the schedule of the CUF Congressional member presiding, every effort was made to enable such unscheduled witnesses to speak. Finally, a number of persons, who did not wish to testify publicly, submitted written statements and other types of material for the record, as did several public members.

The written statements of scheduled witnesses varied in length from three to ten pages and were generally composed in Ukrainian and translated into English by staff translator Dr. Samilenko, who also interpreted the testimony of spontaneous witnesses from Ukrainian and Russian into English and questions to such witnesses into their native language. The necessity of having a written statement, as opposed to a spontaneous oral one, was demonstrated by the experience of the Glen Spey hearing. At that time only one witness had prepared a written statement. The remainder gave spontaneous oral accounts of their experiences, accounts which at times wandered far afield and well beyond the CUF mandate of gathering information on the Man-Made Famine in Ukraine. Given the time constraints of the hearing, it was often necessary to remind the witnesses that, while there are a great many issues of valid concern, the Commission's specific mandate required that it limit itself the specific issue at hand. Thus, following Glen Spey, witnesses were told only to limit their statement to their first-hand experiences during the Famine, giving them the option of also incorporating such information as place and date of birth, family size, and other facts which are normally part of an oral history.

Some witnesses, once they had made the initially courageous decision to testify publicly, willingly offered much detailed information about their experience during the Famine, but chose to use pseudonyms, citing fear of reprisals against relatives remaining in the Soviet Union. Twenty out of the 57 witnesses who testified before the Commission did so under pseudonyms, while the remaining 37 allowed their correct names to be recorded. Fear of reprisals against family members still residing in the Soviet Union were cited as the main factor which prevented witnesses from using their own names. For example, when Senator DeConcini asked witness Ivan M. about the latter's refusal to have his name recorded, the latter replied, "I have a sister with the same last name as my own who served time in Siberia. She was not permitted to return to Ukraine, but was forced to live in the Baltic states. In 1937 the people left, and they destroyed everyone, and if they find my name, they destroy her also."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 38.

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The witnesses were divided almost equally between urban residents, mainly from Kiev, Kharkiv, Odessa, and Poltava, and former villagers, who generally had resided within 30-60 kilometers from these cities. The age of the witnesses at the time of the Famine varied, with most between seven and fifteen years old, but occasionally the age of a particular witness deviated drastically from the norm. The Petrenko family of Phoenix, for example, included a daughter, age three at the time of the Famine and her 93-year-old father, who recalled not only the Great Famine of 1932-33, but pre-revolutionary events as well.<sup>4</sup>

A vital element of the hearings was the elicitation of information from the witnesses, analogous to that of the interviewer in the oral history process. Only rarely did problems arise with educated urban witnesses, whom the Soviet authorities had clearly considered members of the *aktyv* (the group on which the regime relied to carry out its policy directives). Occasionally, when asked to describe their role in grain seizures, such witnesses turned evasive.

Often at a hearing a unifying theme emerged as specific sets of questions directed at the witnesses recurred. This was usually the result of either a substantive issue suggested by the testimony of a particular witness or by the member's need to clarify a specific point for the record. For example, questions posed by the members at the Chicago hearing focused on the issue of cannibalism. Witnesses were asked not only if they had personal knowledge of instances of cannibalism, but also if they knew whether those who were jailed for cannibalism had been tried by jury. Questions in Warren, on the other hand, centered on the role played by the Soviet regime in creating the Famine and the emergence of a conspiracy of silence among the victims. One of the most revealing exchanges occurred in Phoenix when witness Nadia Harmash was asked, "Why people didn't rise in revolt," against their tormentors, to which Mrs. Harmash replied, "How can you rise when you're dying of hunger?"<sup>5</sup>

Another important component of some hearings was the interaction between the presiding member, the witnesses, and the audience. In Chicago, where David Roth of the American Jewish Committee presided as the *ex-officio* representative of the Chairman, most of the unscheduled witnesses were allowed to dispense with the protocol of addressing the commissioners as they testified. Instead they chose to speak directly to the audience, not only about their tragic experiences during 1932-33, but also about the difficulty of communicating this information to their American friends. Disbelief and lack of interest were cited as barriers preventing Famine survivors from sharing their experiences with Americans.

Despite the freedom given the witnesses in shaping their individual testimony, certain patterns emerged in the collective body of responses. Left to their own volition, for example, witnesses seldom began by plunging directly into an account of the events of 1932-33. Rather, they preferred to ease their way into the main topic by providing background information, usually in the form of family genealogy or an account of life during the NEP period of the 1920s.

Ivan Kasiianenko noted that when he was born:

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It was still the time of the New Economic Policy (1921-27). We had enough food and no one bothered us. A free market was permitted, and people could lift themselves up by their

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.



bootstraps. Where we were, people grew mostly wheat and sugar beets. The state didn't seize it but bought it. Taxes were very low. People would sell the beets and receive sugar and some money besides.<sup>6</sup>

Mr. Danylo (pseudonym) noted that after the revolution the government took away 40 acres of his father's land, leaving him five for a family of eight people:

We got twelve acres of land and worked the farm independently, privately, and were very well-off. We were very prosperous, and until 1929 we and the other peasants were very well off and had as much as we had prior to the Revolution. But in 1929 everything was taken away from the peasants and put into domestic animals and seeds, and the peasants were forced to work in collective farms.<sup>7</sup>

Both Anna Pylypiuk and Anna Portnov noted, almost in lyrical terms, the revival of Ukrainian nationalism which continued into the 1920s. Mrs. Pylypiuk said, "I began attending school in 1928. For a short time all was wonderful. We were taught in Ukrainian by dedicated teachers. Then things began to change. I understood very little of what was going on."<sup>8</sup> Of the years before the Famine, Mrs. Portnov stated:

I remember having come to one of those villages (near the city of Kiev) when I was quite a little preschool child. My mother's aunts and grandmother used to live there. It was a remote village and though the revolution had already had its toll ... the people were still composed and even cheerful and on the holidays there were a lot of good, tasty things on the table and Ukrainian beauties were wearing the well-known beads, especially coral beads and silver-coin necklaces and many silk ribbons hanging from the crowns of braids and their self-embroidered colorful blouses. It was so beautiful.<sup>9</sup>

Witnesses recalled that on the eve of the Famine Soviet authorities launched a campaign to halt the awakened spirit of nationalism, their attacks being directed against the Ukrainian intelligentsia and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church:

at the beginning of the famine (actually, at the beginning of collectivization – staff) the leading class of the village was arrested and destroyed; for instance the Ukrainian teachers, the church choir director and all of the village what they called 'intelligentsia.' And there were big attacks on the church. The priest was arrested and my father was arrested seven times. He was kept in cold water in the basement cellar so that he would denounce and leave, because they wanted to get rid of him from the village of Horodetsko. (Valentine Kochno)<sup>10</sup>

Individuals possessing higher degrees of learning fell under suspicion and were sometimes persecuted. Mrs. Pylypiuk testified:

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122. This refers to the fact that in Ukraine the Committees of Non-Wealthy Peasants (*komezams*), which did not exist in Russia, were until late 1923 allowed to expropriate surplus lands and property from "kulaks." Such land and property was then distributed to the less well-to-do villagers, usually the *komezam* members, who had decided who was a *kulak* in the first place.

<sup>8</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 109.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

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I recall that my father and grandfather had a large library. Both of them held degrees in agriculture and were interested in botany. They kept bees and conducted experiments in the grafting of fruit trees... One autumn night in 1929, on the feast of Mary the Protectress (old style), our house was thoroughly searched. More books were confiscated while the remainder was destroyed. My father was taken away in a 'Black Raven' (a vehicle used to remove prisoners). The men who arrested him did not give us a reason. My brothers and I cried so much that our lips became dry and our bodies cold. This was my eighth birthday.<sup>11</sup>

Witnesses cited a sequence of events as a prelude to the Famine itself. The first disaster to strike the Ukrainian village was collectivization, based on the liquidation of the *kulaks* as a class. First, in 1928, came the redistribution of "surplus" *kulak* lands and property and confiscatory taxation:

During the NEP period, my stepfather had a small store in the village of Kolodiazna, and twenty-two hectares of farmland on the estate of Druhyi Vosmernyk, for there were eleven of us in the family. In 1928 according to economic calculations, our farm was divided, and in 1929, the part that was left over was confiscated by the collective farm without any compensation. (Oleksander Merkelo)<sup>12</sup>

The final months of 1929 witnessed the first stage of "the liquidation of the *kulaks* as a class," meaning total expropriation. Witness Oleksiy Keis explained:

My parents were well-off peasants, and during the New Economic Policy my father had 50 hectares of land. He had a thresher, a tractor, horses, cows, a sheaf-binder, a harvester, and other machinery. Father was mechanically inclined and did everything himself. In November 1929 he was dekulakized and his property expropriated. After this, my status as a so-called socially alien element prevented me from completing my education at the technical school where I was enrolled.<sup>13</sup>

Hand in hand with dekulakization went collectivization, which was seldom voluntary:

My parents had six children, and you could say they were poor, although they were considered to be middle peasants. But, when they refused to join the collective farm, they were renamed *kulak* sympathizers. That was the beginning of everything. (Motria S.)<sup>14</sup>

One form of pressure was the threat of dekulakization, if not as a *kulak*, then as a "subkulak" or "*kulak* agent." Ivan Danilenko recalled that although his father was not a *kulak* "by their definition" he was nevertheless "independent and just couldn't see how he would voluntarily join the collective farm."<sup>15</sup>

Refusal to join the collective entailed the threat of punishment. Mr. Chymych observed that

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>12</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 149.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

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anyone who was singled out as not wanting to join a collective farm could not remain in the village. He had to leave. He left when he became part of the labor force. Many did so, because there was no discrimination against *kulaks*. People who had been dekulakized or people who had been wealthy peasants could work side-by-side with other classes in industry. And they were mostly praised, because they were very good workers.<sup>16</sup>

Upon refusing to join the collective farm, Ivan Danilenko's father was made responsible for fulfilling the quotas of his neighbors in addition to his own. Less fortunate villagers were dispossessed of home and possessions. "They took away our oxen and horse and eventually our cow, put father in prison and threw us out, permitting us to take only the clothes on our backs but nothing of the food." (Motria S.)<sup>17</sup>

Among the witnesses were not only victims of collectivization, but also those who actually took part in the collectivization process. Nicholas Chymych, who had been a teacher during this period was asked how he encouraged individuals to join the collective farms, to which he replied:

I cannot say this in one word. I need an hour. Many, many different kinds of methods. I was neither a Party member nor a member of the Youth League. Because I was not a member of the *Komsomol* (Communist Youth League) or the Communist Party, I could get around many of the rules that applied to these groups, and I was very often with people who did not belong to the Party but who helped in collectivization who were called by the derogatory term 'non-Party scum.' As a worker collectivizing the village, it was necessary to get at least twenty members into a collective farm, and I thought of the following way of doing it in as painless a way as possible. I knew two teachers who were the daughters of priests in the village. Their father was still alive and was respected in the village. So, I talked to him and asked him to try to get the villagers to join a collective farm of their own free will, because there was no other recourse. They would either be dispossessed of their property or banished to other parts of the country.<sup>18</sup>

Not infrequently, refusal to join the collective and dekulakization (the two were often inextricably linked) entailed exile to the Far North. Although Oleksander Merkelo's family was not exiled, the witness recalled many other families in his village that were:

In the bitter cold, usually at night, from the village and surrounding area, the following families were taken to the railroad station of Dvorichna, loaded into freight cars, and shipped to Siberia: Three families of Rohovy, two families of Posokhovy, four families of Poltavtsi, and two families of Sokurky. Others never returned, either. The rest of the peasants who were branded as *kulaks*, had their property confiscated and given over to the collective farm without any compensation, and their families were driven out of their houses. The same thing was done with former "NEP-men" who didn't manage to leave the village in time—the families Shtanhei, Galkin, and Herkov. The Galkin family, who did not want to leave their house, were taken by force on a sled, without any outer clothing to a field and thrown into the snow, where they all froze ... the peasants who lived on the former estates were dealt with especially severely. In the 'circular' estate settlements, all eight or ten families were driven right out of their homes just as they were, and all the buildings were converted into cattle barns. In case of resistance a special

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<sup>16</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 127.

<sup>17</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 149.

<sup>18</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 129.

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division of the police was called in to help village activists. Such was the fate of the estates of Pershyi and Druhyi Vosmernyk and of many others.<sup>19</sup>

Wasył Samilenko, on the other hand, experienced first hand the tragedy of exile:

It was the end of 1929, the fall. I was thirteen. It was in the evening when the OGPU (secret police) came in a wagon into my home. Inside my house was my mother and my whole family. The senior OGPU officer took out papers and read before my entire family this order. Take only that which you can wear and take something to eat. You are under arrest. And, they took us all outside and placed us in the wagon. They took us to the railroad station far away called Ichniya. We rode the entire night. At the station there were cattle cars used for loading cattle and other types of domestic animals. They opened the doors and shut us all in. They didn't tell us—they shut the doors, didn't tell us where they were going. There was no air, except for tiny vents on the roof of the cars. We rode for a little over a week. Nobody was permitted to go out. Nobody could relieve himself outdoors. Everything, all the refuse was discharged through the windows.<sup>20</sup>

Mr. Samilenko's family eventually ended up in a labor camp in Archangel where they were subjected to sub-freezing temperatures and hunger before escaping.

Although famine came only in the fall of 1932, food shortages had been the norm since the beginning of dekulakization and collectivization in 1929-1930. "From 1929, the beginning of industrialization and collectivization, our family and all of the people of Odessa suffered a great shortage of food." (Sviatoslav Karavansky)<sup>21</sup> "As collectivization proceeded, food shortages began ... by about 1931 my father made several trips to Kuban to trade some of my mother's clothing for flour. Soon there were no garments left and travel became difficult." (Ivan Danilenko)<sup>22</sup> Noted A. Butkovska (pseudonym):

With the beginning of the forced collectivization of agriculture in 1930, the amount of food brought to urban markets dropped sharply. In the fall of 1932, food became scarce in market places in Kharkiv. First we heard rumors, and then we learned the facts of what was taking place in the countryside.<sup>23</sup>

The Famine of 1932-33, according to the general consensus, was not caused by a poor harvest. Leonid A. observed that, "In 1932, shortly before winter, they sent the people to weed the grain. The crop of 1932 was very good. The yield was 37 centners to the hectare. The grain was taken by the government. They left nothing for the people."<sup>24</sup> Ivan Kasiianenko also observed that:

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 102.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>23</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 23.

<sup>24</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 131. According to official Soviet statistics, the 1932 crop was somewhat lower than the average for the period, but certainly not of famine-creating proportions. As always, however, the yield varied from locality to locality, being good in some districts, average in others, and below average in others. However, no witness from Ukraine has ever referred to the 1932 crop as a bad harvest in the area where they resided.

In 1932 the harvest was a normal one. It was brought in before anyone suspected what was to happen. It was winter when they came in to take the grain that had already been ground into flour and was sorted in bags. They came and seized all of this grain, not only from us but from all the villagers. And ours was a large village – 6,000 people lived there.

The sound of crying was everywhere. Those who seized the grain carried out their orders without mercy. I remember as if it were yesterday how a man ran away, leaving behind a wife and three children. They took absolutely everything: Cows, pigs, everything. There was nothing left for the wife to do. She sent her children away to fend for themselves, set fire to the house, and hanged herself.<sup>25</sup>

Witnesses were clear on what they saw as the ultimate cause for the Great Famine of 1932-33 – the seizure of grain by village activists, or so-called “Twenty-Five Thousanders.” These were urban workers recruited for permanent work in the countryside.<sup>26</sup> Mr. Merkelo described the Twenty-Five Thousander who came to his village:

A middle-aged man, who looked very well-fed and well-dressed, with his family (a wife and son), rented the best house in the village. He received packages regularly from Moscow, with food, salmon cakes, and all he needed to live a comfortable life. He set up a local activist group, comprised of semi-literate and sometimes criminal elements. If there weren't enough of them, he mobilized other collective farmers, local teachers, and the like, and faithfully fulfilled his tacitly understood plan. Incidentally, this agent lived next door to us.<sup>27</sup>

Helping the Twenty-Five Thousanders with the grain confiscation were members of the *komnezam* (Committee of Non-Wealthy Peasants)<sup>28</sup> and/or the shock brigade. By and large those who helped seize grain were regarded as villains by the witnesses. According to Mr. Kochno,

The *Komnezamy* or the so-called Committees of Non-Wealthy Peasants were composed of the worst criminal elements of the local population. They were either the lazy loiterers or the criminals that did not want to do anything and only stole and were the best known criminals of the entire village... They drove their two vehicles (called) *pidvody*, each carrying eight to twelve men. They were all *Komnezam* members... They even had special gadgets to check the yards to see if people had buried any grain or food products underground.<sup>29</sup>

Mrs. Pylypiuk described “bread collection” as it was carried out in her village:

Every day a brigade consisting of several sturdy men headed by a *Chekist* (member of the Soviet political police) came to our house. He had medals on his chest and people called him Comrade Fisher. He ordered his men to pierce all the walls, ceilings and floors with long ramrods. He threatened the men by saying that they would be arrested if they did not find any

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<sup>25</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> The standard monograph on the Twenty-Five Thousanders is Lynne Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>27</sup> *Second Interim Report*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>28</sup> For a brief history of this institution, which was unique to the Ukrainian SSR, see James E. Mace, “The *Komiteti Nezamozhnykh Selyan* and the Structure of Soviet Rule in the Ukrainian Countryside, 1920-1933,” *Soviet Studies*, XXV:4, October 1983, pp. 487-503.

<sup>29</sup> *First Interim Report*, pp. 118-119.

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grain. Fisher began to tease my stepmother and to provoke her with various unpleasant jokes. My brothers and I cried. Once my stepmother was so furious that she grabbed one of father's joiner instruments and threw it against the stove. The instrument rebounded and nearly struck Fisher in the head. After this incident my stepmother was repeatedly summoned to court...<sup>30</sup>

Some witnesses commented on the heterogeneity of the shock brigade. Noted Jacob K.:

In 1932 I was a student. We students were mixed or added to the *Komsomol* and sent to the villages to seize grain and all kinds of foodstuffs in the village. The seizures were motivated by the government's insistence that certain persons in the village had not fulfilled their grain quotas. We students had no concept of Moscow politics and believed what the government said, that the whole country was in trouble.<sup>31</sup>

Several witnesses participated in grain searches under duress because of their particular profession. Such was the fate of many teachers, and one, Maria N., talked in some detail of her experiences as a village teacher who had been forcibly "recruited" into a brigade to collect grain—as she put it—"to the last pound, to the last kernel." She recalled being present at the formation of such a brigade:

One evening, the party leadership of the village ordered a meeting of party activists and school teachers to take place at the village soviet. An official sent by the district party committee spoke of the necessity of collective farms and maintained that it was necessary to organize grain search brigades to collect "to the last pound, to the last kernel of grain.

I witnessed how two party members turned in their party membership card after being branded "enemies of the people" and were subsequently arrested.

The next day, the village activists were divided into shock brigades which were sent out to every corner of the village. There was a Russian in each brigade. Dark days set in for the village farmers. The shock brigades equipped with sharp metal pikes, the kind utilized by farmers in haying, went from house to house, poking the walls, searching the cattle sheds and yards in an attempt to find grain, and seizing everything, including baked bread.<sup>32</sup>

Maria N. described entering two homes in the dead of night—that of a priest and that of a terminally ill consumptive. In each case, the procedure for grain seizure was by this time brutally egalitarian, with no consideration of either the social class or physical condition of the victim:

We first entered the home of a priest. It was still dark outside. The leader of the brigade ordered the priest, Father Skitskyi to open the door and threatened to break it down if he didn't comply. The priest, dressed in his night clothes, opened the door. On the floor where the family slept sat his wife, also in night clothes, and their daughter who had been forbidden to attend school. The priest's family was terrified. At first the priest was asked, "Where is the grain, and how much of it is there?" Following the priest's response in the negative, the brigade commenced its search. I witnessed for the first time how the brigade conducted its searches. The contents of the house were all turned over. Every corner was scrupulously searched, including the stove. The exterior and interior were examined to the tiniest crevice, including the ashes and crocks sitting on the top of the stove. The icons were turned over. The floors were poked with metal crooks, as were the ceiling and the thatched roof. The same thing happened in the entrance hall, in the cattle shed and in the yard. Returning to the house, the brigade

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>31</sup> *Second Interim Report*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>32</sup> *First Interim Report*, pp. 150-151.

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workers discovered a piece of bread and a couple of handfuls of flour hidden away in the bed. These were confiscated, and the priest was arrested. The brigade went from farmstead to farmstead, and its method of confiscating grain never differed. Each protesting farmer was assaulted with a torrent of verbal abuse uttered in Russian.

The brigade entered the house of a dekulakized peasant. The owner had already been exiled to Siberia. His wife, who was in the last stages of tuberculosis of the lungs, was confined to her bed, and their nine-year-old daughter had her face and entire body swollen from hunger. It was very difficult for me to describe the horrible spectacle which I witnessed, and difficult for those who were not witnesses to it to believe what I saw. The house was filthy after the dekulakization. The window panes had been poked out and the holes stopped up with hay. The emaciated woman with deep sunken eyes lay silent in a filthy bed. Yellow skin covered her bones, and she coughed up blood. The little girl did not attend school, because she lacked clothing, shoes, and proper social origins. The methods of grain seizure were again the same. They found half a loaf of baked bread. Questions began, phrased in Russian and sprinkled with verbal abuse. 'If there is bread in the house, where is the flour?' The little girl explained that someone had brought the bread to the house the night before, and that she, not having anything to eat for three days, had eaten half the loaf with water, leaving the rest for later. The bread was taken away, despite the little girl's importuning to leave some for her sick mother. The leader of the brigade threatened to send the little girl to Siberia, and when she approached him, he pushed her away so hard that she fell to the floor.<sup>33</sup>

Not only was food confiscated during the searches, but occasionally the individuals whose homes were searched were arrested and thrown out of their homes:

My father was arrested during the final grain seizure campaign because he could not fulfill his quota. In jail, they made him hand over the last crumbs of bread remaining after the rest had been torn from the mouths of his children. But the Communist government was still not satisfied, and soon his entire family, including six little children, was thrown out of the house. They let us take neither food nor clothing, neither for the youngest children nor our grandfather who was over 80 years old.

We were taken 30 miles away to a small village near a railroad station where dekulakized people were gathered from eight nearby villages. We were kept there a long time. They fed us little and no one bothered us. Each had to get food any way he could. After a short while, my grandfather and two of my siblings died. Then my father died, leaving my mother to look after his two small remaining children. By then, I already had two children of my own.

My family was not deported like so many, but were simply taken to a dilapidated house. Sometimes at night, I would go visit my mother, little brother and sister, who were swollen and feeble from hunger. They waited for me with the hope that I would bring them something to eat, but I could not help them enough because my own children and I were starving, too. (Palaahka Olefirenko)<sup>34</sup>

Although the village activists who took part in the procurement brigades included both Russians *and* Ukrainians, certain witnesses were loath to place blame on their co-nationals. One of the most moving testimonies came from Mrs. Olefirenko, who described how the leader of a reaping brigade had refused to allow her to leave the field to bury her daughter:

Not long after that, my eldest little girl who was eight years old died of starvation followed soon after by my six-month-old infant who starved because my milk had dried up. At the collective farm they gave us food which lacked essential nutrients.

One day, my little girl came up to me in the field. She was in tears, and I immediately guessed that my baby had died. When my daughter confirmed my fears, I begged the brigade

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151-152.

<sup>34</sup> *Second Interim Report*, pp. 39-40.

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leader to let me go home and bury my baby. The brigade leader, who was on a horse and had a loud angry voice, refused. I didn't understand him and started to leave the field.

He called after me in that loud and angry voice, saying that if I took one more step he would run me down and squash me like a frog. He even tried to do it, but the horse wouldn't answer to his reins.

I don't remember what he said, because my thoughts remained on my little baby daughter. I did manage to get home. I wrapped my baby in a white blanket, took her in my arms and went to the cemetery.

The coffin was very small, but I had difficulty digging the grave because I had no strength left. Several days later, the two youngest children of my brother-in-law died and were buried, without their mother and father being present. The graves were very shallow, because the diggers themselves were very weak from hunger.

The young sister and brother of the deceased children helped cover the coffin with earth thrown by their own little hands.<sup>35</sup>

Asked if the abusive brigade leader had been a Russian, she replied that, "He was Ukrainian ... a man who was well known in the village."<sup>36</sup> At the conclusion of the hearing, Mrs. Olefirenko, visibly upset, came up to one of the staff members to ask if she had done the right thing in revealing the nationality of the brigade leader. She was reassured, of course, that she had.

Passive resistance to grain seizure was the norm. Nadia Harmash observed that, "Nobody complained ... everybody knew what was going on, but people were silent about it." Asked by Senator DeConcini as to what kept the people from rebelling, Mrs. Harmash replied, "How can you rise when you're dying from hunger? ... People were subjugated."<sup>37</sup> When Commissioner Mazurkevich asked about explanations given by Party officials concerning the situation, Mykola Kostyrko replied that

you didn't have any possibility to ask somebody what was the state of the world. Some people, communist people, but very good people, told me this is very tragic story, but we can nothing to do about it. I heard from my relative in Moscow—I told my relative and he could do nothing. This is order from Stalin, that is all.<sup>38</sup>

During the initial wave of collectivization, rural resistance was widespread, albeit on a small scale. Zinoviy Turkalo, recalling his school-days, said that in the Kiev area many Twenty-Five Thousanders were killed by the peasants. His school band was invited to the funeral every time, "For us, it was very happy event, because every time somebody was killed they would take us to the village, give us some food, and then we would play in the funeral. And, we were looking forward every time to the next funeral, because that meant food for us."<sup>39</sup>

Mykola Kostyrko also witnessed active peasant resistance to collectivization:

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 96.



In the village of Novo-Arkhangelsk, there was opposition to collectivization. The village resisted collectivization and the high grain taxes. A few activists were killed, and the police were unable to quell this revolt. How many peasants were killed on the spot, I don't know; but every day, toward the evening, I went down to the railroad depot, and, with an aching heart, observed as groups of peasants from the village were loaded into freight cars—whole families with their small children—headed for Siberia.<sup>40</sup>

Even later, during the Famine, episodes of resistance were not unknown. One was a revolt at the Sahaidak railroad station. Dr. Valentyna Sawchuk described it:

One morning ... I saw many people running towards the railroad station from the village of Pivni.

They ran past my window through our courtyard, most of them being women. In a few hours, some of them were running back, dragging sacks of grain behind them. They were too weak to carry them.

My father later told me that a large number of people from surrounding villages came to the grain bins and in a fury looted the bursting bins. The guards could not contain them. However, additional troops were brought in from Poltava. People were trampled by horses, beaten, and many wounded. The grain was taken from them, and the mass was pushed to the marketplace.

In self-defense the people were bundled together. They were forcibly separated, beaten, arrested and taken to Poltava Prison. Some were lucky and escaped with some grain, but on the whole, most were left with nothing.

The following day, by someone's command, they passed out a few pounds of peas per person, the irony being the grain bins bursting with wheat and other grain. In fact, wheat and grain were burning from spontaneous combustion, for if grain is not rotated and aired, it will burn.<sup>41</sup>

After the seed and fodder loan of February 25, 1933, some of the grain "loaned" to the collectives was consumed as food during the Spring sowing campaign. Leonid A. noted that although cows, horses, sheep, and goats were taken from private homesteads and given to collective farms,

there was no one to work on these collective farms because people were starving. Throughout the collective farms people who could still walk were sent to work. For the workers there was a kitchen, a so-called field kitchen. They ate in the fields. They were not permitted to take any food home.<sup>42</sup>

Mr. Merkelo also remarked that

collective farmers were forced to work from sunup to sundown, for a pittance. At work they were given some sort of lunch, and sometimes they got a little grain for a certain amount of 'workdays,' but this was in no way enough to sustain a family. There was nowhere to buy clothing or shoes—besides, there was nothing with which to pay for them.<sup>43</sup>

Not infrequently the collective farmers were so weakened that workers had to be imported from other parts of the country to sow, weed, and harvest. Observed Mr. Keis:

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<sup>40</sup> *Second Interim Report*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>41</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 144.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>43</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 16.

*Summary of Public Hearings*

In 1933, when the people in the collective farms had already died from hunger, factory workers like myself were mobilized to work the soil. Four hundred young men and women, myself included, were drafted from Enakievo for this purpose. We were joined by 70 other individuals from the mining towns of Zverovka and Sofiivka. We were taken to the village of Korsunovo, which was twelve miles away from Enakievo. There were three collective farms in Korsunovo. One was called 'Prometci' (Prometheus). The others were the 'Shevchenko Collective Farm'. In Korsunovo there were only ten families. In all of the collective farms the people had either died or fled. The 470 persons who had been mobilized to work on the collective farms were divided into three working brigades of 150 each.

Twice daily we were given cabbage with a little oil sprinkled over it, which was brought to where we were working. This food was brought to us in large metal containers. There was only one horse for all three collective farms.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, Lydia A. noted that by the Spring of 1933 most of the villagers were so exhausted and swollen that there were few people left who were able to till the soil at the collective farms:

Under compulsion, the government organized the so-called brigades for work on the collective farms. Students, civil servants and laborers were required to go. I went with a group of students to a village located 150 kilometers from Kharkiv, Pyshenkivka. We received accommodations in a school building. There we were told not to go outside at night and not to open the door. We went out into the fields to weed sugar beets.

Then it rained for several days, and we could not go to work. After it stopped raining in the afternoon, several women and the brigadeer arrived, and we went into the fields. On our way there, the women went inside a house, thinking that there was an able-bodied woman there. A woman sat with a boy at a table, and they were eating. They looked horrible. They did not react to any knocking on the door. The women mumbled something among themselves. They were troubled and frightened. We followed them in silence.

We returned to Kharkiv at daybreak, but we were not allowed to go home. We were taken to an institute, despite the fact that we were hungry and dirty. When government officials arrived, an errand girl told me that I had to go to a special department. The manager asked me what I had seen. I said nothing. Then he said go and don't say anything.

Frightened, I never asked the others whether they had been called to the same department. There were rumors about cannibalism, and my thoughts returned to the whispering of the women.

Summer arrived, and the brigades were being sent again to the villages to bring in the harvest. Various institutions, manufacturing plants, and organizations took part in the so-called patronage over a collective farm, meaning that the patron institution was responsible for helping the particular collective farm or village assigned to it. Women's party organizations established day care centers and kindergartens and took food and clothing to the needy.

When we arrived, the woman in charge took us in to see what they had done. The house had been tidied up. The children were clean and sitting on the grass, and there were toys around them. The children did not pay attention to anything. They only pulled out grass and ate it. The headmistress complained, "We feed them, but they keep eating grass."

I shall never forget these children, and I wonder whatever happened to them. Did they ever recover and grow up to be normal? At that time, they did not lead a normal life. They were scraggly. Their eyes were lifeless. There were toys around them, but they only wanted to rip out the grass and eat it.<sup>45</sup>

Workers on state farms (*sovkhoses*, *radhosps*) fared somewhat better in food acquisition because, since those who worked there were considered employees

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

## Chapter 7

rather than joint owners of a cooperative enterprise, the state was obliged to compensate them for their labor. Mr. Merkelo noted that

the situation on the state farms was not as terrible as it was in the villages. Laborers and other service employees received a salary and a ration, if only a poor one. In the cooperative stores you could buy something and the atmosphere was not as oppressive.<sup>46</sup>

### Observed Max Harmash:

At that time in 1932, my wife was pregnant, and our first baby was born in 1933. Working on a state farm along the river near the regional center, I received some food rations such as a two-and-a-half pound loaf of bread and one-half quart of milk, and occasionally soup consisting of soybean and water, cooked for the workers in the state-farm kitchen which they opened for only two hours each day.<sup>47</sup>

By contrast, membership in a collective farm held no guarantee of adequate sustenance, and, in fact, most of the Famine victims of 1932-3 were members of collective farms. Motria S. described how she and a friend were denied even the feed given to pigs:

One day, as we were baking the flatcakes (for the pigs), an activist walked by and caught a whiff of the smell. As he entered the room we threw the flatcakes behind the cauldron, but he crawled after them and retrieved them. The following day the people were called together to witness how we were reprimanded for eating the pigs' food. Both I and the girl who was helping me bake the flat cakes were fired from our jobs.<sup>48</sup>

### Mr. Merkelo observed that

on the collective farms, the harvest of 1933 (probably 1932 – staff) was snatched out from under the threshing machines and removed to the grain collection sites. Sometimes it was left in a pile out under the open sky, where it got wet and rotted. (This happened at the Topolia and Dvorichna depots.)

The collective farmers were forced to work from sunup to sundown, for a pittance. At work they were given some sort of lunch, and sometimes they got a little grain for a certain amount of 'workdays,' but this was in no way enough to sustain a family. There was nowhere to buy clothing or shoes – and besides, there was nothing with which to pay for them.<sup>49</sup>

Some fared better than others in the face of the growing food shortage in the villages. Village schoolteachers, for example, were somewhat better off than their neighbors:

Every teacher had a tiny plot of land in which they were able to sow a little bit of potatoes, a little bit of this, a little bit of that... But already in the spring of 1933, none of this was possible. There was no food anywhere, not even in the small plots of land. (Maria N.)<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>48</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 150.

<sup>49</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 16.

<sup>50</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 155.

### Summary of Public Hearings

Even in urban areas the food shortage was keenly felt, especially after Stanislav Kossior ordered the closing of communal eating establishments in early 1933. Margarita Borzakivska, then a student in Kamianets-Podilsk, said that

most of the students lived in dormitories and ate at the dining halls attached to the institution where they were given three meals daily. But at the beginning of 1932 (actually 1933—staff) the dining halls were unexpectedly closed because of the lack of food. Agricultural produce also disappeared from the stores and also from the marketplaces where the peasants had come to sell their surpluses ... of course, the students became so hungry that they could no longer study, and more and more of them failed to attend classes.<sup>51</sup>

Oleksiy Keis, a resident of the industrialized Donets Basin (Donbas), also confirmed that:

The terrible famine began in the Fall of 1932. My family was living in the town of Enakievo in the Donbas area. Frequently, we witnessed how hungry people from collective farms gathered along the railroad lines Zverovo-Kiev and Zverovo-Miullerovo, thinking that travelers on the trains would throw them a piece of bread. All along the railroad you could see the corpses of people who had died begging for food, corpses that lay on the ground like sheaves.<sup>52</sup>

At the height of the Famine, the scene in the villages was frightening. Anna P. recalled that

by 1933 the people were left without any bread, and they suffered from the hunger and cold. Even the horses died. When a horse died, people stripped the carcass where it had fallen, boiled the meat, and ate it. The government tried to stop this by burying the horses, but the people dug them up and ate them. One man was so sick, he just lay under a bush. He was so swollen that he couldn't walk. I remember that he crawled to a dead horse that was being chopped up and started to drink blood; and then he died. All around me people were swollen from hunger. They would get liquid under the skin, and then the skin would burst and ooze a thin, brown, foul smelling liquid. In a few days they would die, and there was no one left who had the strength to bury them. At harvest time the people were sent out into the fields, and they tried to hide a few ears of grain, but there were mounted guards all around. The guards had whips and would whip anyone trying to hide an ear of grain until the blood ran.<sup>53</sup>

Many villagers survived by consuming marginally edible foodstuffs. A prime staple in the diet of the hungry were weeds. According to Oleksiy Keis:

I spent my evenings filling a sack with young tender stalks of plants called *loputsky*, a bitter grass called *shcharytsia*, pigweed (*loboda*) and nettle (*kropyva*) which I then took to my parents at night. All of the grass surrounding the town where my parents were had been picked by starving villagers who had wandered into the town looking for food. My weekly delivery of two bags of weeds sustained my family through the famine... My mother had many different ways of preparing the weeds I brought home. My father would take the bark from an oak or a linden tree, grind it to a pulp with a mortar, and from this mixture my mother would make patties which we ate in addition to the other foodstuffs.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 135.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

Stephen C. noted, "People ate everything without bothering to cook it first. They ate grass meant for pigs, weeds; they even caught birds, killed them and ate them raw."<sup>55</sup> William Krewsun's family survived by eating the branches of trees, "It is hard to believe, but some of those tree limbs are very tasty... (The) most delicious food that I remember in those days is potatoes, plowed in spring, the old potatoes destroyed by frost, and it was delicious for us."<sup>56</sup> Maria N. observed:

Struggling to survive, the people ate leaves, nettles, pigweed, sorrel, honeysuckle, bulrushes. They made tea out of the branches of cherry trees. The leaves of the linden trees were the tastiest. People gleaned the remnants of rotten siftings and potato and beet peelings. To these were added strained linden leaves and the baked mixture was called *shchodennyky* or everyday patties.

Whoever had a poppy seed cake divided it among the members of his family leaving some for the following days. People died of hunger in the houses, the fields, in the yards, streets, railroad stations, on the roofs of train cars.<sup>57</sup>

The effects of the Famine were compounded by harsh penalties for gleaning grain, which was considered collective farm property. According to the law of August 7, 1932, commonly known as *zakon koloska*, "the law of the ear of grain," any villager who tried to glean ears of wheat remaining in the collective farm fields after the harvest was subject to a prison term of ten years for pilfering socialist property or execution. Maria N. remembered, "Hungry farmers, and particularly their children, tried to gather sheaves of wheat from their own fields, but these were seized by the members of the *komsomol* and the *komnezam*, because eating grain from your own fields was called robbing socialism."<sup>58</sup> Palashka Olefirenko's brother-in-law was arrested and "Exiled to Siberia not for anything he himself had done, but because his four-year-old son had picked up some grain from the field, leaving four small children to fend for themselves, the eldest of them was only eight years old."<sup>59</sup> Mr. Keis observed:

This law included not only the taking of an ear of wheat, but also anything that you could manage to pick up in a field, such as some beets, a potato, anything at all. My friend had four children, but nothing to feed them with. He dug up a few beets at the collective farm and for this particular crime he spent seven years in Siberia. One lady had a little child, and she went to the field to gather ears of wheat, and for this she was caught and sent to prison for seven years. Trials for offenders of this law occurred almost daily and people received very severe sentences.<sup>60</sup>

Scenes of starvation were also recorded by urban inhabitants who had occasion to travel to the countryside either for occupational reasons or to visit relatives.

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<sup>55</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 127.

<sup>56</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 52.

<sup>57</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 153.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>59</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 40.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

*Summary of Public Hearings*

Nicholas Chymych spoke of the seizure of canned goods by authorities during an attempt to take them to his sister in their native village:

At the time of the famine I was living in town, but had a sister who still lived in my native village of Verhuny. From her I discovered there was a famine in the villages, but it was impossible to either send food or take food to the starving villagers.

On the way to visit my sister I got off at the train station at Romodan and was accosted by civilians dressed as policemen. "Who are you?" they asked. These were ordinary villagers who were forced to serve as guards to prevent people from entering the villages from the towns.

The guards asked me to show my luggage and, upon discovering that I was carrying bread and some canned food, told me that I could keep the bread because it was obviously meant for me, while the canned goods were not. 'You do not need the canned goods,' they said.

When I protested that I was taking them for my sister, they took the canned goods away. You could see starving people everywhere. They came up to the train begging for food.

In the village where my sister lived there were no people on the streets. None of the normal sounds associated with village life were audible: No barking dogs, no horses neighing. Many of the houses were empty, while in others, all the people were swollen.

I went to the nearest neighbors and asked if I could spend the night. They asked me if I had the proper documents. 'You can stay,' they replied, 'but someone may attack you,' they told me, implying cannibalism. The neighbors told me that many children had died, this one and that one.

In the Spring of 1933 I went to another village to see my distant relatives. My seventeen-year-old third cousin was begging for something to eat. There was no bread in the house, and she, taking the pillow, ripped it open and began eating the feathers.

Fifty years have passed, and I still recall this incident with pain.<sup>61</sup>

As a new teacher, recently transferred to the district of Oleksandriia in Ukraine, John Samilenko witnessed scenes of starvation:

I went to the village of Chervonyi Iar to look at a public school there. When I came to that school, I discovered that 75% of the pupils were absent. The authorities refused to tell why this was so, so I decided to go to some village homes to find the answer myself. In five houses there was no response to my knocking or my calling. All the members of the household had died. From two of the houses came groans. When I entered I saw a woman on the floor who pointed with her hand to her three dead children and husband, all of whom died of hunger. In another house I found a man who told me that there had not been anyone in the village for a long time. He was very weak and couldn't walk. He asked me for nothing, except to bury his dead family—his mother, wife and two little children, whose bodies were already decomposed.<sup>62</sup>

Max Harmash, who worked as a technical director at a state farm in Dnipropetrovsk region was mobilized by the *raion* government to supervise the seeding and planting at a collective farm about 30 kilometers from the state farm where he was working. Instead of able-bodied villagers, however, Mr. Harmash found death:

I received a two-wheeled carriage, some hay for the horse, and two pounds of bread for myself. The head of the village soviet assigned me to stay overnight at the house of a collective farm member and left me at the door.

Inside the half-dark house, I saw a very thin man in rags. He did not answer my greeting and sat motionless. I heard groans from atop the hearth and asked what it was. Dying, the man, said:

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>62</sup> *First Interim Report*, pp. 101-102.

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I looked at the top of the hearth and saw a grotesque half-naked swollen body. Rags lay around it, and the stench was atrocious. I broke off a piece of bread for the man and ran back to the village soviet office.

The watchman was heating the soup, and I shared the rest of my bread with him. He told me there were no feeding or planting supplies in the collective. Only a few members of the farm had meat or reserves of food left. About half of the village population had died of starvation, and all poultry, cats and dogs had been eaten by transients and the local population.

Younger and stronger people had left the village. The occupants of the house where I was supposed to stay the night were scheduled to be buried the next day. Before sunup, I left the village without accomplishing my mission. The state farm director was very happy to have the horse and carriage as well as me back again, but I kept having nightmares about abandoning my task and expected severe punishment which never came.

I was not punished, because everyone, especially the leaders, knew the horror that was going on.<sup>63</sup>

Mrs. Harmash, visiting him in the same village, observed peasants along the roads:

They were mostly men and boys. They walked very slowly, and I noticed that they were squatting frequently. At first, I could not understand why they were squatting down, but then I understood that they were bleeding with diarrhea. I saw that the road was blotched with bloody patches. As I came closer, I could tell that their clothes were stained and that a heavy odor hung about them.<sup>64</sup>

As a student, Mr. B. traveled to the village of Katerynivka near Kiev in 1933. Forbidden to visit the village or talk to villagers, one day he noticed a heavy stench about the campsite. Ignoring the order, he went to the village only to discover the odor's source, "There I saw a truly horrible picture ... everywhere bodies were sitting and lying and they were decomposing and from them was emanating such a stench that I couldn't stand it."<sup>65</sup>

In 1932 Ivan M. was one of five hundred workers mobilized from Kharkiv and Nova Bavariia (New Bavaria) to weed beets in the village of Terny in the Poltava region. Here, too, the workers were forbidden to visit the village and the realization that the villagers had starved to death was purely accidental.<sup>66</sup> In the same vein, Mr. Merkelo testified:

In the spring of 1933 the fertile Ukrainian soil was covered with human corpses. Corpses could be seen everywhere—on the roads, in the fields, at the railroad station. Sometimes I went to visit my village (for I still had family there), and I saw how special brigades gathered the corpses from the streets and the houses, and carted them to common graves, or simply threw them in ravines. Even the 'undertakers' themselves were half-dead.<sup>67</sup>

Residents of Kiev, Kharkiv, or Odessa, testified mainly about food shortages experienced by the urban population during the Famine years. The testimony of urban Ukrainians underscored the correlation between social status and food

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<sup>63</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 45.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>65</sup> *First Interim Report*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>66</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 35.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

acquisition. The greatest quantity of food was available to the privileged few or functionaries employed by the administrative organs that determined food allotments for the privileged. Tatiana Kardynalowska, the widow of Serhii Pylypenko, the founder of Pluh (Plow), a Soviet Ukrainian union of peasant writers in the 1920s, emphasized that Pylypenko, like other writers, was issued a book of ration coupons. The coupons were used by the writers and their families to eat at the Radnarkom (Council of People's Commissars) building and were supplemented by additional packages of food (*paili*).<sup>68</sup> Mykola Kostyrko, an engineer-economist, resided in Odessa during the Famine. As a supervisor of the planning and manufacturing division of an industrial cooperative, he attended a special meeting at which he was ordered to set aside one of his co-op stores immediately for the exclusive use of the members of the Central Committee, the NKVD, and the city and regional councils. Kostyrko and his colleagues were not only told to designate the stores as closed distribution centers, accessible only to members of the elite, but also to make sure that the latter appeared closed from the outside.<sup>69</sup> Dr. Helen K. observed that in her class in school, "There were children who came to school with fine sandwiches, with all kinds of rolls and breads, sausages and cheeses. They were children of party leaders. They did not starve."<sup>70</sup>

City dwellers who were not privy to special distribution centers had recourse to other means of nourishment. In Kharkiv, Kiev, Odessa the introduction of the system of rationing ensured a meager diet for civil servants and workers. Varvara Dibert noted that in 1933 (soon after the arrival of Pavel Postyshev as the Second Secretary of the Ukrainian Central Committee) the so-called "commercial bread" appeared in Kiev, "You could buy a kilo for two-and-a-half rubles. They would only let you buy one kilo a day, and the lines for this bread were so long that not every working person could wait so long."<sup>71</sup> Mrs. Harmash said that while "city people got rations of bread, you had to get up about 4:00 in the morning and stand in line to get your bread."<sup>72</sup> According to Ivan Oransky:

Kharkiv was very much differentiated in terms of who got food and who did not get food. There were people who belonged to the Party, the civil servants and people like that. There were many factories and industrial plants in Kharkiv, and the workers who worked the hardest physically received more food, while others received fewer rations. As a student I received 400 grams of bread. I divided it into four pieces, four slices, and so as not to eat it all at once. It was as if you had four sandwiches to eat.

This ration was for the entire day.<sup>73</sup> According to Mrs. Dibert:

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civil servants got 400 grams of bread daily and another 200 grams for each dependent. Factory workers got 500 grams per day while workers at military factories got 800. Some millet, sugar

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<sup>68</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 160.

<sup>69</sup> *Second Interim Report*, pp. 5-8.

<sup>70</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 123.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>72</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 50.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.



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and fat was also given out. Today some people may say that 400 grams per day does not constitute a famine, but this is because we have other things to eat besides bread.<sup>74</sup>

According to the ration system which had been in effect since 1929-30, Sviatoslav Karavansky "as a dependent, received 200 grams (seven ounces) of black bread per day. My mother, brother, and sister received the same ration ... soldiers of the Red Army received at that time one kilogram of bread per day."<sup>75</sup> While working at a metallurgical plant in the city of Enakievo, Mr. Keis received a monthly salary of 127 rubles, but:

My brother, who worked in the bookkeeping department, occupying a somewhat less important position than I, received 108 rubles a month. Our father, who worked as a guard at the same factory, received 70 rubles a month. Between the three of us, we received 300 rubles a month. People working at the factory in Enakievo were given bread rations. Furnace men or wheelers, who constantly risked their health through exposure to gas fumes, received one kilogram of bread daily, while their spouses and dependents—400. As a minor boss, I received 800 grams of bread. My father was given 600 grams and the girls received 200 grams each.<sup>76</sup>

Long bread lines were a common sight in towns. Mrs. Borzakivska recalled how

the urban population ... stood in long lines to wait for bread, which was given to the stores in small quantities. When bread arrived at a store, the shoving was terrible, because everyone was hungry. Not a day passed without someone suffering a heart attack, being wounded or simply being smothered. Many of the hungry went home with broken hands and no bread. It even came to the point that people ate dogs and cats to save themselves from starving to death.<sup>77</sup>

More substantial nourishment was available at special *valuta* (precious metals and foreign currency) stores, the *torgsins* (acronym for trade with foreigners). Unheard of delicacies such as smoked fish, could be purchased there for foreign currency or gold (typically gold wedding bands or crosses). The problem was the relative scarcity of either. Mrs. Dibert recalled her own encounter with the *torgsin*, "Once my husband brought home a certificate and said he could buy some food with it at the *torgsin*. When I stared at him in amazement he opened his mouth and I saw he had steel fillings instead of gold ones."<sup>78</sup> The family of Rev. Alexander Bykovets gratefully accepted small bills sent by a relative abroad:

Since my aunt left Ukraine after the collapse of the Ukrainian National Republic in 1920 and then lived in France, my father used to correspond with her in French, and she was kind enough to put a five or ten franc bill in every letter for us to use in buying food from the *torgsin*. This contributed a great deal to our survival during the artificial famine of 1932-33 in Ukraine.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 73.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>76</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 19.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>78</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 74.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

### *Summary of Public Hearings*

But others, like Motria S., were unable to make use of the *torgsin*, "I saw many hungry people in town. Those who had gold went to the store which was called a *torgsin* where they could buy flour, sugar, bread, bacon, and so forth. But I didn't even know what it looked like."<sup>80</sup> Ivan Pylypenko pointed out a danger connected with the *torgsin*. Even if one had enough money to avail oneself of its products:

If somebody arrived and had too much gold or silver, then he would be followed by a secret agent, who followed him home, wrote down his address, and then afterward, people from the secret police would arrive at his home, and these people would interrogate him, asking why do you have so much gold and why haven't you admitted before to having so much gold, where are you keeping it?<sup>81</sup>

A. Butkovska (pseudonym) also confirmed the relative scarcity of precious metals in the possession of the populace:

very few people had any precious metals, and then only in small amounts, because the state had requisitioned all gold and silver in the 1920s. Emaciated people walked by the *torgsins*. Later the police forbade hungry villagers from entering regions where the *torgsins* were located, but as spring approached, more and more villagers came to town nonetheless.<sup>82</sup>

Although villagers flooded Kiev, Kharkiv, Odessa and other cities in search of food, they were not permitted to stay. According to Mrs. Dibert:

No one in Kiev had the right to allow even their closest relatives to stay the night in their residence. One had to go to the building manager with a certificate and get it stamped with a date indicating the length of the stay. For most villagers, particularly the men and boys, such certificates were not easy to get. Single women and girls were more fortunate. Sometimes they were able to get jobs as servants for party people and thereby acquire union cards, even without residency permits. Later they could even attend evening courses and get permanent jobs. This was sometimes done not only by villagers but also by female members of the intelligentsia who had been denied employment because their husbands had been arrested as so-called class enemies of the people or because of their own "nonproletarian" class origins. I knew of four such cases from among my own relatives, and my aunt in this way saved six women, two of whom had already begun to swell up from hunger.<sup>83</sup>

The specter of the starving peasants, wandering city streets in search of food, haunted every urban survivor of the Famine. Ivan Oransky described Kharkiv, capital of Soviet Ukraine until 1934:

Many villagers roamed the streets there. You met them everywhere. They were of various ages, old, young, children, and infants. Their state of physical deterioration was evident in the slow way they moved their bodies. The light was extinguished from the downcast eyes on the haggard and occasionally swollen faces. They were hungry, exhausted, ragged, filthy, cold and unwashed. Some of them dared to knock on people's doors or maybe on someone's window, and some could barely stretch out their hands in supplication. Others yet were sitting against the walls, and they were motionless and speechless. I had to return home late before midnight

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>81</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 55.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>83</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 73.

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from the specialized College for the Study of Foreign Languages. To reach Kholodna Hora, an area of the city where I lived, I had to cross some railroad tracks. A glass-covered and unlit viaduct went over them. Masses of homeless villagers had been brought to this shelter. I had to watch each step carefully so as to avoid stepping on a living person, or even one who was already dead. On the other side of the street near a fence there was a corpse already covered by someone with something. It could be seen from the window of an apartment on Cemetery Street. The corpses which had been gathered were taken down Cemetery Street to the graveyard which was far away. They were loaded into an ordinary peasant cart hitched to one horse, as though to cover it completely. There they were thrown into one common pit. There was not even one grave. The earth was thinly spread out above the so-called 'buried'.<sup>84</sup>

Valentine Kochno and Mykola Kostyrko both witnessed the forcible removal of peasants from the bread lines by police. The hungry villagers were loaded in trucks and taken out of Kharkiv.<sup>85</sup> One such villager, the father of Anastasia K., traveled there periodically to get food. As a child Anastasia would sometimes take her father's turn in line:

But, when the time came for me to take my bread, I would generally be told either that there was none left or that I was too small to be buying bread. You can imagine how pitiful I felt having waited long hours for the bread only to return empty handed.<sup>86</sup>

Mr. Keis said that occasionally hungry peasants would be hired by factories, often with disastrous results:

At the factory where I worked, there was a shortage of *katali*, so-called "rollers" whose job it was to roll up the cars containing the coal, cinders, and metal cutting to the blast furnaces, where these elements were then melted down. Because this involved difficult work, there were very few people willing to do the job. An order was issued requiring rollers to be fed a special diet. The secretary of the party committee at the plant, a man by the name of Doroshenko, took a few men with him and they set off to catch a few hungry boys, who could be trained to do the work of rollers. They searched everywhere—in and out of town—gathering up all the boys they could find. Near the plant was a Polish Catholic Church which had been closed down. Approximately 80 boys were given cooked groats to eat. When the bosses returned the following morning the boys were all dead. Unable to accommodate so much food, their shrunken stomachs had burst.<sup>87</sup>

Starving villagers inundated train stations in the hope of traveling to areas with more food, but the trains were reserved for those with internal passports or to those who had documents identifying them as collective farmers on a work-related trip approved by the collective's board. Internal passports were issued in December 1932 but not to villagers.

With nothing to eat in the countryside, many fled to the city. More were attracted when in January 1933 the so-called Postyshev bread, obtainable without ration cards, went on sale. As the weather warmed, more and more came.

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<sup>84</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 130.

<sup>85</sup> *First Interim Report*, pp. 18-21; *Second Interim Report*, pp. 5-10.

<sup>86</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 156.

<sup>87</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 21.

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The number of rural refugees in Kharkiv grew with each spring day. Emaciated, with ashen faces, swollen limbs, and blisters all over their bodies, these creatures sat on each side of the bread line, staring expressionlessly at the ground or into space. They had neither the money with which to buy bread nor the strength to stand in line for hours. Once in a while, someone who had been lucky enough to buy bread gave a little to one of these unfortunates. There were cases where they died on the spot, having eaten too large a piece of bread. Some were afraid even to ask the townspeople for bread and begged only for water with outstretched tin cans.

The mothers with babies in their arms made the strongest impression. They seldom mingled with the others. I remember seeing one such mother who looked more like a shadow than a human being. She was standing by the side of the road, and her little skeleton of a child, instead of suckling her mother's empty breast, sucked its own small knuckles thinly covered with translucent skin.

I have no idea how many of the unfortunates I saw managed to survive. Every morning on my way to work, I saw bodies on the pavements, in ditches, under a bush or a tree, which were later carried away. They died in the streets which bore the ever present slogan 'Life has become better, life has become more fun.' Now and then, someone risked his life to add 'for Stalin.' (A. Butkovska)<sup>88</sup>

The quest for food not only drove villagers to Kiev, Kharkiv, Odessa and other cities, but also beyond the borders of Ukraine. An anonymous witness submitted a written statement at the Chicago hearing, "I remember that my father frequently went through the Russian city of Briansk, which is on the border of Ukraine and Russia in order to collect firewood to buy bread and flour."<sup>89</sup> Rev. Bykovets noted that, "To survive the Famine, our family was forced to depend on parishioners who were employed by the railroad, for it was possible for them to bring food beyond the borders of Ukraine and to share it with us."<sup>90</sup>

However, the state tried to prevent Ukrainian peasants from going to Russia or from bringing food back with them. Therefore, as Maria N. recalled, smuggling foodstuffs was risky, fraught with the danger of discovery and punishment:

Some people traveled to Russia and were able to acquire flour, millet and other items through illegal barter, but such good fortune was rare. My mother mustered up the courage to make a trip into Russia. My sister and I gathered all that was best for trading and gave my mother some money for teachers received regular monthly wages, and she departed for Russia to seek her fortune.

She was able to obtain some flour, millet and a bottle of oil, but her happiness was short-lived and ended in tears. At the border, everything was taken away from her, and her name and address was recorded. She was given a severe reprimand never to travel to Russia in search of food or to tell Ukrainians about how the Russians lived.<sup>91</sup>

Peasants traveled to cities not only for food, but also to abandon their children on a city street in the faint hope that they would be picked up by someone who could feed them. Maria N. also stated that in the spring of 1933,

parents who still had the strength to carry their small children drove them on the roofs of the train cars to cities and abandoned them on city streets. The militia picked up the abandoned

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>89</sup> *First Interim Report*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

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children and placed them on the hay in the cattle cars... The children ... looked like skeletons. Filthy and torn, they cried out, 'Bread, bread give me a little piece of bread, Mama.'<sup>92</sup>

The parents generally left their child on a street corner. Noted Mrs. Kardynalowska, "A typical picture I observed many times was of a mother with a baby coming into town and looking for a busy street. She would spread her kerchief on the sidewalk, stop there and watch if anybody would pick up her child."<sup>93</sup> According to Mrs. Butkovska:

Often an emaciated woman would bring her small children to the steps of some apartment building or establishment and order them to stay there 'until she could buy bread,' hoping that someone might rescue them from the certain death they would surely have faced in their native village. Sometimes such children would be picked up by the police, who took them to orphanages, and sometimes the children would leave to look for their mother. Many such children went to railroad stations to beg. Their bodies covered with sores, and their puny arms, with which they swatted away the flies, gave mute testimony to their deteriorating condition. Usually, the trains continued on without stopping, and no one came to the aid of these starving children, who were dying in agony. I once happened to see the police take away two large baskets containing newborn infants, which they had picked up on the streets. The starving mother who had given them birth were unable to sustain their lives and had abandoned them, thinking perhaps that some stroke of luck would save their babies' lives.<sup>94</sup>

A common sight in towns were the homeless children (*bezprizornye* in Russian, *bezprytul'ni* in Ukrainian) who, orphaned or abandoned by their parents, wandered the streets, stole, or scavenged the garbage cans at the cafeterias located at industrial sites. Mrs. Dibert recalled the orphanages where such children were taken:

Near the house where I lived there was a large building. The government converted this building into a so-called "collector" for homeless children caught on the street, and who, after sanitary inspection were sent to orphanages. When leaving my home I would often see how trucks would pull up there and the police would take out the filthy, bedraggled children who had been caught on the streets. A guard stood at the entrance and no one was permitted inside. During the winter of 1932-33 I often saw five or six times how in the early morning others took out of the building the bodies of half-naked children, covered them with filthy tarpaulins, and piled them onto trucks. Going as far as Artem St., I would hear a loudspeaker (at that time there was one in every corner) blare out how children lived in horrible conditions in capitalist countries and what a wonderful life they led in our own Socialist Fatherland.<sup>95</sup>

Mr. Kasiianenko, who survived such an orphanage, called it a "house of torture:"

The children had nothing to eat. It was impossible to keep clean. We were literally eaten by lice. But nobody cared. We were the progeny of the defeated class enemy. The experience of these years is very difficult to describe. The experience of these years of famine loomed before my eyes as if they happened yesterday, yet I am unable to describe them... The orphanage had children of various ages. We were all united by a common tragedy and became very close, like brothers and sisters. But we could not reconcile ourselves to being in the orphanage. Just

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>94</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 24.

<sup>95</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 74.

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imagine, its evening, and the children are all hungry. Someone starts a sad tune and all the rest begin to weep.<sup>96</sup>

There was a concerted effort by the Soviet government to keep the Famine a secret from the population even in places where the Famine occurred. Mr. Merkelo explained that

in newspapers it was always written that the collective farms were blossoming. Even agitators were imported to tell people living in the collective farms how wonderful it was to be there. People understood that this was propaganda, and nobody believed it. I mentioned when I was living with a family from the collective farm the condition of which the brother and sister were in when they returned from one of those meetings.<sup>97</sup>

According to Mrs. Butkovska:

At work no one spoke of the famine or of the bodies in the streets, as if we were all part of a conspiracy of silence. Only with the closest and most trusted of friends would we talk about the terrible news from the villages: Whole villages that had died out to the last inhabitant, or cases of cannibalism where the dying had actually eaten the bodies of those who had already perished. The rumors were confirmed when the townspeople were ordered to the countryside to help with the harvest and saw for themselves whence had come the living skeletons that haunted our city's streets.<sup>98</sup>

She added that children were fed propaganda in school that there was no famine:

In the schools no one knew. The situation in schools was a very ticklish one because the children who went to the town schools were themselves half hungry and the teachers were obligated to say that everything was just fine. They would be asked by the pupils, "Why, if it is all fine, can't we have bread to eat?"<sup>99</sup>

Ivan Oransky, who attended a specialized Institute for the Study of Foreign Languages, said that

for some reason, at the beginning of a lecture on historical materialism at the Technical Institute of Foreign Languages, one of the students mentioned the horror in the streets in Kharkiv, where hungry peasants scurried along the streets as though they were some sort of phantom multiplied a hundredfold with an outstretched hand. It had to be seen with what wrath, with what hatred and wickedness the student was attacked for expressing sympathy by the instructor who called them 'the enemies of the people,' those who are interfering with the government's measures to collectivize agriculture, to get rid of private capitalist property, and to make society fortunate and socialist.<sup>100</sup>

Doctors were ordered not to disclose on the death certificate that the deceased had starved to death. Mr. Keis recalled:

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<sup>96</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 12.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>100</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 130.

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The Soviet government told officials on the *oblast'* and *raion* levels that they must never write on a death certificate that someone had died of starvation. Since the authorities had to account for every single death, even the people who died on the roads and streets, they would make up all sorts of illnesses—intestinal disorders, heart attacks—as causes of death.<sup>101</sup>

Foreigner visitors and residents of the port city of Odessa, were treated to Potemkin villages, built by the authorities to conceal the Famine from outsiders. Mr. Kostyrko testified:

The government did all it could to take the 'surplus' Ukrainian grain and other merchandise abroad. They exported everything in order to get foreign capital for the 'needs of the state'—to buy tractors, and for propaganda abroad, among other things. The city 'cleaned up' the corpses every morning. A special club was created for foreign sailors to prevent them from going into the city and seeing what they could not have missed. At the club, they were entertained and distracted, even with girls.<sup>102</sup>

Both Karavansky and Kostyrko recalled a dearth of corpses in Odessa proper, although many could be found on the outskirts. In the city corpses were scrupulously removed every morning, so as not to attract the attention of foreign visitors.<sup>103</sup> Kostyrko related how the peasants in the village of Grendenitsa were dressed up and temporarily moved to a newly whitewashed and renovated school dormitory in order to impress a group of American farmers invited to observe "the attainments of the new life of the Ukrainian peasant." After the visitors departed, the peasants were stripped of their finery.<sup>104</sup>

In Odessa during French Premier Edouard Herriot's 1933 visit, Mr. Kostyrko also described how the several cars indigenous to the city were ordered driven back and forth so that the city would appear prosperous for the French dignitary.<sup>105</sup> Leonid A. described how he, under an oath of silence, was mobilized as a chauffeur by the leaders of the state farm to drive away bodies in the dead of the night.<sup>106</sup>

The influx of starving peasants into the cities necessitated the dissemination of propaganda to explain what was happening. According to Mr. Karavansky, "In the school which I attended from September 1932 to May 1933, the teacher told us that the *kulaks* (or *kurkai's*) were responsible for the temporary difficulties of the Soviet socialist economy." Children were taught by their parents to curb their natural curiosity about the Famine or the fact that grain was being shipped out of Odessa during it, for "if a child asked about these things in school, the teachers assumed that he had been taught by his parents, who were thus placed in danger."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 22.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>103</sup> *First Interim Report*, pp. 78-82; *Second Interim Report*, pp. 5-10.

<sup>104</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 8.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>106</sup> *First Interim Report*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

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It was quite possible for Soviet citizens in other parts of the USSR to remain unaware of what was taking place in Ukraine. Mrs. Kardynalowska recalled the astonishment of her friends in Russia on her telling them that there had been a famine in Ukraine.<sup>108</sup>

Regardless of whether the witnesses came from the village or the city, they all, in one way or another, came in contact with death. Many lost as many as half of their immediate families to hunger. Ivan Kasiianenko summarized the passing of his entire family:

In March or April of 1933, they took our cow. The first to die was my younger sister. Then another sister. Then my brother and a third sister died at the same time. Father died and was buried on Holy Thursday. Mother died two days later and they threw her in a hole on Easter Sunday.<sup>109</sup>

Stephen C. observed that in his family

in the immediate household, my father's father, then my mother's starved before my very eyes. They buried him in his boots because his feet were too swollen to have them removed... Another aunt, my mother's sister was stabbed to death with a pitch fork for stealing scallions from a neighbor's yard.<sup>110</sup>

Tetiana Kysil noted that six members of her family perished from hunger: Father, mother, sister, two brothers, grandmother, grandfather.<sup>111</sup> Tatiana Pawlichka related a similar story of wholesale extermination:

In February of 1933 there were so few children left that the schools were closed. By this time, there wasn't a cat, dog, or sparrow in the village. In that month my cousin Mykhailo Rudenko died; a month later my cousin Ivan died, as well as my classmate, Dokia Klymenko.<sup>112</sup>

"Mr. A." readily provided a list of family and friends who perished from starvation:

The entire family of Fedir Sich, consisting of six persons, perished. In the family of Vasyl Yarmak, consisting of six persons, only two survived. Of the seven members of the family of Mykhailo Dibrova, only three survived. Of the five members in the family of Mytro Shapoval, only one survived. Of the eight members in the family of Serhiy Mabakh, who was a construction worker, only two survived.<sup>113</sup>

Mrs. Kysil recalled, "I worked in Kharkiv at the time and I remember passing over dead bodies, walking over dead bodies."<sup>114</sup> Mr. Kochno remembered his

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>111</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 57.

<sup>112</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 75.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>114</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 57.



young classmates in the village of Horodetsko near the town of Uman' wasting away as the seasons changed from Fall through Spring:

Those who were skinny in Winter swelled up now, the water went through their bodies, so much so that it was hard to recognize anyone. Then the skin started ripping in their lower legs, so that the water pressure burst their feet ... within thirty to forty-five minutes they fell down and were dead.<sup>115</sup>

Although a majority of the witnesses were themselves children during the Famine, many were both fully cognizant of the situation and recalled in detail the physical anguish they endured. Mrs. Pylypiuk remembered that

in the Summer of 1933 I could no longer take the cow to pasture. My legs were swollen and covered with sores, I was unable to walk. My stepmother had to place me on the chamber pot because I could no longer do it myself... On my twelfth birthday I still could not walk. My eyes were covered with sores.<sup>116</sup>

Perhaps the most moving category of death from starvation are accounts of the elderly who, in the realization of their own impending death sought out graves for themselves. As Mrs. Pylypiuk also testified:

One day my granduncle Nykypir, i.e. my grandfather's brother, came to our house. He was swollen and tired because he had walked a great distance. He told our grandfather that he did not want anything from us; he knew that we had no more than he did. The only thing our granduncle wanted was for us children to help him get to the family grave so that he could die there. The old man embraced our grandfather who could no longer move. My brother and I proceeded to fulfill our granduncle's last request. When he finally reached the cemetery gate he fell, his swollen legs refusing to carry him any further. He died shortly after. Flies covered his entire body; water flowed from his legs. The side of the road was strewn with bodies. Frightened, we rushed home. The following day our stepmother buried him with the help of neighbors. Soon after, father's cousin informed us that one of grandfather's sisters had also died. I don't know what happened to his other sisters because they lived far away. I do know that all my uncles died. In fact almost all our close relatives died.<sup>117</sup>

Daily contact with death created a certain emotional numbness, an indifference to the fate of the dying, particularly the elderly. Stephen C. recalled that his

father's mother also died of hunger. She ate some false flax which causes a sleep-like condition that eventually goes away as the person regains consciousness. My grandmother was already sick so when she fell into the sleep-like state, everyone at home thought she was dead. When they came to bury her, however, they noticed that she was still breathing, but they buried her anyway because they said she was going to die anyway. No one was sorry that they buried her alive.<sup>118</sup>

More horrifying than the destruction of the body was that of the mind of the Famine victims. Hardly a single witness finished testifying without vividly recalling

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<sup>115</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 119.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

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cannibalism, resulting from famine induced insanity, either as hearsay or as something which he or she had witnessed personally. Tatiana Pawlichka, for example, recalled, "On my farmstead, an 18 year-old boy, Danylo Hukhlib, died, and his mother and younger sisters and brothers cut him up and ate him. The communists came and took them away, and we never saw them again."<sup>119</sup> Mr. Keis observed that

there were also instances of cannibalism in Enakievo. Nobody, as a rule, bothered merchants. However, if a person was selling meat, the police would immediately seize the meat to check if it was human or dog meat. There were people who had no qualms about cutting off a piece of flesh from a dead body, which they would then sell in order to get money for bread.<sup>120</sup>

Dr. Helen R. added:

one day my mother came to visit a sick person in the neighborhood and she was whispering something to my father and I could listen when she entered the house. She thought that the people were ill because they did not answer the door. When she entered the house she saw the family was sitting around the table and a baby was separated. They cooked the baby for food. It was 1932.<sup>121</sup>

Anastasia Kh. remembered how near the villages of Novo-Andriivka and Petrovske:

a mother killed her own child near the shocks of wheat. The little girl's name was Halya. The mother stabbed her with scissors and took the meat home to feed her sons. The little boys said the cooked meat was so good that some should be saved for Halya. At these words, the mother went mad. She ran out of the house and began screaming that she had eaten her own child.<sup>122</sup>

Mr. Kasiiianenko recalled a similar incident, concerning an acquaintance:

His name was Ivan Ostapenko. His mother put a noose around his neck and tried to strangle him, but he was stronger than she and managed to break her hold. But he kept the marks the rope left on his throat for a long time to come.<sup>123</sup>

Halyna B. told of a family consisting of an older mother and two sons. "The mother died one evening and the sons were swollen and lost their mind and started cutting up the mother's flesh and baked it on the fire and ate this. But this did not help and within a week both of them died."<sup>124</sup> Jacob K. offered perhaps one of the most chilling accounts of cannibalism:

The woman collective farm workers who were weeding the sugar beets were talking among themselves that their children are missing somewhere. One woman was saying, my son, my little son has disappeared, and no matter where I look I cannot find him.

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>120</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 21.

<sup>121</sup> *First Interim Report*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>123</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 12.

<sup>124</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 126.

Another woman, her neighbor who was with her, I saw your son as he was playing with little Tolya, and Tolya called your little son into his home, and I did not see your son exit. This woman who lost her son immediately went to the head of the collective farm telling him that her son had gone into Tolya's house but has not returned from there.

The head of the collective farm immediately removed the woman from the field, and went to the state farm, took the head (of the village) soviet, took a few policemen with him, and all of them went to Tolya's house.

Tolya was not home. Tolya everyday went to work. He was about 23 years old. As an interested bystander, I went along with the head of the village soviet and the other individuals to Tolya's house.

Tolya was brought from the field and a search was instigated. They found a kind of meat dish, meat dish of jelly cooked with human meat as well as much raw meat in the storehouse, as well as the innards of a human body and the head of the little boy which had been cut off and covered over.

They called to the regional police which immediately arrived after an hour. Upon questioning, Tolya coldly admitted to having killed the little boy, but he also said he had killed his sister, and he himself did not wish to die of hunger, because his own two children had died. I was witness to this tragedy.

The police arrested Tolya as well as several other individuals, including two women, who had been connected with the practice of cannibalism. After this incident, from Kiev there came a whole boxcar load of flour.<sup>125</sup>

Another witness testified that, "In our village there were many instances of cannibalism. One woman killed her three-year-old son. When she fed the cooked meat to her husband, he noticed the bones of little fingers in the dish. He then turned her over to the police." (Stephen C.).<sup>126</sup>

Mr. Danilenko's own family experienced cannibalism, "I was told that my uncle, my father's brother, had been cannibalized in Crimea."<sup>127</sup>

In towns rumors of human flesh being sold in the marketplaces persisted:

There were rumors in Odessa that people were being arrested for selling human sausages in the market place. There was a saying that the sausages 'had been shot.' Such accounts were not published in the newspapers, which only praised the wisdom of the party and the great leader, Stalin. (Sviatoslav Karavansky)<sup>128</sup>

Lydia K. lived at a hospital with her uncle, a doctor, "We saw many bodies dumped into a building which served as a morgue. I heard that sometimes bodies were stolen and especially the brains would be taken by people to eat."<sup>129</sup>

Witnesses lacked any substantive knowledge of the justice system in their former homeland in respect to cannibalism. Asked as to what happened to the mother and her daughters who together ate the son, Danylo, Mrs. Pawlichka replied that, "The communists came and took her away and we never saw them again. People said they took them a little ways off and shot them right away—the little ones and

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<sup>125</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 54.

<sup>126</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 127.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

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the older ones together.”<sup>130</sup> After repeated questioning by Commissioner Mazurkevich and Mr. Roth, Stephen C. said that the woman who ate her three-year-old son had not been subsequently charged with a crime, merely, “Taken away and was never heard from again.”<sup>131</sup> Mr. Kasian was equally vague concerning punishment for cannibalism:

There was an incident where one woman came to Kramatorsk in 1933 and received work as a cleaning lady in the communal barracks. In two weeks, having received some bread, she recuperated but went insane, shouting she had eaten her two children. The militia came and took her away.<sup>132</sup>

He then added more information on the fate of individuals guilty of cannibalism, “My brother was only fourteen in 1931 escaped from exile in the Solovetsky Islands said that thirty-seven persons were serving sentences in the Solovky camps for cannibalism.” But when Commissioner Mazurkevich inquired if there had been a trial, Mr. Kasianenko replied, “Whether or not there was a trial is not clear, but they arrived at the Solovky Camps on the charge of cannibalism.”<sup>133</sup>

Despite its relative brevity, the Famine left a permanent scar. Those who were children during the Famine—and this included a majority of the witnesses—suffered an abbreviated childhood or none at all. Many were forced to join the adults in gleaning grain, doing odd jobs so that the rest of the family might survive, or taking care of the younger children so that parents could take jobs hundreds of kilometers away where there was bread. Mrs. Pylypiuk said, “Because my stepmother had to work at the collective farm I looked after my younger brothers... We needed money to buy bread, so in the Summer of 1932 I went to wash pots at the butter factory.”<sup>134</sup> According to Mr. Danilenko, “In the early spring of 1932 the whole family had to pitch in and look for food. Four of us children went out to dig for sugar beets and potatoes left unharvested from the previous years’ frozen fields.”<sup>135</sup> Motria S. added:

My mother was employed at tending the vegetable gardens and although I was still small, they hired me to do the same. There I got a bowl of soup twice a day and 200 grams of bread. Knowing that my mother and the smaller children were cold and hungry, I ate the soup, but kept the hard, dry bread for them. Although my legs began to swell from hunger, I decided to return to our village with the dried bread. I finally worked up the courage to take the train the forty kilometers back to our village. There were a lot of people on the train. Some were swollen.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

Children emerged as the most pathetic victims of Stalin's policy of starvation. Not only did they suffer extreme privation and the premature loss of childhood, but they were also the victims of a particularly insidious policy orchestrated by the government, a policy of turning children against parents.<sup>137</sup> As Mrs. Pawlichka noted, "They would come to school, trying to seduce the children with candies and sweetmeats, in order to get them to betray their parents, to get them to tell the authorities where they had hidden the food."<sup>138</sup>

Loss of national identity and forced Russification was another tragedy inflicted on the children. Michael Smyk recalled being assigned to the town of Kryvyi Rih which had an orphanage housing children who had lost parents during 1932-33:

Because they had been brought to the orphanage at such an early age that they did not know their own surnames, the children were given new names and surnames, mostly Russian, like Ivanov, Petrov, and so on. The nannies in the orphanage were for the most part Russian and the children spoke only Russian.<sup>139</sup>

As further indication of how families were shattered as a result of the Famine, Mr. Smyk pointed to evidence from the Soviet Ukrainian daily newspaper, *Sil's'ki Visti* (Village News), published in Kiev. The paper carries a regular column called "We Have not Lost Hope," consisting of notices from individuals seeking lost relatives. Although many of the notices referred to war time losses of family members, four of the notices presented by Mr. Smyk were from the Famine years. Two of them illustrate the fate of the many children whose parents could no longer ensure even a meager level of existence:

I always read "We Have not Lost Hope" with emotion. Perhaps our brother, Ivan Pylypovich Moroz is looking for us. I have not forgotten how, when I was five, my older brother Vanya was with us, but I must remember still more. It happened in 1933. Our oldest sister, Motya, went to Kharkiv. Soon mother and father died. We were left alone. My infant brother, Kolya, lay crying in his cradle and I rocked him. Later, he became silent. Then Vanya took me by the hand to the center of the village. As we went, I hit him with my fists.

"Where are you taking me?" I cried. He grasped me to his breast and soothed me. He took me to a nursery where they accepted orphaned children. He looked at me, kissed me, and quickly left. When I was older, I discovered from people that Vanya went to the Lykhachove station. Now Motya lives in Dnipropetrovsk. And I have two daughters, two sons, and six grandchildren. But I cannot forget Vanya. Answer, brother."

Another episode, with a somewhat more auspicious ending occurs in the July 5, 1987 issue of the same periodical. The notice is from Mykola Makarovykh Danylchenko from the village of Khmeliove, Malovyshivsk Raion, Kirovohrad Oblast':

"We lived somewhere near the mine in Mikkiivtsi in Donets Oblast'. I remember the pit hill where my brother and Vanya and I used to play. Not very far from where we lived was a

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<sup>137</sup> The classic example is the still extant cult of Pavlik Morozov, the 14-year-old peasant boy who "unmasked" his father, a former head of the local village Soviet, as a "hidden enemy." After the father was arrested, other villagers, including Pavlik's uncle, killed the little Judas, and the state turned him into a martyr. Pavlik Morozov is still held up as a role model to Soviet children, and his native village of Gerasimovka boasts a statue and museum in his honor. There is also a plaque which reads, "In this timbered house was held the court at which Pavlik unmasked his father who sheltered the kulaks. Here are the reliquaries dear to the heart of every inhabitant of Gerasimovka." Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, p. 295.

<sup>138</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 76.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

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market place. In 1933, my mother went somewhere with my oldest sister, Vera, leaving me and my brother in my father's care. He took us to the market, sat us down on some burlap and told us, 'Wait here until I return.' By evening he still had not returned. When they took us inside the orphanage, I ran away. I wandered around the city until a gypsy took me by the hand. 'Are you by yourself?' he asked gently, and I felt the warmth of his hand through my clothes.

"He took me to a tiny hut where there was a woman and four children. 'And this is our fifth,' he told his wife, gently pushing me toward her. She gave me a maternal laugh. 'We'll be eating soon, son,' she said, and started to set the table.

It later turned out that my adopted father was the well-known welder, Mykola (I don't know his patronymic) Kholupenko. He enrolled me in a technical school where I learned his trade. The war separated us, but this very day, I owe my gratitude to Mykola Kholupenko, his wife and children and would very much like to see them again.

Maybe brother Vanya remembers our family and the day that we had to wait so long for our own father. But if he's forgotten, perhaps he'll recognize himself from the following physical characteristics, which perhaps have survived to this very day. On one side of his face, there was a birthmark the size of a cherry, which was like an earring, and on his chest, there was a mark that resembled a plum. Answer brother.<sup>140</sup>

The Famine contributed significantly to the geographical dispersion of Ukrainians to other areas of the USSR. In reply to Senator DeConcini's query as to whether there was any immigration from Ukraine to other parts of the Caucasus, Mr. Kostyrko replied that, because of the region's close proximity to Ukraine "mostly people went to the Caucasus."<sup>141</sup> When Mr. Karavansky's father, a shipyard employee in Odessa traveled to Batumi on a cruise in 1934, he observed that a large number of Ukrainian peasants had migrated to Georgia where there was no food shortage and no famine." Karavansky also observed that in 1970 he and his wife met a woman in the village of Tarussa (Kaluga region) who spoke with a strong Ukrainian accent. Born in Kiev she had found shelter in Tarussa, where she later married and settled down.<sup>142</sup>

Witnesses sometimes noted that the Famine was but one of several events that decimated their family:

My mother died of hunger in the village K. in the Poltava region. Her sister and her two children also perished from hunger. About the rest of my relatives I know nothing. The little I do know, I discovered when I returned to the village in 1941 during the German occupation. That was the first time I had set foot in the village of my birth since my escape in 1929. During all the intervening years, I never corresponded with my mother. In 1941 when I returned to K. and discovered that my mother had died of starvation, as had several families in the village, I was also told that my father had been shot in 1937. Surviving neighbors also told me that my younger brother had been taken from the institute where he was studying and also shot as 'an enemy of the Soviet people.' (Ivan M.)<sup>143</sup>

The deepest scars left by the Famine were psychological. Asked by Commissioner Fedorak to explain the Ukrainian community's attitude toward the Famine in retrospect, Anastasia Kh. replied, "People have very much bitterness because they still remember that in almost every family somebody died, and people

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>141</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 9.

<sup>142</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 79, 80. Quotation from p. 79.

<sup>143</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 36.

didn't trust anybody any more. If somebody comes into your house and asks you questions, you were afraid to tell them because you didn't know who they were."<sup>144</sup> On the other hand, witnesses like Dr. Helen K. noted an increased appreciation of life instilled in her by the horrifying tragedy of the Famine, "It was permanent suffering. I must say that I am very happy that I did not become depressed person. I'm a happy person because I have seen these terrible experiences. Somehow destiny chose for me to enjoy life."<sup>145</sup>

American attitudes toward the Famine of 1932-33 were seen by many witnesses as exhibiting a lack of interest and disbelief. When Ivan M. was asked if he had ever shared his experiences with American friends, he replied, "I always to Americans explained and said you could be someday in same position... They talk about cars, about jobs, about football. They not interested."<sup>146</sup> Mrs. Harmash added:

And for American people, we tried to tell them, we still do, and with most of them, it would be absolute indifference ... or they will say, oh yea, we had hunger too. Our people had to look in the trash cans for a rotten apple. I say trash cans? We didn't know what trash cans means. Nothing was thrown in the trash cans in our country.<sup>147</sup>

Such testimony represents in more concentrated and accessible form the type of material present in the CUF Oral History Project. It is not only invaluable in carrying out the Commission's mandate of gathering information about the Famine and thereby adding to the historical record of this tragic event; it constitutes moving evidence of the indomitable resilience and courage of the human spirit. Public hearings also provided Commission members their only opportunity to meet with and hear personally those who witnessed the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine. Those who had the courage to come forward and testify publicly made a tremendous contribution to the Commission's work. As Senator DeConcini put it in his opening statement at the San Francisco hearing, "They must face the pain of remembering traumas which most of us can scarcely imagine. They have accepted the responsibility of exposing Soviet lies with truth."<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> *First Interim Report*, p. 158.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>146</sup> *Second Interim Report*, p. 38.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

## Chapter 8

### ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The goal of the Oral History Project of the Commission on the Ukraine Famine (CUF) is to add to the historical record by taping, transcribing, and making available for research as many oral histories of survivors of the Ukrainian Famine as possible. The Commission currently has 179 oral historical accounts drawn from three sources: The 1984 Ukrainian Famine Oral History Pilot Project, the CUF Project, and tapes and transcripts sent to CUF by individual volunteers.

The Ukrainian Famine Oral History Pilot Project was designed and directed by James E. Mace, then a research associate at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, and was sponsored by a grant from the Ukrainian-American Professionals and Businesspersons Association of New York and New Jersey. Leonid Heretz, a Harvard graduate student in Russian history, was retained as a full time oral historian during the Summer of 1984 and collected 57 oral histories based on a questionnaire worked out jointly with Dr. Mace. At the beginning it was decided that after collecting personal data on the subject, the main objective was to obtain as much qualitative information as possible. Questions were only a guide, and much discretion was left to the interviewer. For this reason, the set of questions evolved over the course of the project. Interviews were conducted in Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, and English.

The CUF Oral History Project was a direct continuation of the 1984 project. Mr. Heretz was retained on a contract basis to train CUF oral historian Sue Ellen Webber and to collect an additional 10 interviews in the Rochester, New York area. Ms. Webber collected 99 oral histories before leaving the Commission in March 1987 for other employment.

The Commission also received a number of oral histories done by other individuals and institutions, as well as unsolicited testimonies and written statements, adding invaluable material to the historical record that would otherwise be lost. It has been saved only thanks to this grass-roots initiative of the Ukrainian-American community.

#### *Problems of Sample and Reliability of Testimony*

The problem of finding witnesses willing to be interviewed has presented major difficulties throughout. One reason is the emotional cost to the subject of recounting deeply traumatic experiences of his or her life. Many individuals feel that their experiences and observations have no particular value because "everybody else saw the same things as I did." There is also sometimes a feeling of guilt felt by the narrator that he or she survived while so many friends and relatives did not.

However, former Soviet citizens have other valid reasons for their reluctance to grant an interview—reasons which are rooted in the Soviet experience. At the time when most Famine witnesses left the USSR, the 1934 law on treason was still



in force. This law instituted what amounted to a hostage system in that the relatives of a "traitor," a term very loosely defined at the time, could be punished even if they lacked foreknowledge of the treasonable act.<sup>1</sup> This has engendered a strong fear of reprisals against one's relatives still living in the Soviet Union should one "give away the secret of the Famine."

As a result, fully two-thirds of persons approached by an oral historian have been unwilling to talk under any circumstances. Of those who consent to an interview, two-thirds do so only under a guarantee of absolute anonymity. This is ensured by keeping no record of an anonymous eyewitness's identity. The oral historian is under strict instructions not to reveal the subject's name, even to CUF personnel. This rule was made explicit after anonymity became an issue following the 1984 Pilot Project. At that time, some well-meaning Ukrainian community activists questioned the credibility of anonymous testimony and urged the oral historian to provide a list of names of anonymous witnesses to be kept under seal at a well-known Ukrainian-American community organization for a specified period of time. The project director and oral historian argued forcefully that the existence of any such list would mean reneging on the assurances given the witnesses. Under such circumstances, it was felt that the obligations made to the narrators must take precedence even over the credibility of the testimony. In any case, the necessity of anonymity in any project involving the testimony of former Soviet citizens has long been taken for granted by scholars in the field of Soviet studies.

For this reason, primary responsibility for locating Famine survivors must reside with the oral historian. The most usual way of reaching witnesses is, of course, through Ukrainian-American community structures, especially the clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. After the first interview, the narrator of the oral history will then often call acquaintances and urge them to consent to an interview. From this arises the problem of the project being based upon a self-selecting sample, which cannot be said to reflect the general population of witnesses to the Famine. Only a minority of the general population of the Ukrainian SSR, as constituted before September 17, 1939, decided to emigrate during the later stages of World War II.

This might give credence to the representatives of the perpetrator government who attempt to deny the Famine's historicity. One such representative, Academician Ivan Khmil' of the UkSSR Academy of Sciences, responded to the issue of the Ukrainian Famine on October 19, 1983, in the United Nations General Assembly. According to Khmil', the study of the "alleged famine which was supposed to have occurred in the Ukrainian SSR fifty years ago" is merely a "slander" based upon the testimony of "Ukrainian bourgeois-nationalists" who had served Hitler and fled to the United States, where, "in order to justify their presence in that country, (they) had circulated the lie about the famine."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The All-Union Central Executive Committee decree of June 8, 1934, legalized a hostage system by ordering the adult members of the family of a traitor or soldier fleeing abroad, even if they had no knowledge of such treason, "exiled to the remotest districts of Siberia for a term of five years." Those who had such knowledge and failed to report it, were dealt with less leniency. English text in James H. Meisel and Edward S. Kozera, eds., *Materials for the Study of the Soviet System: State and Party Constitutions, Laws, Decrees, Decisions and Officials of the Leaders in Translation* (Ann Arbor, Wahr, 1953), p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> *United Nations General Assembly, Thirty-Eighth Session, A/C.3/38/SR.17*, for October 19, 1983.

No oral history project relying on emigrants from the USSR can claim to have found a representative sample of the Soviet population or of any subgroup within it, either at present or at the time of the sample's emigration. This was recognized even by those who carried out the pioneer project in this field, the Harvard University Refugee Interview Project, 35 years ago. As Alex Inkeles and Raymond Bauer put it in connection with that project:

Since our sample can in no event be deemed representative of the Soviet population, the crucial question is whether or not it is possible to draw valid inferences from such a presumably biased sample, and, if so, what limitations there are on such inferences. Any sample of former Soviet citizens will be fundamentally different from the Soviet population from which it was drawn, and therefore unrepresentative in some sense. On the other hand, any sample, no matter how drawn, shares certain features with the parent population... The question of sample bias can be answered only in the context of the specific type of analysis which is made, and the specific inferences which are drawn.<sup>3</sup>

What, then, may be said of this particular sample?

In terms of "class origin," if one may be pardoned for using the Soviet terminology, *dekulakized* peasants seem to be somewhat overrepresented in relation to the total population of pre-war Soviet Ukraine. This stratum of the population was far more likely to flee the return of the Soviet regime in 1943-44. The central regions of Ukraine are also somewhat overrepresented, due to the fact that the return of the Soviet order was interrupted by a German counteroffensive in this area. The population of this region thus had a recent experience of "Soviet reality" to help them in making up their minds whether or not to flee.

In reference to the charge that the narrators of the oral history project are "bourgeois-nationalists," a number of observations must be made. In the first place, it is historically incorrect to attribute anything particularly "bourgeois" to the nationalism of the Dnieper Ukrainians, unless one accepts Lenin's dictum that all national aspirations are by definition "bourgeois-nationalism." Ukrainian nationalism in the Russian Empire arose out of the socialist movement, and one of its basic tenets was that the "bourgeoislessness" (*bezburzhuznist'*) of the Ukrainian people meant that the quest for Ukrainian home rule (*samostiinist'*) would necessarily go hand in hand with the struggle for socialism. Anti-socialist authoritarian ideologies such as monarchism and integral nationalism appealed primarily to Western Ukrainians, while the only post-war Ukrainian émigré political party with substantial appeal for Dnieper Ukrainians, the Ukrainian Revolutionary Democratic Party, was firmly socialist in its orientation, at least in the immediate post-war years.

The political attitude questions of the Pilot Project (LH series), in contrast to the Webber interviews (SW series), showed the narrators to have had the most positive attitudes toward either the anarchist chieftains Makhno and Marusia or various peasant warlords (*otamans*), and only secondarily toward the Ukrainian nationalist leader Petliura. In view of this circumstance, it may be safely assumed that Mr. Heretz was more successful in reaching beyond the structure of the organized Ukrainian-American community than was Ms. Webber and thus that the two series represent somewhat different samples. Yet the experiences related in each series

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<sup>3</sup> Alex Inkeles and Raymond A. Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen: Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society* (New York, Atheneum, 1968), p. 26.

correlate almost completely. This would in turn tend to indicate that adherence to the organized Ukrainian-American community and the sharing of its perceptions and values did not to any discernable extent color the narrators' memories of what they witnessed, though it might well have colored their interpretation of the events narrated.

The openness of the narrator was inversely related to his or her social status. Women, who are generally allocated less social status in a traditional peasant society than men, were as a group far more open than men of the same social status. Persons of higher educational attainment or social status, especially males, often became reticent when asked to go beyond generalities, probably because they were often considered part of the *aktiv*, the active element upon which the regime called to carry out its various campaigns, and were forced to do unsavory things. The role of teachers was especially notable in this respect. Villagers, regardless of their social status in the village, were most likely to provide detailed and graphic scenes of horror. Those who had been dekulakized, although they tended to have somewhat higher status in the village before being dekulakized, the fact that they were singled out as class enemies and repressed gave them more grievances against the state. It should also be noted that dekulakization did not necessarily mean that the "kulaks" had been more prosperous than their neighbors—especially in the later stages of mass dekulakization (1931-1932) the term *kulak* was as much a political as a class category—and many of those dekulakized were identified as "subkulaks" or "kulak agents."<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the Pilot Project sample includes a substantial number of witnesses who lack any connection with Ukrainian nationalism, bourgeois or otherwise. Mr. Heretz was able to draw upon a wide range of personal and family contacts in order to reach outside the secular and religious structures of the Ukrainian-American community to interview a substantial number of individuals who did not read the Ukrainian-language press, participate in community organizations, or attend Ukrainian churches. Since they lacked contact with the organized community, it is safe to assume that their perceptions of what they experienced have not been influenced to any significant degree by community lore. Moreover, the evidence from the Soviet press organ *Sil's'ki Visti* by Michael Smyk to the Commission indicates that a significant segment of the Soviet Ukrainian population shares similar experiences.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the witnesses, of course, may have collaborated with the Germans. The Germans managed to find at least some people to work for them in every country they occupied, and such people had a strong motive to emigrate before falling into the hands of the Soviets. It has often been pointed out, however, that such individuals tend to seek obscurity rather than visibility and become "quiet neighbors." Moreover, Ukrainian community perceptions of the OSI would tend to indicate that former collaborators, who have real reasons for concern about the OSI, would be the least likely group to consent to be interviewed.

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<sup>4</sup> The Ukrainian language terms *pidkarkul'nyk* and *pobichnyk hlytaia* were among the official designations of such individuals.

<sup>5</sup> *First Interim Report of Meetings and Hearings of and before the Commission on the Ukraine Famine Held in 1986* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1987), pp. 165-167.

### *Oral History Project*

In any case, the claim that nearly 200 witnesses, most of whom have never met each other and whose statements on tape reflect all the various dialects of pre-1939 Soviet Ukraine, could all be repeating the same inventions is a *prima facie* absurdity. After more than half a century, details are sometimes garbled, dates are sometimes given inaccurately, and certain perceptions are often colored by later experiences and ideas. This is why oral historical sources are ideally used as only one of a number of sources for the reconstruction of a given historical event. However, the basic consistency of such a large number of accounts serves as the final guarantee of their basic veracity.

### *The Interview Process*

The procedure worked out during the Pilot Project and adopted by the CUF Project usually involved the oral historian conducting the interview in the narrator's home. Much time and energy was saved in those instances when community and church leaders were able to bring several witnesses together at a single location. Interviews were occasionally done jointly, at the narrator's request, where two or more people decided to meet the interviewer simultaneously and discuss their individual experiences together. Accommodating the narrator took precedence over standardization of the interview process, and every effort was made to make the subject as comfortable and reassured as possible.

Normally the process began with a brief unrecorded conversation between the interviewer and the narrator, which helped to put the latter at ease. The interviewer explained the type of questions that would be asked and how the narrator should speak clearly and distinctly for the record, but despite this, indistinct words and phrases often marred otherwise valuable work. The narrator was also given the option of anonymity. Every effort was made to prevent the oral historian from giving cues, and even obviously incorrect dates and details were ignored. Witnesses were never "corrected."

Specific questions varied with the individual narrator and the evolution of the two interconnected projects such that no single set of questions were used throughout. The oral historian was instructed to memorize and internalize basic questions. The narrator was allowed to set the agenda of the interview as much as possible. Basic information elicited in most interviews included the narrator's year and place of birth (village or *sil'rada*, district, and region), parents' and narrator's occupation and social status, the amount of land owned by the narrator or his or her family, the approximate population of his or her village, and his or her contacts with the Soviet government and Communist Party members, supporters, and organizations. The narrator was then asked to compare life under the old regime, life under the Soviets before the crash collectivization of agriculture, and life under the Soviets after collectivization. Then specific institutions were covered (the church, the village *aktyv*, the village soviet, the Committee of Non-Wealthy Peasants, and schools) and about the participation of local villagers and persons sent from outside the village in them. Specific questions were asked about the revolution, dekulakization, and collectivization.

Dekulakization and collectivization led naturally to the basic issue of state procurements of agricultural produce and the Famine of 1933. This is the core of

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the interview and the most difficult, because only a relatively few set questions are appropriate to virtually all rural subjects:

**What portion of the harvest was taken by the state?**

**Was this too much?**

**Who took the grain? What happened to them?**

**Was there active opposition to the state procurements?**

**Was there famine in your area? (following if "yes")**

**When did it begin?**

**Did members of your family die? If so, who?**

**Did you know anyone else who died?**

**How many people died in your village?**

**How did people save themselves?**

**How did you save yourself?**

**Did you leave your village during the Famine? Where did you go?**

**Did you leave the Ukrainian SSR? Was it difficult? What sort of barriers did you encounter? How were things different where you went?**

**Did you hear of outbreaks of cannibalism? What did you hear?**

**Did you have personal knowledge of cannibalism? What was it?**

**Why was there a famine?**

**When did it end? Why?**

For urban residents the questions were a bit different:

**When did you first see hungry villagers?**

**How did the government deal with them?**

**Was there enough bread in the city?**

**How much bread did workers get?**

**How much bread did you get? How?**

**Did you buy commercial bread in early 1933? How much did it cost?**

**Did you leave Ukraine during the Famine? How were things different where you went?**

**What did the government say about the situation during the Famine?**

**Do you know the extent of the Famine?**

**How did you learn this?**

**When and how did the Famine end?**

## *Oral History Project*

### *Preliminary results*

From the testimonies we have learned that the Ukrainian peasants saw life under the tsars as preferable to either War Communism or post-collectivization Soviet life. Best of all was the interval between War Communism and Stalinism, the brief period of the New Economic Policy (1921-1927), when the peasants had the landlords' land and could sell their surplus produce on a limited free market. In the peasant's mind, the intensified pressure on the peasantry from the return to forced requisition and increasing pressure on the *kulaks*, which began in the second half of 1927, so fades into a single impression with dekulakization, in December 1929, that no distinction is made between them. Yet, the forced collectivization of agriculture, which began conterminously and was carried out in close conjunction with dekulakization, was perceived as something separate and distinct. One is tempted to surmise that for the peasant who was not dekulakized but in typically Ukrainian individualistic fashion took advantage of his neighbors expropriation in order to enrich himself from the spoils, this act was seen as the original sin from which the succeeding calamities of collectivization, grain seizures, and starvation flowed.

In terms of factual observation, all respondents agreed that the collective farm was detested by the peasantry, with most of those who joined voluntarily being relatively well-off peasants who hoped that entry into the *kolhosp* would prevent their being dekulakized. Resistance to the collective farms was widespread and was often led by poor peasants, former Red Army men, and sometimes by former communists. Every single respondent from the village witnessed forcible seizure of foodstuffs before and during the Famine, and by and large they attributed the Famine to this. Not one single villager attributed the Famine to a crop failure. Most discerned a punitive intent and gratuitous destructiveness in the way in which the grain searches were carried out. Most also believed that the authorities had a personal interest in their fate: The narrator often believed that they wanted him or her to die.

Although the grain seizures were usually instituted and led by persons not native to the given village and not of Ukrainian nationality, there is no doubt that the vast majority of the people who carried out the grain procurements were local Ukrainians and natives to the given village. This is often troubling to respondents with closer ties to organized Ukrainian-American life, who occasionally followed a statement to this effect with a query as to whether he or she has given the "correct" answer. Upon being assured that the project goal is to get the truth, the narrator then would warm to the subject of who these people were. The narrators usually described them as being extremely poor peasants who were eager to ingratiate themselves with the authorities. They were described as lazy people who spent their days doing nothing but having a good time, while the industrious peasants worked hard and earned a good living. It should be stressed that the Ukrainian peasant has traditionally identified poverty with sloth and prosperity with hard work. Their actions were usually attributed to jealousy and the opportunity to get something for nothing. The Ukrainian term *holota* was often used, an untranslatable word roughly equivalent to the term "white trash" used in the American South, but lacking the latter's racial content. Other terms often

employed were useless babblers, lazy good-for-nothings, the *temnota* (the ignorant), and smokers of *makhorka* (cheap tobacco).

As a personal experience, the Famine was a struggle for survival against incredible odds. The struggle to stay alive is moving for even the most hardened listener. Those who survived did so by fleeing the village to seek work in industry, hiding food, stealing it from the collective farms, eating plants and animals not traditionally consumed by the culture, going to Russia to buy food, and by trading heirlooms and other valuables at the *torgsin*. There were also many accounts of cannibalism, some of which are described in rather grizzly detail.

Those sent from the cities to carry out the food seizures and their local helpers were exceedingly thorough in searching individual peasant houses. Long wooden pikes with metal points were used to poke the dirt floor and the ground outside in hopes of finding a soft spot, betraying a buried cache of food. Stoves were often torn apart. It was not unusual for the grain procurements brigades to examine livestock manure for hidden kernels of grain. When food was found, the "hoarder" was often arrested for violating the law of August 7, 1932, on socialist property and imprisoned. On other occasions, punishment was handled less formally: One respondent tells about two boys who caught frogs and fish, were arrested, taken to the village soviet, and beaten. Then they were taken into a field where their hands were tied behind their backs and their mouths and noses bound. They were left there to suffocate. This is but one example of how the village authorities did everything in its power to deny all sustenance to the population.

The starving searched endlessly for food. Villagers turned to eating roots, flowers, leaves, and tree bark to assuage their hunger pangs. Soups and cakes were often made out of such ingredients. People ate dogs, cats, rats, birds, insects, and grubs for meat. Because of the slaughtering of pets and the passivity of the starving, the villages fell silent. One account describes a case where two starving boys ripped apart a live rat and ate it raw on the spot. There were occasions when even success in the endless quest for food was fatal. One narrator related the case of a woman who found some dried beans and immediately ate them raw. Soon thereafter, her stomach began to react violently to the expanding beans, and she died when her stomach burst. Other accounts relate similar happenings.

The extension of the *torgsin* apparatus to provincial cities during the Famine made the strongest impression on the peasantry, and the seemingly fantastic array of foods available in the *torgsins* were often cited as evidence of the Famine's artificiality.

Besides going to the *torgsin*, villagers also went to the cities in hopes of finding, begging, bartering for, or buying food. One urban narrator recalled seeing a continuous flow of peasants into Kiev. Many of these people would just sit along the walls of buildings, begging for food until they died there. Trucks served as dead wagons and came by periodically on routine rounds to pick up the bodies of the dead and near dead. The drivers were often described as tossing the bodies on the bed like firewood. Peasants from central and northeastern Ukraine often made their way to the Donbas (Donets River Basin), where it was easy to find work in heavy industry and coal mining. It was a difficult life, but it offered the chance of survival. In fact, residents of the Donbas sometimes became so isolated from the countryside that they were unaware of conditions in the villages.

Some men who still had enough energy managed to travel to Russia to buy food and bring it back to their families in Ukraine. One narrator, originally from the Poltava region, told how his father, who had become a railroad worker after his lands were seized in 1932, was able to take a train to Russia and buy bread there but had to surrender it to the militia<sup>6</sup> as the train approached the Ukrainian border.

Another incident also illustrates the government's policy of preventing the starving from leaving Ukraine for Russia, where food supplies were scarce but at least extant. A priest's son from the city of Dnipropetrovsk told how he had been able to travel to Russia to buy food. He described the beginning of his journey as something like Sodom and Gomorrah. There were thousands of people milling around the train station trying to buy tickets to Russia.<sup>7</sup> Preference was given to government officials. The militia were constantly admonishing the peasants to stay away from the ticket counters, and the disobedient were often fined and arrested. On the third day the narrator managed to buy a ticket through a contact, having spent the intervening time at the station and able to buy only a bottle of carbonated water flavored with fruit syrup. He thought he might be able to assuage his hunger in Kharkiv, but there was such a crowd of people at that station that he could not leave the train. At one of the first stops across the border in Russia, he saw local villagers who had come with prepared foods to sell to the passengers: Potato pancakes, milk, sour cream, and home-made crackers. He bought a bottle of molasses at this stop. He was disgusted with the wood shavings and dirt in it, but hunger overpowered his revulsion, and he drank it. When he reached his destination, the city of Orlov which was about 100 miles from Kharkiv, he found life there completely different from what he had left. There was no starvation, and the grocery stores were well stocked. On market day, the peasants did not come with a bag carried over their shoulders but with a wagon full of bags of flour and potatoes. There were even horses for sale, a far cry from the situation in Ukraine, where they had either been killed for food or died of starvation. After buying their food, the Ukrainians who had gone there were too tired to return to the station on foot and hired a wagon to take them. Once they had loaded their purchases into the back of the wagon, the militia rounded them up and charged them all with speculation. The narrator, however, was younger and stronger than the rest. He grabbed his goods and ran into a field, where he hid his things under some leaves. That evening he retrieved them. Luckily, the only obstacle he faced was paying a fee for excess baggage. Once back home, he was asked what had taken him so long.

The oral histories contain the most gruesome details of cannibalism. None of the narrators ever admitted to participating in it him- or herself, but most were aware of instances, at least through secondhand sources. Cannibalism was attributed to those whom starvation had driven insane and, thus, were close to death, which at least makes plausible the assumption that those who were not caught and punished were likely to perish themselves. Often repeated are rumors that human meat was being sold in urban markets, and many urban residents

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<sup>6</sup> During the revolution Lenin abolished the police and replaced them with the so-called people's militia. This is why the police in the Soviet Union are always called "militia."

<sup>7</sup> At this time there were strict orders given to railroad officials in Ukraine not to sell tickets to peasants to go to Russia.



## *Chapter 8*

meat there for fear that it was human. Parents also warned their children not to wander for fear of their being eaten.

This is but a sample of the information collected by the Oral History Project. These testimonies have been transcribed, ten samples have been translated in full and form Appendix I, and all will be published in the original language with 100-150 word summaries in English. It is hoped that this will constitute an important body of source material which will undoubtedly make possible major contributions to our understanding of the tragedy that took place over half a century ago in Ukraine.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

*administrative measures (administratyvni/administraticheskie mery)* – brute force applied in an arbitrary fashion. The tendency toward overreliance on administrative measures is also called *administruvannia/administruvanie*).

*aktiv* (Russian *aktiv*) – the collective of active supporters of the Soviet system and Communist Party upon which the regime called to carry out its policies.

*apparat/aparat* – administrative apparatus or jurisdiction.

*centner (tsentner)* – 100 kilograms.

*collectivization* – the process of consolidating individual peasant holdings into centralized collective farms, theoretically owned by the peasant-members, but actually controlled by the state. The slogan adopted at the end of 1929 was *sploshnaia kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziaistva na osnove likvidatsii kulachestva kak klassa* (Russian; in Ukrainian *sploshna kolektyvizatsiia sil'skoho hospodarstva na osnovi likvydatsii hlytaistva [or karkul'stva] iak klasya*) total (or immediate or crash) collectivization of agriculture on the basis of the liquidation of the *kulaks* as a class. *Sploshnaia kollektivizatsiia* is also translated as forced collectivization, since the peasants were forced to sign up voluntarily as members of the new collective farms, which seemed to many to be indistinguishable from the pre-emancipation serf estates.

*CP(b)U* – Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine.

*dekulakization* (Ukrainian *rozkarkulennia*; Russian *razkulachivanie*) – the expropriation of all property and disenfranchisement of so-called *kulaks*. Often followed by arrest, imprisonment or exile.

*desiatyna* – a traditional East Slavic land measurement of 2.7 acres.

*deviation* (Ukrainian *ukhyl*; Russian *uklon*) – failure (by a member or members of the Communist Party) to understand or implement correctly the Party's General Line or the establishment of a "line" different from the General Line. The Party, by defining the General Line, also defined deviation (that which is not the General Line). Policy changes often took the form of condemning ideas earlier considered acceptable or even mandatory as either a Right or "Left" deviation ("Left" deviation in Stalinist usage always used quotation marks as a way of asserting that the only true Leftism was the Stalinist General Line). Any conceivable course of action could at any moment be condemned by the Party as either a form of the

Right or “Left” deviation, allowing Stalin personally to avoid responsibility should something not work out or to turn on any Party group or individual at any time.

*distortions* (Ukrainian *perekruzhennia*; Russian *iskrivlenie*)—a “leftist deviation” consisting in an overreliance on administrative measures in dealing with the peasantry.

“Dizzyness from Success” (*Golovokruzhenie ot uspekhev*)—Stalin’s March 1930 speech condemning excesses and “violation of the Leninist principle of voluntarism in the collective farm movement.” Peasants were subsequently allowed to leave the collective farms. Most did so only to be subsequently forced to rejoin them “voluntarily.”

*General Line*—that which is true and/or correct as defined by the Communist Party.

*kolhosp* (Ukrainian: short for *kolektyvne gospodarstvo*) or *kolkhoz* (Russian: short for *kollektivnoe khoziaistvo*)—collective farm.

*kolhospnyk/kolkhoznik*—collective farmer

*komnezam* (short for *komitet(y) nezamozhnykh selian*, also referred to by its initials *KNS*)—Committee(s) of Non-Wealthy Peasants in Ukraine. A voluntary organization of that stratum of the village population which Ukrainians refer to as *holota* and Americans refer to as “white trash.” Founded in 1920, the *komnezam* was conceived as “a militant class organization of the village poor” and near-poor on the model of the early Russo-Ukrainian Committees of the Village Poor (*kombed(y)*) and were allowed to conduct their own program of expropriating *kulak* “surplus” property (and keep it) until mid-1923, functioned as state organs with functions overlapping that of the *sil’rada* until mid-1925, and at the time of forced collectivization operated as the regime’s basic support organization in the village, with its members being allowed to keep 15-20% of all the grain they seized from other peasants. Once the Famine occurred, however, no provision was made for the sustenance of the organization’s members, and many starved. The *komnezamy* were abolished at the height of the Famine in April 1933, ostensibly because the attainment of complete collectivization had made the existence of such a militant class organization unnecessary. An alternative explanation is that its membership was no longer much good to anyone, neither the regime nor themselves.

*kulak* (Russian) or *kurkul’* (Ukrainian)—officially a rural capitalist who hired labor, actually sort of a generic rural class enemy, a member of the upper socio-economic stratum of the village. In official Soviet Ukrainian usage at the height of dekulakization the term *kurkul’* was almost completely replaced by the even more pejorative *hlytai*. If the “class enemy” marked for “liquidation” was too poor for the term *kulak* to be used, he would be disenfranchised as a *subkulak* (*pidkurkul’nyk*; *podkulachnik*) or *kulak sidekick* (*pobichnyk hlytaia*).

“Left” *distortionism*—overreliance on force when dealing with the peasants.

### *Glossary of Terms*

**MTS**—Machine Tractor Station. Under Stalin, MTS owned the farm machinery, which was used to work the land, and also functioned as a basic instrument of control by the urban-based regime over the countryside. Disbanded in the 1950s.

**Old Bolshevik**—official Soviet term for a person who had joined the Communist Party before 1917.

**pood (pud)**—a Slavic measurement of weight equal to 36 pounds.

**political section** (in Russian *politotdel*; in Ukrainian *politviddil*)—established in the state farms and MTS in 1933 to oversee all work in agriculture and especially to combat (purge) class enemies from the collective farms. Replaced the more rough and ready expedient of the **Thousanders**.

**quintal**—a hundredweight, 100 kilograms or 220 lbs.

**Right Opportunism**—failure to employ energetic measures (i.e., force) sufficiently in dealing with the peasantry.

**sil'rada** (Russian *sel'sovet*)—short for *sil's'ka rada* (*sel'skii soviet*), village soviet or council.

**stanitsa**—Cossack settlement usually larger than a village but often lacking some of the attributes of a town.

**Thousanders** (*tysiachniki/tysiachnyky*)—usually refers to the so-called Twenty-Five Thousanders (*dvadtsatipiatitysiachniki*), although there were also the Ten Thousanders and One Hundred Thousanders. The Twenty-Five Thousanders were recruited among urban workers of several years seniority who volunteered for permanent work in the countryside as part of a Union-wide campaign in 1929. Their initial task was to carry out the “total collectivization of agriculture on the basis of the liquidation of the *kulaks* as a class,” but many later became collective farm chairmen or board members, or were assigned to work in the MTS. About 7,000 of the roughly 27,000 the Twenty-Five Thousanders selected from the far greater pool of volunteers were from Ukraine. No more than 10,000 at most were ever assigned to Ukraine. Upon arrival in a given village they had absolute authority over all village inhabitants and institutions. In 1933, their function was assumed by a new institution, the Political Section. They were not, as many Ukrainians mistakenly believe, an army of 25,000 sent from Russia to Ukraine.

**torgsin** (abbreviation of *torgovlia s inostrantsami*, “trade with foreigners”)—a chain of state-owned stores, initially in major cities and exclusively for trade with foreigners, which during the Famine was extended to provincial cities and large towns. *Torgsin* did not accept Soviet currency in payment for goods, but only precious metals and convertible foreign currencies (known as *valuta*). *Torgsin* stores contained goods and foodstuffs either unavailable elsewhere or of higher quality than could be had elsewhere in the USSR. *Torgsin* also operated in the West as the sole legal channel through which foreign funds could be transferred to

### *Glossary of Terms*

**Soviet citizens.** During the Famine private individuals and organizations could purchase *valuta* certificates for individual Soviet citizens which could then be redeemed by the recipient at a *torgsin* store.

***Ukrainization (ukrainizatsiia)*** – the official nationality policy applied by the Soviet state to Ukrainians for a decade before the Famine and abandoned in 1933. Ukrainization was designed to give the Soviet Ukrainian regime, initially imposed by Lenin with Russian troops, some veneer of national legitimacy in the eyes of Ukrainians by subsidizing national cultural activities and institutions, by fostering the retention of the Ukrainian language by peasants newly drawn to the Red Army as well as to industrial and urban areas, to foster the de-russification of Ukrainians who had hitherto assimilated the Russian language and culture, and by compelling all responsible state and party figures in Ukraine to learn the Ukrainian language. Ukrainization was the Ukrainian version of a policy applied throughout the non-Russian areas of the USSR for several years beginning in 1923 and known as indigenization (*korenizatsiia*).

## PERSONS PROMINENTLY MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

*Ivan Alekseevich Akulov* (1888-1939)—Old Bolshevik of Russian nationality who spent most of his career in the political police. In 1931-32 he was First Deputy Chairman of the secret police. In October 1932, he was named secretary of the Donets Basin (Donbas) regional Communist Party Committee (*Obkom* Secretary) and a secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (bolshevik) of Ukraine. In 1933 he became chief prosecutor of the USSR until his replacement by Andrei Vyshinskii in 1935. Arrested as an enemy of the people.

*Lazar Moiseevich Kaganovich* (1893- )—Old Bolshevik of Jewish nationality from Ukraine and Stalin's chief lieutenant. Twice First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine (1925-27, 1947). During the Famine, Secretary of the All-Union Central Committee section on Agriculture and in November 1932 headed special mission to the North Caucasus. Credited by Soviet historians in the 1960s of having personally overseen the deportation of Cossack *stanitsas* from the North Caucasus in 1932. Removed from power for opposing Khrushchev in 1957. Believed to be currently living as a pensioner on Frunze Street in Moscow.

*Mendel' Markovich Khataevich* (1893-1939)—Old Bolshevik of Jewish nationality from Belorussia. During the collectivization of agriculture, Secretary of the Middle Volga Territorial Committee (*kraikom*) of the All-Union Communist Party and a member of the Politburo commission established to plan the tempo of collectivization. At the end of January 1930, his haste and brutality in dekulakization were declared impermissible by central authorities in Moscow. In October 1932 he was named Second Secretary of the CP(b)U and made authoritative pronouncements on CP(b)U policy toward the countryside. In January 1933, when Postyshev was named Second Secretary, he became Third Secretary and Secretary of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Party Committee. Arrested in 1937 as an enemy of the people.

*Stanislav Vikent'evich Kossior* (1889-1939)—Old Bolshevik of Polish nationality. First Secretary of the CP(b)U 1927-1938 and Politburo member 1930-1938, although at times overshadowed by Skrypyk, Khataevich, and Postyshev. Arrested and shot as an enemy of the people.

*Viacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov* (1890-1987)—Old Bolshevik of Russian nationality. Real name Skriabin and nephew of the composer of that name. During the Famine, USSR Prime Minister (1931-1939), and later as USSR Foreign Minister (1939) signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact which made the USSR Hitler's ally. Along with Kaganovich, Stalin's chief lieutenant. Later accused of having drawn up death lists during the Great Terror (1937-1938). Assigned

### *Index of Persons*

frequent trouble-shooting missions to Ukraine in 1932-1933. Removed from power for opposing Khrushchev in 1957. Lived as a pensioner and publicly supported Gorbachev after the latter's coming to power.

*Pavel Petrovich Postyshev* (1887-1940)—Old Bolshevik of Russian nationality. Prominent in the Ukrainian party organization (1923-1930) and Secretary of Kharkiv party regional and city organizations (1926-1930). In Moscow (1930-1933) as Secretary of the All-Union Communist Party Central Committee section on agitation, propaganda, and organization. January 1933 named CP(b)U Second Secretary and *de facto* ruler of Ukraine. Intensified grain seizures and defeated so-called national deviation headed by Skrypnyk. In 1937, he evidently opposed Stalin's desire to execute prominent party figures, for which he was demoted and transferred to Kuibyshev. Arrested in 1938 as an enemy of the people.

*Boris Petrovich Sheboldaev* (1895-1937)—Old Bolshevik of Russian nationality. Secretary of the North Caucasus Territorial Party Committee (1930-1932) and oversaw grain seizures and the exile of Cossack *stanitsas*. In January 1933 named to head a special committee to oversee the Spring sowing campaign in the North Caucasus and given powers analogous to those Postyshev was simultaneously given in Ukraine. Arrested in 1937 and shot as an enemy of the people.

*Mykola Oleksiiovych Skrypnyk* (1872-1933)—Old Bolshevik of Ukrainian nationality. Ukrainian Commissar of Education 1927-1933 and until 1932 the dominant figure in the CP(b)U. Directly responsible for Ukrainization and cultural policy. USSR's most prominent spokesman for the rights and prerogatives of non-Russian nations and republics. After being denounced and demoted by Postyshev as the leader of a Ukrainian national deviation, committed suicide.

*Iosef Vissarionovich Stalin* (1879-1953). Old Bolshevik of Georgian nationality. First or General Secretary of the Central Committee (1923-1953) and undisputed ruler of the USSR (1929-1953).

*Roman Iakovich Terekhov* (1890-?). Old Bolshevik of Russian nationality. Secretary of the Regional Party Committee in Kharkiv until replaced by Postyshev in January 1933 and in the 1960s revealed that he had appealed to Stalin for aid in 1932. Arrested and survived to be released in 1956. Thereafter lived as a pensioner.

## **Appendix I**

### **Translations of Selected Oral Histories**



## CASE HISTORY LH8

*Translated from Ukrainian by Darian Diachok*

**Question:** May I have your name, please?

**Answer:** Fedir Pavlovych Kapusta.

**Q:** When were you born?

**A:** September 17, 1900.

**Q:** Your place of birth?

**A:** The village of Horby, Kremlianchiv district, Poltava region.

**Q:** And where were you living during the latter part of the 1920s—and at the beginning of the 1930s?

**A:** Part of this time, I was living in the village of Horby, but I left the village in 1926 and went to the Donbas. The reason was that the *artel's* had just been established and they were confiscating land around my village, you understand. And they took all of my father's land, without exception, even though it was two-and-a-half or three kilometers from the village. And this was all contiguous land. That's how big the *artel'* was. They took the land! And together with other peasants, I lodged a complaint at the land division at Kremenchuk. I requested the following of them, "Please issue an order that the land not be confiscated, since this is to be done in the Autumn, and the fields of rye and wheat have already been plowed, and are being readied for harvest." This statement was signed by 13 individuals, and I went to Kremenchuk. From Kremenchuk came the order that the land was not to be confiscated until confirmed by the Kremenchuk District Office. When news of this order became known, immediately all the loudmouths began to talk—that my father had collected these signatures at secret meetings—there were 13 signatures on the petition, you understand.

**Q:** These were local people?

**A:** Local people—from the *artel'*, and the *komnezam*. "What's he up to?" they were saying. "He held underground meetings, because the petition had 13 signatures."

I saw that this was a nasty affair. The regions had already been set up, not the *raions*, but the local councils<sup>†</sup>—the Soviet local council had already been established. And in each local council, there was one single representative of the GPU, one man for the entire local *volost'*,<sup>‡</sup> not for the region, but for the local *volost'*.

When I heard this, I know that when all this talk began, I asked my uncle for help—well, first, I asked my father—but my father didn't have any money; and the new money was already in circulation—the so-called *chervontsi*. My uncle gave me 20 *chervontsi*, or it might have been 20 rubles. And I left and went to the Donbas.

And in the Donbas, I received an assignment from Artemivska in the Donbas, an assignment to the post and telegraphic office of Kiev. I traveled there and became a Morse Code operator, and then a bookkeeper. And I worked there in this capacity from 1926 to 1933. But in January of 1933, they instituted the passport

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<sup>†</sup>*Volost'* councils.

<sup>‡</sup>*Volost'* = canton.

system. And I was declared a *kulak*. In fact, three months earlier, they declared me to be a *kulak*. And they didn't issue passports to *kulaks*, you understand.

I submitted an application to be released at my own request. The head of this regional division—I forget his name—submitted my request to the GPU, the Kiev GPU, the district GPU. This was in the town of Orzhonikidze—it's now Ienakiievo, but once was Orzhonikidze, and used to be called Rykovo, as well as by other names. And now it's called Ienakiievo, and remains so. So I submitted it—but without the head of cadres, no one [portion illegible] ... the head of cadres—that means that they could not release me. And this head of cadres informed the GPU that Mr. Nestorenko was the director of the district section<sup>†</sup> and also a communist. And he informed them that this head of cadres, Nestorenko, was releasing a, well, a *kulak* at (the *kulak's*) own request. At this point Nestorenko gave up the attempt to get me a document releasing me at my own request. But he did make a submission to the head of the party committee<sup>‡</sup>—who was also a communist—that director, the *raion* head of the special section<sup>§</sup>—was a communist, and the other one, Nestorenko, was also a communist, you understand. And he put the question to the district party committee,<sup>¶</sup> that either they release me, or they fire the director of the special section.\*

At the regional party committee, they decided to dismiss the director of the special unit. And this really happened. I had already transferred my documents to the bookkeeper.<sup>°</sup> And I had to wait for four months finally to be released at my own request. But I'm getting ahead of my story. In the month of January, the passport system was being introduced and another director of the special unit asserted at the passport unit that I was a *kulak* and that I had fled from my village, and so on. And when you received the passport, you had to reply to the question, "Do you, or do you not work?" I declared, "I am working." So they issued me a passport valid for three months, since I had said that I was working. Even though I was a *kulak*, still I had work, and they issued me a passport valid for three months. And, after all, my certificate wasn't really a certificate. I obtained a copy of my birth certificate. At that time, the churches gave out copies of birth certificates. And at the end of the three months, I presented it at the passport unit—generally, everyone used to get these in the cities, but now only at the one passport unit, for the entire city... So I presented this birth certificate, and he<sup>°</sup> was not aware of what they had on me—that I was a *kulak* and all that, for three months had already passed. I was issued a passport valid for five years.

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<sup>†</sup> *Raividdil*.

<sup>‡</sup> *Partkom*.

<sup>§</sup> *Spetsviddil*.

<sup>¶</sup> *Raipartkom*.

<sup>°</sup> *Spetsviddil*.

<sup>°</sup> *i.e.*, the new bookkeeper.

<sup>°</sup> *i.e.*, the passport unit employee.

And then Nestorenko, the man who had stood up for me, even though he was a party member, put in a request for leave at a health-resort, since he was exhausted. He went off to the health-resort, but instructed his deputy to grant me my request to be released, you understand. He did so and issued me the release.

I already had a place for myself, so to speak, at Starobils'k. I had in fact requested Starobils'k four months earlier. I put in a request at Starobils'k—a district there in *Donets Oblast'*—this particular district fell within the Starobils'k *Okrug*. There were actually 20 such districts there. So I went there. They accepted me. And I worked there three years, to 1937. Afterwards, people from Ienakiievo moved there who recognized me and told the *okrug* director.

The *okrug* director, you know, said to me, "You're a *kulak*. I am going to give you a certificate," he said, "that you were released at your own request." And he gave me a certificate that I was released in accordance with my own wishes. So I wandered—working two months, three months. I also traveled to Ienakiievo and got work at the industrial bank<sup>†</sup> there. I worked there for three months. And so I kept on working and managed until the time the war broke out.

I had even gone to Voroshilovhrad. In Voroshilovhrad, I worked in an *artel'*. The *artel's* did not require proof of social origins. No one asked, you understand. This was a coal-mining *artel'*, not an agricultural *artel'*. A group of about 50 persons joined together and dug coal. And I worked there until 1941. They took me away from this *artel'* to dig trenches. According to the passport system, I was unsuitable because I was a *kulak*—they didn't issue weapons to *kulaks*. So they sent me to dig trenches. I dug trenches in Zaporizhzhia. Then the retreat came. We retreated all the way to Kuban. And as we retreated, then we were on our own ... it was only the food that came from them; all the rest was ours: Footwear, uniforms—all of this was our own; they didn't give us anything. And so this is how I worked. They forced us to Kuban, and didn't give us food for two or three days at a time. And there were times when we would see a sunflower. And one of us would break ranks and make for the sunflower, wanting to eat it—and he would be shot. Incidents like this occurred.

After that, I returned from Kuban to Voroshilovhrad and spent two months there. The Famine was bad there. You couldn't get anything. And just at this time they began distributing certificates. The commander began giving out certificates allowing anyone who wanted to, to return to his native land. And I got one of these certificates permitting me to return to my homeland, that is, to my own village, the village of Horby.

I arrived in my village and so you know, worked there the whole time, and applied for the job of tax inspector. I myself was a bookkeeper. I worked on taxation until I quarreled with the head of the administration. This was already during the German occupation.

The head of the administration wanted me to sign a document releasing some woman who was supposed to be a member of the *Komsomol*. Whether or not she was I don't know. But I replied how could I, since I wasn't familiar with the local scene, since I had just arrived and had been working elsewhere. This woman herself had told me that she had been *dekulakized*. He got angry with me and fired me. And right at this time, a transport was leaving for Germany—you know transporting workers who were being recruited—and so I left with that transport.

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<sup>†</sup> *Prombank*.

The head of the administration had me included in the transport. So off I went with this transport to Austria, where I worked until 1944. Toward the end of 1944, in November or December, I fled Austria, because the Soviets had occupied it. I was fleeing the Soviets. I stopped in Munich where I remained the entire time working for the Americans. I still receive to this day a pension of \$55.00 from the Federal Republic of Germany for work that I did there. And in 1951 I came here.

Q: How did they find out in 1933 that you were a *kulak*? Did someone inform on you?

A: As a bookkeeper I had a responsible post, you understand. It was the GPU itself that was responsible. No one else informed, just the GPU. The GPU kept an eye on anyone with responsible work, so to speak; and even though I wasn't in the party, I was the bookkeeper for the regional section, and so the GPU acted. And why did the GPU mark down who I was? Well, because prior to this, the director, Nestorenko from Ienakiievo, had purchased 12 horses for the mail service. And those horses died. And he had a misunderstanding with his deputy. You know, don't you, how people sometimes just can't stand one another. And both of them were communists. And so, this deputy brought it to the attention of the local GPU that Nestorenko was responsible for the death of ten horses because of inadequate feeding.

As Nestorenko's bookkeeper I was called to testify. Nestorenko said that it was beyond the bookkeeper's responsibilities to answer for the horses' deaths. And they asked me to testify before the GPU as to how the horses had died. And I said that I had in no way impeded the task of providing money for the purchase of fodder—that this never happened. The horses died simply because it was impossible to get forage. One person, in fact, one of the stable hands, traveled all over the region and managed to get food for 12 horses. And you know 12 horses is a lot. Once he would ride out and get the fodder; another time he wouldn't. And because of this the horses died, there simply wasn't any fodder. And I was asked by someone from the GPU, "What is your social category?" I replied, "I am a peasant." And he said, "No. You're not a peasant! What is your class identity?" And I answered, "Middle." He then told me that I was a *kulak*. "Middle *kulak*."<sup>†</sup>

And then they wanted to know who I was in my village. And it all came out. And this was exactly the time of that whole thing with my passport. So passports for *kulaks* were not to be issued. You had one issued for three months, then for five years.

Q: How much land did you have?

A: My father, not I, but my father, had 20 *desiatynas* of land. This was the equivalent of 22 hectares.

My father was dekulakized in 1929. There weren't as yet any Ten Thousanders, or for that matter, neither Ten Thousanders or Twenty-Five Thousanders. We didn't have them yet. Everything was done by our own people—by the party cadre, by the *komnezams*. And the *komnezams* had organized seven All-Ukrainian conferences, beginning with the May 1920 Conference and ending up with seven All-Ukrainian conferences; and at each one of these conferences, landholdings were revolutionized, *kulaks* were eliminated, and *kulaks* were banished. And it was Stalin who pressed for this banishment, this dekulakization; and I myself was dekulakized in 1929. And Stalin further stated that the collective farms should not

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<sup>†</sup> i.e., did not work.

accept any *kulaks*, that *kulaks* only need to be dekulakized and banished. This was at the Conference of Marxist Agrarians held in Moscow from December 29-31, 1929. But throughout the year of 1929, *kulaks* were not banished, but rather sentenced; the punitive session would arrive and would issue an immediate sentence of five years.

And my father was not deported until 1930. My father was assigned to a state farm<sup>†</sup> six *verst*s from my village. And he remained there to... And in those days we were still under the liberal laws of the NEP era. But he was sentenced in 1929. So he worked in a state farm from 1929 to 1931. In 1931 he was released. As to how he worked, he was as yet no radical; liberal reforms still existed. They released him and he went to Dniprodzerzhynsk, near Dnipropetrovsk, where he worked.

About a year went by. And in 1932, toward the end ... and exactly in those years; in 1930 Stalin published his article *Dizzy from Success*. And after the appearance of that article, the collective farms began to confiscate property, in as much as they were forced to in 1930; 64% were already in collective farms<sup>‡</sup> by this time. But when Stalin's article *Dizzy from Success* appeared, then they withdrew their property from the collective farms and themselves withdrew from the collective farms. And all that remained was approximately, I forget, the exact figures, something like 30%, while all others withdrew.

And when the XVIth Party Conference took place in 1930, it was resolved to restore compulsory membership in the collective farms.

Q: And did they compel membership?

A: Everyday they called [us] before the village soviet.<sup>§</sup> "Why don't you join the collective farm?" Well, they answered, this is why or whatever or whatever. And every day they called us out and forced us to make written depositions. They wouldn't deal with us without the depositions. So the people wrote out the depositions, and then they'd return to the collective farm. This was in 1931. By 1931 the collectivization had reached about 59%. And by 1932 it had reached 70%. They grabbed everyone who had fled, no matter where they found them.

Just a second, I'll find you [the passage]—ah, here it is—the resolution taken by the Council of Peoples' Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR regarding measures for increasing the procurement of grain. This very resolution is one that created the Famine. Take a look at what it says here:

"The regional authorities are to organize immediately the confiscation of grain from individual members of the collective farms and from individual peasants, that is, grain stolen from the collective farms and the state farms during the collecting, grinding, and transport of grain to granaries, and other collection points. Further, to confiscate grain from all individual households that they might have in reserve... —

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<sup>†</sup> *Radhosp.*

<sup>‡</sup> *Kolhospy.*

<sup>§</sup> *SilPrada.*

They had no grounds to do this anywhere—but they did it. [This is from] *Kolhospnytsia Ukraïny*,<sup>†</sup> No. 23-24, in November 1932. And there you have it—from the head of the Council of Peoples' Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR, Chubar'. This took place November 20, 1932.

**Q:** Did you read all of this during this time? You had an interest in all of this?

**A:** No, I didn't know it at the time. I learned about it in emigration. I only know that on January 21, or it could have been the November 21, the brigades did this in every village where there was a collective farm. And these brigades went about among the members of the collective farms and individual peasants, and just totally cleaned them out. Whatever they found—a handful of wheat—they took it; some melons—they took them. And the cellars—where the cabbage, and pickled beets, and potatoes were kept—they were also totally cleaned out.

Why did they confiscate all this? Well, it was on orders from the responsible authorities. But those who took part in the confiscation got 25 percent of everything they confiscated, and therefore they tried to collect as much as they possibly could, you understand, because, after all, they got their 25 percent. They didn't have any food either; they were hungry, too. But they volunteered for this assignment.

Nowhere in this directive were there instructions to leave some minimal amount of food behind for the families. It simply wasn't mentioned. And it was still seven months to the new harvest: November, December, January, February, March, April, May and June—still eight months left. And nowhere was it mentioned that some thing was to be left behind; no, everything was to be taken. And so here you get this order: "...immediate confiscation from the local population of stolen grain."

No one stole any grain. No one stole any, but yet they were under orders to carry out the grain requisition. And so they did it. They didn't do anything but bring about the Famine.

People were trying to escape to anywhere they could. Mostly to the Donbas, to Kryvyi Rih and to Byelorussia—most of them fled there. And they brought back bread—whoever could—brought back bread from there.

**Q:** They were allowed to go there?

**A:** No one gave them permission. It was their own decision. There was a standing directive issued in 1928, when collectivization began—and this was issued by the Ukrainian government—forbidding anyone to leave the villages, so that people wouldn't disperse, so that they would join the collective farms.

**Q:** Do you remember your father ever speaking about how life was under the Tsar for the peasants, or do you perhaps remember yourself?

**A:** Under the Tsar, life was good for people like my father, except that there was national enslavement, so to speak—there were no schools using the Ukrainian language. I myself finished my schooling in 1915 in the Russian language, because there were no Ukrainian schools.

**Q:** But did the people themselves want Ukrainian-language schools?

**A:** What does that really mean, 'Did they want the schools?' You know, during those times, the issue couldn't even come up. The peasantry, you understand, well, wasn't very advanced ... no one would have ... if there had been schools, but at that time there were none, because the Tsarist government imposed this scheme. This was the law.

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<sup>†</sup>*The Collective Farm Woman of Ukraine.*

Q: How many were there in your family?

A: There were seven in my family. And we had land according to the appropriate norm. They left us ten *desiatynas*—and confiscated ten in 1920. My father was dekulakized in 1929. And not only my father, but four others were dekulakized in the village soviet.<sup>†</sup> This wasn't done under orders from Moscow, yet. All this was done under the Ukrainian government of Petrovs'kyi and Chubar'.

Q: Do you remember how many farms there were in the village? You had said that five households were dekulakized. How many were there in all?

A: There were 500 households—this included all the categories together—the poor peasants,<sup>‡</sup> the middle peasants,<sup>§</sup> and the *kulaks*. But dekulakization had already taken place. But it was still being conducted throughout 1930 and 1931, and even in 1932. The number that was dekulakized was approximately—I read you that already; Soviet writers themselves say that the percentage of *kulaks* in Ukraine was 15.5 percent; and this was the number that they forced to be dekulakized.

They didn't only force those through dekulakization whom they designated as *kulaks*, but also those who were middle peasants, that is, anyone who had five *desiatynas* or six *desiatynas*—and these were dekulakized in the years 1931 and 1932.

Q: And where did your father get his land from? Did he get it from his own father, or did he buy it?

A: From his own father. My grandfather had 60 *desiatynas* of land. And he got 20 *desiatynas* from his father. I also had an uncle. He also got 20 *desiatynas*. My grandfather died—and he was survived by my grandmother and her daughter, my aunt. So my grandfather willed five *desiatynas* to my aunt and 15 *desiatynas* to my grandmother.

Q: And did they live together?

A: Yes. They lived together with my uncle. And how was my father dekulakized?

A law was passed in the Soviet Ukrainian government. The government, you'll note, had its own prerogatives of power as to how it carried out its grain requisition, and so on. Well, how best to tell you about all this? Actually, I've submitted a few paragraphs about all of this in my book. I gave it to Harvard University, at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, and it was acknowledged by Professor Conquest. If you like, I could find what Pritsak wrote about me.

An expert tax was assessed against the *kulaks* in 1928. This was also assessed against my father in 1928—and my father was designated a *kulak*, since he had ten *desiatynas*. And in 1928 they levied this so-called expert tax. And the assessment against him in 1928 was 500 *poods* of grain, about 50 *poods* of meat, that is, livestock, about 3,000 eggs, and milk also milk—such an enormous assessment of grain alone that he couldn't possibly have met it even in three years, if the harvest was good, you see.

Q: And what kind of a harvest did you normally have?

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<sup>†</sup> *Sil'rada*.

<sup>‡</sup> *Bidniaky*.

<sup>§</sup> *Seredniaky*.

A: We normally had a harvest of 50, that is, 50 *poods* of grain per *desiatyna*. We didn't get higher yields in those days, since people weren't interested in growing more, because the larger the harvest, the larger the grain requisition, the larger the assessment.

And so this assessment was levied against my father, but in 1929 he couldn't meet it. He couldn't meet his quota for the grain requisition.

And in addition to this, they assigned 50 *poods* of superphosphate to him; he was to scatter it over the beets. But he wasn't planting any beets just then, although earlier he had been planting a half of a *desiatyna* of beets, but not any more. And they just dumped 50 *poods* in the courtyard, just dumped it, you understand, and later a tribunal came out and demanded of my father, "Why didn't you use the superphosphate?" And superphosphate, you understand, was only used for beets. And so he was given a sentence of five years. He served two and a half, and he was released from the other two and a half.

Q: What do you recall about the Revolution in your locality?

A: Oh, about the Revolution ... the Revolution! I'll tell you that I really don't remember that much of what happened in my village. I just don't know what happened. I was working in my specialty in Haichur, in Katerynoslav *Oblast'*, I became a post and telegraph office employee in 1917—under the Bolsheviks, you understand.

But I know that when the Bolsheviks showed up, they were confiscating land not only from the landlords, but also from peasants, who had more than 25 *desiatynas* of land. This was the limit that the Bolsheviks were setting. Under Petliura, there was no such confiscation; under the Directorate of the Central Rada, they didn't take away the land from peasants who had less than then 25 *desiatynas* but only from those who had more than 25 *desiatynas*. The Central Rada began confiscating land above this limit.

Q: What was your attitude to the Central Rada?

A: Well, up to the time that the Central Rada was still in power, we lived comparatively well. Even though the Central Rada was on its way out, they still managed to approve the policy of nationalizing the land during the Toilers' Congress. Life under the Central Council was uniformly good, for the poor peasants, for the middle peasants, and for the so-called *kulaks*, as they were made out to be.

Q: Why wasn't there any famine in Moscow, and why was the Famine to be found only in regions beyond Moscow?

A: Well, that's because in Moscow, in Kaluga *Oblast'*, the grain yields per *desiatyna* are 50 *poods*—only for rye, barley, and oats. And that's all. Wheat will not grow there. But in Ukraine, they collected and levied a tax according to the protocol of 150-200 *poods* per *desiatyna*; the protocol was drawn up according to the actual yield per hectare. Where was there a greater yield of grain per *desiatyna* or hectare—in Moscow or Ukraine? In Ukraine the commercial yield of grain per hectare was far greater, because they established a tax of 150 *poods* per *desiatyna*. And how did they actually levy the tax? They collected the land deeds. And it was the Ukrainian SSR that gave [the government] the land deeds; so they established the levies that the peasants had to comply with from these deeds, you understand.

Q: And what was the yield per *desiatyna* in Ukraine?



A: A *desiatyna* in Ukraine yielded up to 200 *poods*. And now I want to—aha, you see—from the region. This was Mirchuk's plan... The quota was 356 million<sup>†</sup> for Ukraine. This was for 1932. And it had been higher in the previous year's plan, 431 million *poods* for the year 1931, and this quota was successfully met that year.<sup>‡</sup> Individual farms supplied 51% of the levy, I now recall it—and that's why they fulfilled the plan, you understand. But then by 1932, people scattered in all directions or had died. And so [in 1932], they weren't able to fulfill the reduced quota, you see. This was down from 431 *poods* to 356, and 41 to 31; Moscow actually reduced the quota by 27 million from 1931. In the Central Volga Region the quota was dropped from the 106 million *poods* of the previous year's plan to 72 million *poods*. And in Moscow *Oblast'*—where is it [on this map]?—in Moscow Region—the quota dropped down to 27 million from the previous year's plan. You see! The Moscow *Oblast'*—27 million *poods*, while the Central Volga Region—72 million *poods*. Yet these two territories are of identical size, or perhaps the Moscow Region is even a slightly larger than the Central Volga Region.

And why is it that there's a bigger tax assessed here, and in the Moscow Region a smaller one? It's because the yield here is 100-150 *poods* per hectare, while in the Moscow *Oblast'*, the yield is only 50-60 *poods*. They levied according to yield per hectare. No one could fool the Bolsheviks. They know very well where they can get more and where they can get less. But what happened in Ukraine in 1932 was purely on account of the fact that they took absolutely everything—just cleaned them out. And it was the government that did this in order to meet the grain quotas—the Ukrainian Soviet Government, you see.

Q: Could we return to the year 1917? How did you happen to get this work in Katerynoslav?

A: There was a post and telegraph office in my village. And in my village there was also a military equipment factory which manufactured chemical products, and they had their own post office there; but later, when this factory went into production in 1914 or 1915, it began to produce noxious fumes and employed 500 soldiers. It was only soldiers that worked there.

Q: Locals?

A: No, not locals. Soldiers were sent there from elsewhere. And so the village of Horby got a post and telegraph office, whereas earlier, it had only had a post office. But then it also got a telegraph service since there was a lot of cable traffic back and forth to the military factory. And so I became a trainee to be a civil servant there, a civil service trainee there in 1916.

So I served as a civil servant four or five months, and approximately in May 1917, I was assigned to Haichur in Katerynoslav Region as a post and telegraph office civil servant of the sixth rank. This was how civil servants were designated in those days—not under the Soviet regime, but still under the Tsarist.

Q: From where was the actual order issued? From the Central Rada or from Petrograd?

A: Well, no. Let me explain how the post office was organized. There were two provinces that the district post and telegraph office administration served; it served

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<sup>†</sup> i.e., 356 million *poods*.

<sup>‡</sup> In fact, it was not met—staff.

both the areas of Katerynoslav and Poltava. These two provinces. And I was assigned to Haichur as a bookkeeper. I only worked there for about a year, up to July of 1918, and in May of 1917, I was assigned there and worked there for more than a year, until my heart started giving me trouble—well, it wasn't really my heart—God knows what it was. And I went to the hospital assistant; there were no medical doctors at that time. And this man listened to my heart not with that instrument but with his ear and told me that I had a heart defect. So then I went straight to Katerynoslav. You see, I know that with a heart defect, you could die tomorrow, today, or the day after tomorrow. So I submitted a request that I be relieved, and a month later they relieved me. I went straight to my village.

Q: Had the Bolsheviks already reached Haichur by the beginning of 1918?

A: Yes, they were already there. And in fact they were there even earlier. But then the Germans came, approximately in 1918; the Germans and the Austrians came there; and I worked there during the time of the Germans and Austrians.

Q: And what was your attitude toward the Germans and the Austrians?

A: Well, you ask, what was my attitude? Well they got rid of the Bolsheviks, which was good. But they had their own plans, so to speak, and they intended to carry them out—they wanted to make Ukraine their granary.

Q: Did the people like the Germans?

A: No, the people did not like the Germans. After I left, Makhno already made his appearance, and Huliai Pole wasn't far away—just 20 *versts*. And Makhno had already made his stand in opposition to the Hetmanate. He had already cut down all the sentries, those that he thought were worth the trouble, you understand. But all this occurred already after my time, since I had gone to my village on account of my illness.

Q: But did the people themselves take an interest in Ukrainian politics, in the Central Rada?

A: Well, of course. Clearly, they took an interest. During the German occupation, there were railway strikes, because of the same issue—foreigners were occupying our land.

Q: And what is your opinion of Hetman Skoropadsky?

A: Hetman Skoropadsky was a very decent man. You know, he said without beating around the bush that everyone, every farmer, was entitled to 25 *desiatynas* of land. Those that have land of 25 or more were not entitled to anything else; only those were entitled who were either without any land at all or who had small holdings. But there wasn't enough land for everyone, not for everyone, he said—it was absolutely necessary to develop an industrial base. And he was correct in saying this. But his big mistake was that he didn't have any official propaganda. In fact, none at all.

I know that in my own village, the Hetmanate lasted from April 29, 1918 to November 1918, but no one showed up in our village. There was an elder and a guard,<sup>†</sup> but there was no one there to propagate the Hetman's ideas and action program. There wasn't a single meeting at our level. Let a Bolshevik just show up, and immediately you're dragged into branch meetings. But at the time of the Hetmanate, there was none of that at all.

And I read about the Hetman's plans in the newspapers. The Hetman ordered the draining of the floodplain along the Dnieper River; and there were a lot of

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<sup>†</sup>*Varta*.

floodplain along the Dnieper River, you know, floodplain that was submerged in the Spring, and above water the rest of the year. Still, no one planted there. You can't plant anything there—only where there's no water will the grass grow... Well, the Hetman made this decree. Drain the floodplain along the Dnieper River, and there you have it. But he didn't get much support from the landless or poor and because the Hetman himself was from the upper class, from the landlords; he was, indeed, a large landholder himself. But his policies were very good, except that it would have been worthwhile to, what were they called? I've forgotten. Those who beat people with riding crops—the guards.<sup>†</sup> They only beat the Communists, didn't shoot them, just beat them and the poor peasants, whoever agitated too much for a Communist government. That's how it was during the Hetmanate.

Q: And how many government guards were there in your village?

A: About three, no more—the commander and his two guards. There weren't any more than this, but there were special detachments, whose jurisdiction encompassed the entire *okrug*—and these<sup>‡</sup> consisted of 40-50 people; they would subdue those who incited rebellions; and these, detachments were apart...

Q: And do you remember the uprising against the Hetman?

A: I do. There was an uprising. I have it here in this book. Right here. There were uprisings in Aleksandriv *povit*—that was about as solidly Makhno country as you could want. In Khorols'kyi District—Dienka was *otaman* there. And in the area of Kiev—Zelenyi was *otaman*. And the division that eventually got to be known as...

Q: The Galicians?

A: No. Not the Galicians.

Q: The Steel Division?<sup>§</sup>

A: There were two divisions of Ukrainians with the Bolsheviks... Well, the District I'm thinking of is in the Kiev area, but I forgot its name.

Q: Bila Tserkva?

A: No. Another one.

Q: Did the people support the uprising against the Hetman in your village?

A: In my village they supported the uprising inasmuch as the Bolsheviks were giving out a *plot* of land to the landless peasants, and to those peasants with little land. In my village, they also supported the uprising, but there weren't any insurrectionists in my village. But you could find them<sup>¶</sup> in the Kiev area, in the Khorolskyi District, in the area of Poltava, and maybe in other places, as well—but I didn't personally hear of any others; whereas in the Aleksandriv District, of course, you had Makhno.

Q: And what is your opinion of the Directory?

A: The Directory was really the same thing, you understand, as the Central Rada. There was nothing really different about it except that Vynnychenko was, I believe one can say, a person imbued with Communism, inasmuch as in 1920 he

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<sup>†</sup> *Vartovi*.

<sup>‡</sup> *i.e.*, special detachments.

<sup>§</sup> *Zalizna Dyvizia*.

<sup>¶</sup> *i.e.*, the insurrectionists.

was ... if I'm not mistaken, he traveled there and issued an ultimatum that he be accepted into the Politburo.

**Q:** How did the Bolsheviks conduct themselves that they established themselves so quickly from the start?

**A:** In the beginning, in 1922, I think, the Bolsheviks had not yet established themselves locally. Nor did they appear in 1921. You know, there was a lot of fear at the time, in fact so much so that at the village meetings where they chose the village correspondent,<sup>†</sup> they picked the oldest person. No matter who that person might have been, the oldest person would always be chosen at the meetings. But during the NEP period, it was all right, even though during this time, whoever worked the land would acquire rights to that land, and everything, so to speak, was getting better when land was privatized and beet processing factories established in 1923, if I'm not mistaken. The Ohlobyn Factory was not far from us. The Ohlobyn Factory already went into production; only this was purely on the initiative of a private cooperative—not on the initiative of the Communist Party, you understand; and the Communist Party did not object.

But, you know, with the Bolsheviks, it's like the wind. Today it blows one way, tomorrow it blows another. That's just how it is with the Bolsheviks.

Just about every month, just about every week, some new campaign about this or about that would be proclaimed, like grabbing land for the committees of poor peasants. They had existed up to that time without anything, you understand, and in fact, they really didn't do anything. But earlier, they had some administrative power in their hands and, in fact, they carried out the dekulakization in 1920.

Oh, yes—I forgot. My father was dekulakized in 1920, except that this particular version of dekulakization was not like the process of 1929 or of 1930. They just came with their committees and asked, "How much land do you have? How many heads of cattle? How many chickens?" and so on. But my father tried to keep from saying the truth. My father actually had 20 *desiatynas*, but he maintained that mother's father had given him 14. You see, my father knew that anyone holding 15 *desiatynas* of land or more would be dekulakized; so he didn't tell the truth. Well, they went away, but in 1921, when the directive came from the All-Ukrainian *Komnezam*, they showed up, along with one of my school friends who lived not far from me. His last name was Hnyda, but he changed it to Lisovyk,<sup>‡</sup> because his brother was a forester, who was a well-known person not among the UNR-ists but among the Borotbists. And he and another person from another village took the sheep-skin coat, and took one of the coffers—we had two such coffers in the house—so they took my parents' sheepskin coat and that's how that ended.

But when my father was undergoing the dekulakization process in 1920, he had a reaper and a sower. And in 1922 I was ordered by the *komnezam* to surrender these possessions. And so I surrendered them. But this program was in fact coming to an end in 1921. I've got [the passage] right here. I found it in the library.

*(Reads aloud the passage from the book.)*

**Q:** And how did the *komnezam* react to such news? What was it to them?

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<sup>†</sup> *Sil'kor*.

<sup>‡</sup> In Ukrainian, *lisovyk* = forester.

A: They had to obey because the orders came from above. They obeyed; they did not protest in this particular case.

Q: And up to the NEP era, were there uprisings against the Bolsheviks? I mean, did the boys...

A: Up to NEP, there were no uprisings in my area. Wherever there were forests nearby, there were uprisings, you understand, up to the NEP. For example, around Poltava there are forests—I've forgotten their name; but around Poltava there were uprisings up to 1923. And in the Kiev area, Khmara and Zelenyi [were operating]. These uprisings in the Kiev area were back in 1921 and 1923.

Q: Did people talk about [leaders] such as Makhno?

A: Makhno, I'll tell you, worked mainly in the cause of the Soviets. I once saw his flag. I was working at the time in Haichur and would travel through it... I myself saw him. He had two camps—one camp on one side, and another camp on the other side. He had two camps. He was such a (expression unclear). And, you know, he had this banner; and when you saw it—a skeleton on a black field—a human skeleton—it was frightening. He didn't have any laws of any kind, you know, nothing. If he had to ... which he didn't have; and if necessary, he took one man from one camp and had him shot, and took another man from the other camp and had him shot as well. And that was that.

Q: Was there anything written on the banner?

A: Well, I've forgotten what he had written up there. Well, let's see, it was something like, "Death to Capitalists!" Something like that.

Q: And was this a skull on the banner or an entire skeleton?

A: It was a skull, a skull. A skeleton? No, not a skeleton, not an entire skeleton. But a skull, that is, half the skull.<sup>†</sup>

Q: Which people belonged to the Party and government apparatus in your village? That is, under the Bolsheviks?

A: In the beginning, when the *volost'* was still in place, the apparatus was composed of poor peasants and middle peasants.

I'll tell you about it. In my village, there lived—well, he didn't really live, but he had... Are you familiar with Hlibov, the writer? Have you heard of him? Well, he lived in my village, at the edge of it, you could say, and had his *khutir* there. He had—how much was it?—he had 40 *desiatynas* of land, except this land was all swamp. Half of it was mud, and half of it was workable. And Hlibov's son, that is, the writer's son, happened to be in the Executive Committee, you understand. He served there as a specialist.

And I'll tell you, both his house and his barn had metal roofs, so to speak. But he himself didn't work the land but just rented it, this Hlibov. And Hlibov's granddaughter, his son's daughter, joined a collective farm and worked there. I know this for a fact. When there was a holiday in Chernihiv—either on the occasion of the death or the birth of Hlibov, they called this granddaughter to Chernihiv—and she went there. But in the collective farm, she worked as a member of the rank and file—she wasn't dekulakized.

Q: Not at all?

A: Correct. But why, I don't know.

Q: And later, let's say during NEP, what kinds of people made up the Party and the government in your area?

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<sup>†</sup> *I.e.*, the top of the skull.

A: They were from the poor peasants. None of the *kulaks* could be members, because they didn't take *kulaks*, you understand.

Q: And were there Communists that came from outside your area?

A: From outside? Yes, there were a lot. They were called—what's the word?—I forgot. But there were a lot from outside. In my village in 1934 we had a Russian Communist, not a local one—but a Russian one. We could just as easily have had a Ukrainian, since there were a lot of Ukrainians in the village councils, in fact, in 1934 and 1935 there were a lot of them.

Q: Up to the time that you fled the village, did you have trouble with the Cheka, or later with the GPU?

A: No, I didn't. The only trouble I had—and I forgot to mention this—I lost the passport that had been issued to me for five years. I was standing in the line at the railway station, and someone lifted my billfold and my passport. I was already working at Starobil'sk—this was approximately in 1935. I had arrived in Starodels'k and had to wait there for a day. And after that the police reported that they hadn't turned up. That meant that whoever lifted the passport, probably needed it for himself; he might also have been a dekulakized person like myself, you understand. But that's the way it goes.

So I went on to Starodels'k. And they asked me, "Are you working?" "Yes, I'm working," I replied, "only I had to go on business to Ienakievo, where I'm employed." The employee issued me a passport valid for one year. After the year was up ... according to my social category, I took my passport to ... I had to go back to the village. I left exactly at the time that my neighbor, Romashchenko by name, was sentenced to three years for misappropriation of property. When he was being dekulakized, he was in the process of cutting sheepskin from some carcasses, you know, sheepskin for a hat or for a coat, or whatever. He was caught doing this and sentenced to three years. And he did his three years, and then served as secretary in the village council, you understand. So I had a talk with him. And he told me, "Go."

"No," I told him, "I need a passport, because mine is out of date." And he said, "Fine." And this was while we had a Russian as the head of the village council and him as the secretary. "Fine," he said, "I'll issue you one. How much are you willing to pay?"

So I gave him 100 rubles for issuing me the certificate which would make my passport valid for five years; and in Serdins'k, they issued the passport. For five years.

Q: Were there village correspondents<sup>†</sup> in your village?

A: I'm afraid I don't know. But I think there were—from among the members of the *Komsomol*. It would have to have been from among them—otherwise there weren't any. The *Komsomols* had them.

Q: And did delegates from the Central Committee<sup>‡</sup> ever visit [your village], that is, any so-called plenipotentiaries of the Central Committee?

A: I really can't answer that because I was working in the Donbas, but I can tell you about [what happened] in Hlobyno—which was 15 kilometers from my village.

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<sup>†</sup> *Sil'kory*.

<sup>‡</sup> The Central Committee.

In 1932, you know, there was already a foreboding, a certain foreshadowing, that the Famine was to come. Not just the Famine but other things as well: The All-Ukrainian *starosta*, Petrovs'kyi<sup>†</sup> began coming this way; and also at this time, you know, we had dekulakization and collectivization, and the train began making special stops just three kilometers from Hlobyno, which had become the district center. And Petrovs'kyi had to be carried by hand for three *verst*s—three kilometers—carried by hand all the way to the center in Hlobyno, from the moment he stepped off the train, you understand. I wasn't there, but I heard about it.

Q: What can you tell me about the informers and secret collaborators<sup>‡</sup> in your village?

A: That I can't tell you. I wouldn't know such a thing—about the informers and the secret collaborators—most of the informers were from the *komnezams*, yes, mostly from the *komnezams*, because this was a front for the party, the Communist Party.

Q: Were your uncles dekulakized?

A: Indeed! Both of my uncles were already dekulakized in 1930. My father was [dekulakized] in 1929. You know why? Simply because he had metal roofs on his house and his barn—and because of this, they made him out to be genuine *kulak*. But my uncle—well, how much did he have—he had more than I—and up to the Revolution, well he had more than my father up to the Revolution, since he had 30 *desiatynas* of land, and my father had only 20 *desiatynas*. And what was left was my grandmother's land, but they took hers as well—but that's a different story. Well, I'll tell you that my uncle on my father's side was banished in 1931. At the time he had been working in the collective farm as a stable hand, you understand; he had been accepted into the collective farm and then they banished him as a *kulak*, and he vanished. And you know, he used to go drinking together with the Party functionaries—they were drinking buddies, you understand—and he just minded his business and worked, and that's it... and he was in the collective farm ... because of that, and then they banished him as a dangerous class element.

And the other uncle as well. He had 40 *desiatynas* of land. They took away his land according to their standard procedures. They left him seven *desiatynas*—or was it ten? I don't recall any more how much they left him. But they also banished him after dekulakizing him. He was dekulakized in 1929—and my father in 1929, and [the uncle] on my mother's side in 1930.

But he had hidden everything. As I later found out, they found the light carriage; they found the winnowing machine; the reaper and the sower had also hidden—they found all of these things on my father's land, all of which had been hidden.

Q: How had he hidden [these things]?

A: He boarded them up in the storehouse. On one side<sup>§</sup> there was a pen for the cattle, and he used one of the walls of the pen as a barrier to the storehouse. And that's where he hid everything and they found it. And so they banished him also. They never came back again. And neither did he. News reached us about my

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<sup>†</sup> Hryhorii Petrovskyi, head of state of the Ukrainian SSR.

<sup>‡</sup> *Seksoty*.

<sup>§</sup> *i.e.*, of the storehouse.

father's brother, namely, that he had been killed by a [felled] tree. They had sent him to a timber felling camp.

Q: Was this in Siberia?

A: No, this was in Durnyts'k, or perhaps in Mordovia.

Q: Was there resistance against collectivization?

A: I really don't know about that. Well, yes, there was resistance, as one would expect, there was some resistance. But in my village there wasn't any armed resistance—none of that. But as to [armed] resistance elsewhere—well, that I can't tell you about. But in my village there wasn't such resistance. But in general no one joined the collective farm unless there was no other option left to them. At that time some people joined, but others abandoned their farms and fled, some across the ocean, wherever they could.

[I'll quote you] from *Kolhosprytsia Ukraïny*<sup>†</sup>—this is from March 10, 1932: “With an inspiring demonstration of the newly-inaugurated ‘get-tough’ approach... The first ones had yet not finished sowing in the village. The tow brigade was one of the first in the region; but instead of just maintaining the fields [as they found them] for their ten appointed days, they actually increased them from 193 hectares to 212. The brigade [did this by] bringing any and all unsown land under cultivation. And during this period, they actually surpassed their quotas by a factor of one and a half or two. And they even managed to sow yet another ten hectares in the single-crop strips, having “taken in tow<sup>‡</sup> these as well.”

This [passage] is from 1932, when people were already fleeing without anything, no food, nothing. There weren't even any buds left on the trees. They had cooked the buds.

The people just fled, you know; they fled and abandoned their houses and their lands and their fields. And that's what these brigades were sowing—these collective farm brigades were sowing abandoned land. This was in 1932.

Q: When you were in the Donbas, were you aware of what was going on back home in your village?

A: Of course! I came across my fellow-villagers who happened to be working at the factory at Ienakievo. That factory employed 25,000 people.

And later—I forgot to mention about my mother—she died in 1926. When they dekulakized me in 1929, the members of the *komnezam* asked me, “And where is the linen that you were spinning? Where is the canvas that you were weaving? “You know, the linen and the canvas were of our own household production—we had two<sup>§</sup>—and there were many bolts of linen. The linen was used for sewing shirts and underwear. My mother had died in 1926, and they were asking, “Where is the linen?” And they dekulakized me in 1929—three years went by; four years went by. And the whole process<sup>¶</sup> was given over to the children! To the children! And there wasn't any of this linen, but they were asking for it—they just forgot

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<sup>†</sup>*The Collective Farm Woman of Ukraine.*

<sup>‡</sup>*Bukryr.*

<sup>§</sup>*i.e., weaving machines.*

<sup>¶</sup>*i.e., the dekulakization process.*



[and assumed] that there should be some linen—these people that gathered [at my house].

And this dekulakization was, well, pure robbery. Robbery. Do you know what I'm referring to? They carted everything away. My mother had a sewing machine, a "Singer", a machine-operated "Singer" sewing machine. And they sold it for ten rubles; but you couldn't buy one for ten rubles then. This was in 1929. Perhaps for 1,000, 2,000, 3,000 rubles you might be able to buy a "Singer" sewing machine then. But here they sold it for ten rubles. And money was, so to speak, without value.

Q: Did a lot of dekulakized persons come into the area?

A: Very many. But it wasn't only dekulakized that came in—there were also a lot of members of the *Komsomol* and the *komnezams*. They just left everything behind because of the Famine. Just as did the dekulakized. But the dekulakized would not be accepted unless they had certificates stating that they were middle peasants, or poor peasants, and not *kulaks*, you understand. *Kulaks* weren't accepted—neither in the mines, nor in the factory, but only in the quarries where they dug sand and rock.

It was just the same with my father, when he was dispossessed, and he traveled to Dniprodzerzhynsk—I don't recall its current place name. He was only 52 or 53 years old and ill. They only accepted him for loading coal. But that was a place that everyone avoided, you understand, this loading the coal or rocks, because there the dekulakized were accepted.

Q: Was it dangerous work?

A: It wasn't that the work was dangerous, but that it was so hard. You had to work with all your might.

Q: But the people in the Donbas, they were able to survive through this period?

A: Donbas was at the top of the list for the government in Moscow, and received everything straightaway: Food, bread, clothes, and so forth. For example, in 1927 I purchased a blue serge suit for 40 rubles—just 40 rubles—and the suit was imported from England and had an English label. We received everything in the Donbas area; you could get condensed milk from the United States. But in the Donbas, wherever there were mines or factories, was where you could get all these things, nowhere else.

But in those places where there were no mines or commerce, well, there was absolutely nothing to be had there. Nothing at all. But [in Donbas] they provided everything—even condensed milk. I myself traveled to Stalino and to Ienakiievo—and I saw that they too had milk in the general stores.

Another point you may find of interest: There were a lot of Germans working on the electric power station; they were constructing the electric power station. The factory there had 25,000 people at the time. And these Germans—there were perhaps 100 of them, perhaps 200, who had come from Germany—they also did their shopping there. At the time, everything was purchased by coupons. But the Germans received their provisions free of charge! However much they wanted: Either two kilograms of butter, or perhaps a kilogram or two of sausage. They got these things for free. So that our people, if they happened to know a bit of German, began asking the Germans to get things for them. And there were indeed some Germans who would oblige the people who asked them. You see, the Germans had this special privilege because they were, after all, foreigners.

**Q: This was during the Famine?**

**A: This was in 1929 and in 1930—and yes, during the Famine.**

**Q: Did you yourself see starving peasants in the Donbas?**

**A: Yes, I did. But I didn't actually witness scenes of people lying down and dying—that I didn't see. The police, you know, kept track of that, of people who were just sitting about. They would ask, "Why are you sitting about?" And they would take them away. This I personally witnessed.**

**Q: And do you know where the police took these people?**

**A: Who knows. Ostensibly, they didn't take them for rehabilitation. Basically, what they did was to try to keep these people hidden from view that were exhausted from hunger. But there were no local people from among the starving—only people who came from elsewhere.**

**Q: Would you please repeat the name of the place that you were living in at the time.**

**A: Ienakievo.**

**Q: Did it ever happen that the peasants would sell their belongings to buy bread? Did you ever witness that—I mean, in your town?**

**A: There was a black market. I myself bought bread on the black market. I forgot to mention that my mother had died, and that my father was dekulakized and suppressed, and as for my brother—well, well, he didn't fit in anywhere. The youngest was only ten or eleven years old. They took him from the second grade and made him tend to the pigs in the collective farm. I had been sending them bread, which I had been buying on the black market—in fact, I was sending both him and my brother food and clothes. And my father at the time was five kilometers away in the state farm. My brother had taken a pair of boots to my father, and had also bought him a used coat, because the state farm didn't provide for such needs. They didn't care if you worked naked.**

**Q: Did anyone from you family die of hunger?**

**A: No, no one from my family died of hunger. But there's one thing that I haven't yet related about my father. After the appearance of Stalin's article in *Pravda*, 'Dizziness from Success,' they started to take away the cattle and everything else. And rumors started to circulate that it was already over. And how the *kulaks* were to be treated ..., not that, and maybe someone had informed my father. So my father managed to earn 100 rubles, a sum of money in addition to his wages, and he hid it away in a pouch beneath his shirt. In 1932, approximately in December, he went back to his village. He worked there and lived in his sister's flat in Dniprodzerzhynsk.**

**My aunt told me that they tried to convince him not to go back, "Don't go! Don't go!" But he went. He said, "Let me at least build a hut right on my own land." You see, they had destroyed his house and had taken the metal for the tractor-machining installation. But he told them that he was going to build himself a hut and was going to live there. And [when he arrived], they told him, "So you think that you're going to build a hut here?!" The head of the village council in that village was a woman by the name of Medvedenko. The *komnezam* was Omelko Shcherbyna. They took him and searched him. He already was in violation of not having complied with an export tax, you understand. Well, they searched him and found the 100 rubles. He had hidden them in his shirt front. They found it and took his money. They told him, "Go wherever you like, only**

don't show up in the village again." But he had already served his sentence, and had a document to show that he had already done so. So he took my brother, named Alexander, who was 12 or 13 years old at the time, and went to the station. And there, they gave him the address where the man's brother was working—the man who had given me a certificate which I had used to get a passport, Oleksiivka station—the Chapaev state farm is about 30 kilometers from the Oleksiivka station. So he located him. This man was a drunkard, and he was angry about something. And this man yelled at my father, "You're nothing but a *kulak!*" My brother actually told me this story—my brother was present. "You *kulak!*" [the man shouted], "Get out of here! Get out of my sight!" And this man was one of the poor peasants, you understand.

My father was, however, accepted and he went to work; but then a commission arrived to determine who among the workers was a *kulak* and to banish them from the state farm. And this is when he stopped eating altogether. The wife of an acquaintance who used to work there told me about this. He just stopped eating, and this woman also had an argument with him, and she came one day to the village, to my village, Horby. And that's when I met her and she related [the story of my father]. But whether she was telling the truth or not, who can really say? And she said, "We invited him to eat with us. 'Have something to eat,' we said, 'Why don't you eat anything?' And he just replied, 'I don't want to.' "But he was probably sick; and he died soon, you understand, he died in the state farm.

And then my brother wrote to me, "Couldn't I come and stay with you?" So I told him, "I would be happy to have you, but I'm in the same situation. They found out here that I'm a *kulak*, but for the time being I'm still working." So he went to the other brother, that is, my brother, who was working at the time as a joiner at the Hrobyts'kyi Factory. He suffered in the Winter and hoped that they wouldn't find out about him. In the Winter, he slept outside in the hay so they wouldn't find him, because there were gangs about that hunted such people down.

Q: What kind of groups were these?

A: These gangs captured the element, around the villages. But this was Ohlobyn District, and somehow, who knows how, he managed to go undetected there. Also at the Chapaev state farm they accepted my younger brother to make bread deliveries. He told me that a lot of people informed on him that he was a *kulak*, but the director of the collective farm kept him on anyway, kept him on and didn't chase him out.

Q: All in all, did a lot of people in your village die of hunger?

A: I think that approximately—let's see, the information was around somewhere; I had given testimony once before the Ukrainian Congress Committee. I had given testimony as to who had died. I also gave the approximate number for the district. Except I don't know where [my text] is. Approximately one quarter of my village died.

Q: Did you hear what had happened with the priest in your village—and with the church in your village?

A: With the priest, yes, I had heard, but not really that much. Because there was this constant change going on with the priests. I forgot how they were called.

Q: *The Living Church?*<sup>†</sup>

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<sup>†</sup> *Zhyva Tserkva.*

A: Yes, that's it, *The Living Church* was already in existence. What happened to that priest at the time that the church was being dismantled, I don't know. But the priest who had served in that church fled ... somewhere to the ... who really knows?

Q: When was this?

A: Approximately in 1928 or 1927.

Q: And how long was your priest actually in church?

A: I can't really answer that, but I would guess about half a year, perhaps a year. But I remember being told about the dismantling of the church—we had quite an old church—they took out the iconostasis—our iconostasis was made out of wood. The *komnezam*, just like those ... piled everything up next to the church and set fire to it and everything burned down. And the bells—we had five bells in the bell tower—well the activists—the *komnezam* and the *Komsomol* members, as well—knocked down [the whole bell tower] and destroyed the bells. And the church, well, they destroyed it completely, but I don't know how that came about.

Q: How many times did you return home<sup>†</sup> after you had fled initially in 1926?

A: Just once, when I was going for my passport...

Q: What do you see as the cause, as the root for all these...?

A: All this? I see all of this as emanating directly from Marxism-Leninism, from the Communist Party, which initiated the collectivization of the villages at the conference, the XVth Conference of the Communist Party in Moscow in December of 1927. All this evil came directly from Marxism-Leninism. All this evil! The class struggle and the persecution of believers—all of this comes from Marxism-Leninism. And Stalin, when he was giving an account of his actions, gave a speech in which he said—he gave this speech when the collectivization had already been accomplished. I have the document here—[Stalin] said that the poor farmers are not to rise out of their poverty. Stalin actually said this during a speech. He said that there is only one course open, and that is to create one giant farm. You can find this in the Communist Manifesto of 1848. And those Communists! And they took [this policy] directly from the Communist Manifesto, total collectivization, it's right there in black and white: Unite the poor peasant farms into one giant enterprise; that's what is written there.

All the evil begins with collectivization. The Ukrainian nation was tied to the land. You know, that initially they supported Lenin, who had said, "Land to the peasants! Factories to the workers!" They were fooling us. They will be given ... property for long.

If all Russians are our enemies—there are 130 million of them in Russia and ten million of them in Ukraine—then we are really in a sad state. But I believe that the Russians are also suffering, that not all Russians are imperialists. Or perhaps not to the same extent that other nations are. [If you maintain that] all Russians are imperialists, then [you should realize that] the Russians are also suffering. It is true that Russians are being imprisoned for Russian patriotism. And it isn't true [that all Russians are imperialists]. One isn't aware of this—one only talks about Russian imperialism and Moscow's *imperialism*. But this isn't true. I know what the prison sentences for Russian patriotism and for Ukrainian patriotism, and they are identical. Have you heard of Ogurtsov? He's been imprisoned for Russian patriotism. He was publishing the journal *Veche*, a name that he took from Novgorod.

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<sup>†</sup> i.e., to your village.

**Q:** Osipov or Ogurtsov?

**A:** Ogurtsov. He's been in prison for ten years already because of this journal. And this journal addresses Russian patriotism, not Soviet patriotism.

And you see, I know the difference between Russian and Soviet patriotism, but it's common to confuse Soviet imperialism with Russian imperialism, to mix them up as if they were identical. Muscovite, or Russia, or Russian imperialism.

But this isn't true. Russian patriotism is one thing, and Soviet patriotism is another. All of this is in the 15 volumes that the Ukrainian writers published. This is not Soviet imperialism. And the two are being confused. Do you ever read *Ukraïns'ke Zhyttia*?<sup>†</sup>

I wrote to him and told him that it's untrue. All I wrote was that Ogurtsov is serving a sentence—I had forgotten his name when I had written. But later I found it. And also, there is no such thing as Russian imperialism. It is really Soviet imperialism. All of this comes directly from the dogmas and corollaries of Lenin: That there will be a Soviet government over the entire world, that there will one day be Communism over the entire world. All of this comes directly from Lenin. I have excerpts from newspapers of what Lenin had said with regard to these questions. A sad affair!

And you see how he mixes Russian patriotism with Soviet patriotism. And in addition to this, you have to remember that a Soviet language and Soviet patriotism can only be that which is national in form and socialistic in content, in other words, the language has to be Soviet in content. This then is a Soviet language, not a Ukrainian or a Russian one.

**Q:** What were the relationships like between the different nationalities in the Donbas?

**A:** I'll tell you—there was nothing out of the ordinary. Those people who had fled from somewhere were simply accepted for work by the administration, and they furthermore received the same rations of food as did those of Russian nationality, or of Greek, Bulgarian, or Ukrainian nationality. I know from my own experience that the rations—two and a half pounds, two pounds, and one pound, were assigned according to one's work status. And they did not take your nationality into account—whether you were Russian or Ukrainian—but rather what your class membership was; they didn't accept anyone who belonged to foreign<sup>‡</sup> class elements for work.

There was no [national prejudice] as such in the Donbas.

Now, let's turn to the topic of Russian imperialism. I have these observations ready for publication. Russian imperialism emanates from the Tsarist regime. But this, on the other hand, is Soviet imperialism, since it's already been in existence for 66 years. By this time, the people have already worked ... for the Soviet [regime], the Communist [regime]. There are now 5,000,000 Communists in Ukraine. And mind you that not all of them are Russians. There are also 7.5 million members of *Komsomol*, and neither are these all Russians. And in the collective farms, all the brigade members, all managers, every boss, or whoever, must be a member of the Communist Party. And the Communist Party is in charge—everyone is aware of this all over the world—the Communist Party is in charge. Without [the authority

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<sup>†</sup>*Ukrainian Life*.

<sup>‡</sup>*Chuzhi*.

of] the Communist Party, without the signature of the Communist Party, the Soviet Government does not pass a single law, unless the Party endorses it.

Q: Do you remember the Ukrainization of the 1920s?

A: I certainly do. I was taking my examination at precisely that time. This was in 1926, or perhaps in 1927. I passed the exam—scored in the top category in Ukrainization. Commissions were reviewing the village administration at the time, that is, the village divisions of the regional executives, as well as the post and telegraph, and the communal [units] such as ... or whatever; the commissions were also examining doctors out in the park, believe it or not. Any question could be asked, you understand. They didn't ask anything about my class origin. Since they didn't ask, I didn't lie.

Q: Did you consider this to be a wise policy or not?

A: Ukrainization? I feel that once there is a Ukrainian government, then it's appropriate to have Ukrainization. If the government is Ukrainian, even if it is a Soviet Ukrainian government, then [Ukrainization] is supported by Soviet law, since the national Ukrainian SSR has certain prerogatives. So, for example, they carried out grain requisitions. They did this and collectivization, too. Class warfare—it had its most virulent form in Ukraine, as the Ukrainian writers, the publishers of the 15 volumes, maintained. And we should believe them. This isn't after all the Muscovite that's writing, but Ukrainian writers, that is, Ukrainian Soviet writers. It would be more accurate for me to say that they were Soviet writers that have mastered the Ukrainian language. They were the ones who aggravated the class warfare in Ukraine the most. And there wasn't a single republic, with the exception of Ukraine—not a single republic—be it the RSFSR, or Georgia, or Armenia—where there was a class superstructure in the village. In no republic—be it Georgia, or Estonia, or Moldavia—did this exist. Only in Ukraine. I can find the document for you. Thanks to the resolutions of the CP(b)U and the government of the Ukrainian SSR, the people in Ukraine—well, how is it that I can't find it—in Ukraine, committees of non-wealthy peasants were being organized in May of 1920. I can find you the appropriate document from Kubyovych's encyclopedia.

Q: Were either of your parents or any of your friends members of the *komnezam*?

A: No. This was impossible because the *komnezams* did not like *kulaks*. That's one point. Now, the *komnezams*, these really represented a layer beyond the class structure of a Ukrainian village,<sup>†</sup> and they spread the notion that *kulaks* were wealthy, that they were exploiters; but such things were actually impossible.

I had an acquaintance—well, not an acquaintance really, but a neighbor—who joined the Communists. After that, I had no occasion to have any more dealings with him. Although it's true that he would greet me from time to time, you understand, as a ... but he also didn't live in the village very much. Because, first of all, he was a regimental commissar in Cherkasy. We had grown up together. And he used to come<sup>‡</sup> in 1921, but I was ill with typhus. And he came with a party of two to carry out the dekulakization: Yog<sup>‡</sup> and another fellow from another village, the village of Hryvka—Romashko by family name. Well, he, himself, didn't come

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<sup>†</sup>i.e., a typical Ukrainian village.

<sup>‡</sup>i.e., to the village.

<sup>‡</sup>i.e., a man named Yog.

immediately. And his partner began the dekulakizing—began hauling out coffers into the courtyard, bringing out sheepskin coats; but later he did show up and he said, “That’s enough. Let’s go.” This happened after about half an hour. You see, he didn’t come to do any dekulakizing himself, because, you understand, he was a neighbor and a school mate of mine.

**Q:** What was your attitude to the Soviet government?

**A:** I had a negative attitude.

**Q:** From the very beginning?

**A:** Yes, from the very beginning, because I had seen Makhno with his banner with the bust of the skeleton. My attitude to the Soviet regime was absolutely negative, and then I also took a negative view of the confiscation of land. They confiscated land and just left you the permissible quota of ten *desiatynas* of land. [I also took a negative view] of religious persecution, the persecution of the church, the persecution ... what they did to the *kulaks*. But I must tell to you there are a lot of Soviet patriots right here in the United States. But they’re afraid to go back home because they have something [in their pasts]—either they deserted from the Army, or they were POWs. You know that Stalin did not recognize any Soviet POWs, but branded them ‘traitors to the homeland.’ There are a lot of them here—formerly from the Soviet regime. I read Jurij Lawrynenko. Now here was a patriot, a Soviet patriot, but also a Ukrainian, a Ukrainian patriot with a Ukrainian point of view. But he was also a Ukrainian with the all intensity of his being. And he also was sentenced to three years. I have the documents. I was told that he got three years. And he gave this speech. I have it [in writing] that he was in the thick of the collectivization and the grain requisitions. I will read to you [about him]. And he gave this speech in 1963 in Bound Brook to the effect that the blame all lay with “the Russians! the Russians! the Russians!” Because he won’t admit what he himself was up to, he tries to blame it all on someone else. But he himself took part in it all. I’ve got it all right here in these documents.

**Q:** What portion of your village do you think supported the Soviets?

**A:** All the landless and the land-poor supported the Soviets. This was because Lenin had said, “Land to the peasants, and the factories to the workers.” They thought that they would be given land for them to keep as their own property. And the opposite actually happened. If they had known all of this earlier, then maybe we never would have had any collective farms, you know.

**Q:** My sincere thanks for the conversation.

*Appendix I*



## CASE HISTORY LH13

*Translated from Ukrainian by Sviatoslav Karavansky*

**Question:** When were you born?

**Answer:** May 7, 1904.

**Q:** Where were you born?

**A:** Should I name the village?

**Q:** This is not necessary if you don't want to.

**A:** Velykobahachans'kyi district, Poltava region.

**Q:** Can you recall the situation before the Revolution?

**A:** Before the Revolution? Yes, a little bit. The Ukrainians were as subjugated under the Tsar as they were under the Soviets. I was born in 1904, so when the Revolution began, I was 14 years old. Well, what can I say? Before the Revolution one who was relatively well off, who had some land, could live. Landowners were quite well off—and lived high off the hog, of course. I tell you, the Revolution was caused by the landowners. Why? Because the poor people were very oppressed, and this is why the Revolution happened. It could not be otherwise. The Revolution had to happen. But not the way it did, with the Bolsheviks coming to power. Well, the Russians wanted an “indivisible” Russia; they didn't care if it was a red or white Russia, as long as it was “indivisible.” If Ukraine had been independent at that time, everything would have been different. Bolshevism came from Moscow. It was true, the Ukrainian people maybe believed that, “Aha, here we have land, here we have everything.” Originally, it was intended that the “land should go to the peasants, while the factories should go to the workers.” However, it turned out quite differently—everything became the property of the state.

After the Revolution, starting in 1922, life began to return to normal. Well, the countryside did not suffer so much, because it was, after all, the countryside. But the cities experienced difficulties with food. I did not live in the city, so I don't know. But it was said that there were difficulties with food, with everything. In the country, of course, there was no kerosene, no salt, so it was difficult. But there were gardens in the country; there was bread; there were potatoes. This was—I tell you—in those days. Then came NEP. During NEP life was better. I mean, for those who were not—how shall I put it—involved in politics. Well, people said, “They gave us a little bit of bread and land; it's possible to live, and you can live.” But whoever wanted an independent Ukraine was arrested. My husband was arrested in 1929 during the SVU<sup>†</sup> affair. I was left with my five-year-old son. Well, this was in 1929. Collectivization had already begun. Dekulakization had already begun. Some were being sent to Siberia. But in 1929 one still could live. Especially if one were not involved in politics. But for those who were involved the situation was dangerous.

**Q:** What crime was your husband charged with?

**A:** My husband was charged with being for an independent Ukraine.

**Q:** Did he serve in Petliura's army?

**A:** He did not serve in Petliura's army. His uncle served with Petliura, and then, in 1919 or 1920, he retreated, when Petliura retreated. When Petliura retreated so did my husband's brother. He lived abroad. He didn't write anyone for a long time

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<sup>†</sup> Union for the Liberation of Ukraine.

*Appendix I*

and then he began corresponding. So, my husband was arrested on account of this uncle. My husband was a deacon, he had a secondary education.

**Q:** Was he in the village?

**A:** Yes. He had a secondary education. At first he was a teacher. Then, in 1921, when the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was resurrected, he went into religious life. He was ordained a deacon. He was not yet ordained as a priest. He was taken while he held this position. There were many reasons. Political ones. He was imprisoned in Poltava, and I went there several times. One time I took the children, but he was not there anymore. The investigator—one Litvinov—told me that “he had been transported to Kharkiv, but he didn’t know where. They lied, for they had already shot him while he was still in Poltava.

When the SVU affair was exposed, some people were tried in Kharkiv, but thousands were shot by secret tribunals without a trial. This is what I have to say about my family.

**Q:** May I ask how much land you had?

**A:** We had? Before the Revolution or afterwards?

**Q:** Before the Revolution?

**A:** Before the Revolution I lived with my mother’s father, my grandfather. Well, it’s a complicated matter. My grandfather had a large farm. The farm belonged to my grandfather and nephews. He lived with two nephews, and grandfather was their guardian. The ownership of the farm was divided among grandfather and the nephews. There were 40 *desiatynas*, 20 for my grandfather and 20 for the nephews. The farm was large. This was before the Revolution. I was brought up by my grandfather and grandmother. They wanted me to go on living with them. My father worked at the railroad, first as a senior worker, and later on—as a foreman. My father came from a peasant family. They, too, were farmers. Only I lived with grandfather—mother’s father. My father died in 1920 or 1922. He died of spotted fever, after working only a short time after being appointed foreman. The typhus epidemic was terrible in our area. So, when my father died, my mother returned to the village to her father’s farm. Then, after the Revolution, we were allotted six *desiatynas* of land. All the rest was taken. The meadows, the forests—everything was taken. We were allotted only fields.

**Q:** To whom was the rest given?

**A:** The meadows and forests went to the state, and the fields were given to individuals who didn’t have much land. Those who had no land were given some. When NEP was established—as I said before—people said, “Aha, this doesn’t seem to be so bad.” Our land was taken away, but some was left, so we lived on six *desiatynas*. There were five of us girls—I was the oldest, so, we worked well.

I attended school. I finished the seven-year school. In our village there was an elementary school, and three kilometers from us, there was an upper-level elementary school; and I went there four Winters. So, this is the kind of education I have. I was the only one from our village. Also there probably weren’t that many boys in school. But some went. My husband had attended this school earlier when it was known as the “ministerial” school, or the “city school,” or the “highest elementary school.” The students wore gray uniforms: Gray overcoats, gray jackets, gray caps. That’s what the uniform was like. Only boys attended this school. After the Revolution girls were admitted too. After the Revolution—in

1917, 1918—girls were admitted. So, I attended this school in 1917, 1918, and 1920, too. But in 1922, I got married.

**Q:** What was the Revolution like in your area?

**A:** Do you know how it was in the village? Some were happy, some wept. In our village nobody did anything to anybody. In our village, thank God, there were no murders, no robberies, nothing of that sort happened. In cities many things happened. But our village was calm. Those who were poor were happy. They thought that it was all over for the rich. But the big landowners deposited their money in banks abroad before the revolution and fled. Those who were the wisest. But the remainder were shot or tortured to death, and their estates seized. People in the countryside were illiterate, with some exceptions, such as my husband and several others. When the Revolution came, the poor people rejoiced, thinking the land would be given out. Only some major landowners were shot at once; others remained; their land was taken away, but they lived until the thirties. But later on, they, too, were destroyed. My grandfather had already died and everything was taken away. The land was taken, some of the cattle was taken away, but it was still not like in the thirties. So, we farmed during NEP. But in 1929, my husband did not farm; in addition, he owned absolutely no land. In 1929 my husband was arrested, and in the thirties came the collective farms. During NEP, people lived well. They did not care, whether it was the Soviets in power or whoever. Those who had land could lead a good life. They also lived well because they worked. They worked and lived well. But afterwards, everything went into ruin; nothing remained anywhere. I know of families whose members vanished in Siberia.

**Q:** Were there people during the Revolution who wanted an independent Ukraine?

**A:** There were, but not so many, I'd say. There were some, but I can't be certain of the number. They were the exceptions who did want an independent Ukraine. In our village, there were some followers of Petliura, but what happened to them—whether they perished or went abroad—I don't know. My husband's uncle was in Czechoslovakia. So, when we found ourselves in Germany, we met him. I knew his address. I didn't have it written down, but the address stayed in my head. However, I don't know how the postcard ever reached my husband's uncle. The address was: Podebrady, Lazne, Prague, then the name, and that's all. But the uncle sent a letter to Berlin. We were in Berlin. This is what I preserved from my husband's letters, for I destroyed them all when my husband was arrested. He was arrested, then released periodically, but later he was taken and never released.

**Q:** What was the situation with the churches in your village? Did you have two churches or was there only one—a Ukrainian one?

**A:** There was one church in our village. Later, the steeple was torn down, and it was turned into a house of culture. But in the other village, Ustymivka, where I attended school, there was a nice church of St. Michael the Archangel. I went to this church often; the priest came to our school several times, even though the Revolution had already begun. He was the dean of that church. Whenever I and my friend Natalka—she was my aunt, my father's sister, but she was as old as I was—found the church open on our way to school, we would go in. Also, we went there for special occasions. So, the priest would say, "It is very desirable that you should attend church." He would say this to all of us. Even we—students from the other village—three kilometers away—went. Natalka lived on the farmstead, a

little beyond the railroad. Our village was located before the railroad, and beyond the railroad—was the Tkachenkiv farm.

So, I liked the church. It was a nice church! There was a nice choir; the service was nice! The church had five cupolas and was nice. Oh, very nice! Mr. Leonid, when I would go there somewhat later from the collective farm, the church services were still conducted in Ukrainian. Then all the clergy were arrested. I would go to Ustymivka often. I felt at home there, since I had gone to school there for four years. Later, my sister was married there. Once when I had occasion to go there I saw that everything had already been tilled; it was impossible to see where the church had stood. I was stunned. I stopped frozen in my tracks. To think that such a majestic and holy thing had been swept away! Well, I tell you, everything had been leveled off and tilled. The church had been surrounded by a large wooded area. But now everything was tilled and smoothed over.

**Q:** During NEP did people support the Ukrainian Church?

**A:** Yes, they did! Some of our people who were richer, were a bit mistaken. They were devoted to the Tsar, to the monarch. But there were people who supported it strongly. Not one soul in our village said that this was not our church, or that the language in which the service was conducted was Ukrainian. All the people went. Moreover, I would say, people went very willingly. They preferred to have the service in Ukrainian; they could understand everything. Every person understood, when the church services were conducted. They liked it! I sang in the choir. When I was a girl and while I was married, I sang in the choir. In Mirhorod all the churches joined the Autocephalous Orthodox Church, and only one did not join—the cathedral where Bazilevs'kyi was priest. My husband, who was then the deacon, went with the bishop to some churches which were not Ukrainianized. My husband said that Bazilevs'kyi closed the door and did not let them in. He said, "You are self-consecrated priests." He did not let anybody into the church. So this cathedral did not join the Ukrainian Church, even though many rich people lived there. Their land was taken away from them, but they still lived in this vicinity and supported the Russian Church. So, this church remained Russian. The cathedral remained Russian. But here in Mirhorod, there were five churches, and all of them joined the Ukrainian Church. Only one did not join. In Ustymivka in the village of Yares'ke, in Velyki Sorochyntsi, in all the neighboring villages I never heard that there was any resistance to Ukrainization. Only this one church, the cathedral, resisted.

**Q:** Who was your bishop?

**A:** I've forgotten, you know. It's so annoying, but I've forgotten the name. Maybe, somebody knows. But I don't. There aren't that many people who still remember those years, of course. What should I tell you? I was young then, I was 20 years old, or so? I've forgotten. And this has forced me to think about who our bishop was then? It seems to me, that it was Hrihorii. Not this Hrihorii, who's here, no...

**Q:** Silvester?

**A:** Maybe, Silvester, but I've forgotten the name. On Mirhorod Street, or on Poltavaska. But during NEP, there was the Autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Well, they (the Bolsheviks) slackened the reins, a bit. Oh, during NEP Ukrainization was so strong that people were compelled to speak Ukrainian. In the various institutions everything was in Ukrainian. The Muscovites who held re-

sponsible positions in Ukraine objected to being forced to speak Ukrainian; they protested that it was hard for them to pronounce some Ukrainian words. It is clear that the Ukrainian language is difficult for a Muscovite. As for us, the Muscovite language was not hard for us, because we grew up with it. I, for one, was taught in Russian before the Revolution. We had a teacher... You see, I haven't forgotten her name—Raievska, Antonina Filipovna. She taught the third division of the third grade. She told me, "Don't speak in school as you would at home." She was a very Russified person. But she was a Ukrainian herself. Her name was Raievska. Without question, the Ukrainian language was highly persecuted. I tell you, before the Revolution I could not find a Ukrainian book anywhere. During the Revolution one could. And the Ukrainian state, the Ukrainian government wasn't even in power all that long? Not long! But all our Ukrainian classics—Hrynchenko, Kashchenko—all of them were published in many editions.

**Q:** Were people interested?

**A:** Yes, they were. Literate people were interested, but for illiterate people it made no difference.

**Q:** Did illiterate people understand the Russian language?

**A:** Not much.

**Q:** Could they understand a Muscovite?

**A:** They could. You see, the kind of people Ukrainians were? When someone came to the village they would always ask where he had been, where he was from. If a Russian registered with the intention of living there, he would never have another name, only "*katsap*."<sup>†</sup> Even if he had a name, a first name, he would be called only "*katsap*."

**Q:** People didn't like the Russians?

**A:** No, they didn't. In our village there was one such family. He got married in the neighboring village of Sorochyntsi; he had been married before and was divorced. When he married, he brought along his wife's mother, her sister and daughter, so he brought along all four of them. They all lived on our street; after marriage, he brought them all from Sorochyntsi. He was a poor man and was in some "*aktyv*."<sup>‡</sup> His wife later became such an avid activist that it was terrible to behold. He deserted her, this Marusia. Her mother's name was Tiurin, and her name by her first husband was Hryshko, and after the second, Nikonenko. So, when her cow was grazing in the meadow... We had a meadow along one side of the village, and along the other, fields; only we did not have orchards, because the land was arid; the river Psyol ran near our village. So, when their cow would come from the pasture, the boys would say, "Look, over there—there go the bast sandals."<sup>§</sup> For them it wasn't a cow, but "bast sandals"—it was to this degree that they hated the Russian newcomers. Whenever a Muscovite would appear in our village—even if he were an intelligent man or the wisest man—he would be called "*katsap*" and nothing else. Well, what else can I tell you?

**Q:** This is very interesting.

**A:** You find this interesting? I've already said a lot. But all this is serious, everything is true. You know, It's easy for me to forget now what's in the next

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<sup>†</sup>Derogatory name for a Russian.

<sup>‡</sup>The "active" element upon which Soviet power relied to carry out its directives.

<sup>§</sup>Traditional footwear of Russian peasants.

*Appendix I*

room, but not what happened long ago. I forget more and more. I buried my son eight years ago. He studied theology in Munich.

**Q:** When your husband was arrested, did he really participate in underground activities? Did a secret underground exist?

**A:** Yes, he did participate. The work was done in a very clandestine way. He had very clandestine contacts somewhere. Obviously, our people were capable of betraying him. There were many informers. Very many.

**Q:** What kind of people were they?

**A:** Well, they supported Bolshevism. There were people like that. The informer could be your best friend, your best comrade and still work for the GPU. It was called GPU then—the State Political Administration in Russian, the predecessor of the KGB.

**Q:** Was his work so clandestine that even you didn't know anything about it? Or did you know a little?

**A:** Yes, I did. I was afraid that I would be arrested also ... because of the two children. But I said that I did not know anything. Even the investigator himself said, "Of course, your husband did not admit anything to you." Two children. I was always afraid. Later my son was taken also. He was taken because of this father. This was in 1939, when my son was taken.

**Q:** Were there local people in your village administration?

**A:** Local. But later on, they began to send strangers. At first there were local people. At first. There were different kinds of people. Some were good people, some bad. But one can say, that the local people were non-Party people. But then, some strangers were sent to us. Then, you had to be very cautious.

**Q:** Were they Ukrainians?

**A:** Yes, Ukrainians. For instance, the chairman of the village Soviet was Ukrainian. But they never lasted long. If they stayed one or two years, it was a long time. At one time during the thirties I worked in a co-operative. I worked there when I lived with my mother. I worked in a cooperative named Plodoovoch. I also worked in a collective farm, I worked wherever I could force my way in. I, the wife of the enemy of the people! Do you know, how it all came to an end? My husband told me, "When you can't bear it any longer, get a divorce for the children's sake." "Get a divorce," my husband told me, when he was under arrest in Poltava. It was so. The children renounced their parents; I did not renounce my husband, for I had not been married in the church; mine had been a civil ceremony. He said, that they did not recognize a church marriage, but you can get a divorce if you had been married in a civil ceremony. So, I did, for the children's sake, because my husband told me to. He said, "Don't think that I will believe that you've renounced me. No! The church marriage is lasting." When I was left alone, I lived for the sake of the children; I never intended to marry again. After all, I was 25 years old, when my husband was arrested. He told me that once they begin bothering you, they would never stop. I would never get a job anywhere. If I didn't get a divorce, I would be deprived of all my rights. I wouldn't have the right to get a job anywhere. I wouldn't have the right to live. And to think, I had two children! So, I made my choice. The divorce troubled my conscience a little. Because it wasn't done in the past. Before the Revolution there were only church marriages, that's all. There were no civil ceremonies.

**Q:** In my opinion the civil marriage doesn't count. The church marriage counts.

**A:** But for them, only the civil marriage counted.

**Q:** So let it be on their conscience, not on yours.

**A:** That's what I'm saying. It didn't matter to me. All right, I'll get a divorce. Let it be so. I didn't renounce my husband in my soul or heart. I only got a divorce in order to be able to work. Otherwise they would have deprived me of my suffrage, as they say. This right was only for voting for those who were chosen beforehand by them. But, nevertheless, people voted. Only I wouldn't have been able to.

**Q:** Did you ever hear of so-called "wolves' tickets"?<sup>†</sup>

**A:** This practice did not exist at that time. That was before the revolution. In some schools and mostly in universities students were given "wolves' tickets," if they did something wrong. Because, before the Revolution there were people who wanted revolution, but not the kind that happened. Students wanted it, the intelligentsia wanted it. The young people wanted it. The Tsar sent many people to Siberia. But they didn't want the kind of revolution that happened. A revolution in our country was unavoidable, Mr. Leonid. Nobody could endure the kind of life we had to live any longer. The landowners oppressed people. A person put up with it because he was poor and had to earn his living somewhere. If he was dissatisfied, he could quit and go to another landlord. As for serfs, after the abolition of serfdom, many serfs didn't want to take the land that was given them. They were afraid. They said, "We'll work again..." because the landowners gave the land to be paid off in long term installments. The landowner reserved some land for himself and gave the rest to the peasants as allotments. Many peasants were afraid of taking the land and therefore remained without land and were poor. It wasn't their fault, because they were afraid that they would once again have to work for the landowner. They would have to work while the landowners would withhold payments. Even though the payments were low, you still had to pay. When a serf was released empty-handed, he was afraid of owning land. He said, "I'll work and once again have to pay the landlord. I'll have to work off the debt to the landlord for the land again." So, many peasants didn't take land. But the Cossacks had land and took the land. I think that these were the Cossacks who came from the Zaporozhian Cossacks.

**Q:** Were there many Cossacks in your village?

**A:** Most people in our village were Cossacks. There were serfs also, but not many. Do you know, Mr. Leonid, the meanness that was characteristic of the serfs remained in the blood of subsequent generations. The meanness remained for generations. They had been innocent people. I mean, the serfs. It was a terrible thing when one was sold in exchange for a dog. The landowners would play cards. When one lost all his money, he would give his serf as payment. This was unbearable. So, the serfs continued to seethe with pent up anger, which existed for generations among the people—the meanness, the nerves. There was in our village one man; he lived on our street. He lived well; he owned land. His grandfather or great-grandfather had been a serf. He had a horse-powered threshing-machine. He had two of them. They managed somehow to buy machines and threshed the grain for people. Later there were machines that ran on steam power, but earlier they were drawn by horses. It would happen that they would drag the machines to a farmer who owned much land. For three or four days they threshed. Whenever

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<sup>†</sup>In Ukrainian and Russian, "to get a wolf's ticket" means "to be on the black list."

the girls whose job it was to unwrap the sheaves and hand it to him to throw into the drum of the machine didn't give him the sheaves in the right way he'd throw it right back in her face [gap in the narration follows].

A: ...Revolution. There was such tension in the air that it was impossible to live that way any longer. Even though I did not suffer, It happened somehow that I did not matter. Also my mother, like me, didn't matter; all people—both poor and rich—were equal for her. Yet she was considered to have come from a wealthy family. All my friends were poor girls.

Q: How did the grandsons of the serfs live with the Cossacks? Were there hostile feelings between them?

A: No. I wouldn't say so. Perhaps they did differ from one another. To be sure, a poor man won't marry a rich girl, or a rich man a poor girl. If he does, he would have a great deal of trouble on his hands. It was so, I say. So when they married, a poor man would marry a girl who was poorer than he, while a richer man would marry a girl who was richer. The people in our village were not so very poor and not so very rich. Some people had more land and some less. There were, maybe, ten very rich farmers in the whole village, which consisted of 500 households.

Q: Were there *komnezams*—Committees of Non-Wealthy Peasants—in your village?

A: Of course, there were. Oh, many people wound up joining the *komnezam*. Poorer people. Well, I must say that I can't blame these people, because earning one's living or owning one's own property makes a great difference. In our village people were mostly middle peasants. But there were also some poor people. There were people who didn't even have enough money for potatoes. But they weren't badly off. They worked for rich people and were able to live, somehow. At least, they lived better than in the collective farm. Many poor people were nostalgic for the past when life allegedly was bad. There were many of them who said, "It would be better if life were as it was before." As I said, the Bolsheviks were easy on the people during NEP. Life was not bad until the thirties. But from the thirties on, the nightmare began. Then all the people were placed on the same level. All were trimmed under one comb. There were neither the poor nor the rich. The rich had already been exiled to Siberia, some had run away, fled to towns to find jobs. Those who survived did so by the grace of God.

Q: Do you remember how dekulakization was carried out in your village? What happened?

A: God Almighty, everything was taken.

Q: Who did the taking?

A: Some say that our own people did. But our people didn't bother me. The poor people died, the rich lived, but they didn't bother anyone. Thus, the order to dispossess the *kulaks* and take away their property must have come from above. Well, of course, a plenipotentiary would arrive from Moscow. Who was he, a Russian, or a Jew, or somebody else, I don't know. And, of course, there should be some authority in the village. Somebody in the village must be in charge. In the village before the Revolution there were elders, *starostas*—the village elders—and messengers as well. And now—there is the chairman of the village soviet, and when the collective farms were organized, the chief of the collective farm. The chief of the collective farm, the chairman of the village soviet, a secretary, somebody had to be... Well, of course, there were also some activists from the



*komnezam*, who came from the poorest people. They thought, "We are in power, and we can do anything." So they took. Young men, members of the Young Communist League, joined the tow brigades. What else could they do? They went, because otherwise they would have been expelled from school or they wouldn't have been admitted to the university. As soon as you joined the Young Communist League, you were obliged to do as you were told. Otherwise you would go the way of the *kulaks*. I'm not saying I blame those who did this, because they were forced to do so. Well, they were forced, well, couldn't refuse. That was the system, those were the authorities. It was so terrible that I can't express it. Well, such was the new system. There used to be capitalism, and now there's communism. It's your guess as to which is more equitable. And there are many other kinds. Once the teacher of our seven-year school, Ivan Hryhorovych Prochan, told us, "Children, even capitalism and communism aren't good. There should be a middle road, democracy." For example, the way it was in Czechoslovakia under Masaryk.

Q: When did the teacher say this?

A: The Revolution had already begun.

Q: Were the Bolsheviks already in power?

A: Yes, they were, but at the very beginning, sometime in 1918 or 1919, he said, "Children, this isn't right, and that isn't either." Then the control was not so very tight. It was only when the red skirt waved that the situation changed. Once upon a time, you know, there were no pensions. I think, you know this; after all, you have studied the history. He told us, "Children, neither capitalism nor communism is our destiny." Our choice should be like Czechoslovakia under Masaryk. I don't know what it was like in Poland. Do you know why I know how good things were under Masaryk? We met my husband's uncle who told us what it was like under Masaryk. Masaryk would walk around Prague without a bodyguard—the uncle told us. He said that anyone could see Masaryk during his walks. The workers had great advantages, great privileges. Things may have been like this somewhere else, also, I don't know. But in Bohemia things were this way after the First World War. But now, I don't know what it's like under the Soviets. There was a newspaper *Rude Pravo*. When our people were there, they were afraid, because there was a rumor that the Czechs would give our people up. There were some of our people who found themselves in Prague when the Soviets entered the city. Some had fled there from the Soviets, but no sooner had they escaped, they became afraid the Czechs would extradite them. The Czechs had waited for the Soviets so much; now they've got what they'd waited for.

Q: How did collectivization occur in your village?

A: Well, it was like this. NEP was over. In 1930, some plenipotentiaries arrived at our village. God Almighty! They called meetings every evening that Fall, every evening to get people to join the collective farm. But people tried to avoid collectivization; they didn't want it. They took everything: The livestock and all the farming equipment.

Well, people were silent then... But the more courageous ones said, "What is this? Serfdom, again?"

"No," others said, "it isn't. It's just that..."

But poor people readily joined the collective farm, as did those who had begun to be *dekulakized*, but who still lived in their homes. They thought that they would be able to remain on the collective farm. But they were later expelled and turned

out of their homes. Only the poor people remained on the collective farm. Afterwards the Bolsheviks agitated so vigorously that almost all of the peasants joined the collective farm... But suddenly a directive was issued that called such methods too extreme. Whoever did not want to join the collective farm could leave. My God! Everyone took back his own property, his horse, his wagon. So, some people left, while others remained. Some were poor, others a bit more wealthy. So, for one more Summer, people farmed independently. The authorities allotted grain for joint Spring sowing. Then they allotted the gain for the Winter crop. It happened somehow, that in Spring the peasants sowed individually. After that, all of the peasants were driven into the collective farm, where they did their Spring sowing. Whoever managed to sow the Winter crops by himself, harvested them by himself. This was in 1930. Then in the Spring, the authorities gave out small quantities of Spring crops: Some Spring wheat, some oats. They calculated how much everyone should get. Beets, everything. Thus, people farmed independently. In the Spring it was the same thing all over again: Either join the collective farm or get thrown out of your own house. Well, what can one do? People again joined the collective farm. What else could you do? There was nothing anywhere. The authorities cut down even the vegetables in the garden near your hut, leaving you with only 15 hundredths of a hectare if you were not a collective farm member. So, that would be the end of your vegetable garden. So, people thought, "Even if I won't earn anything in the collective farm, I'll still have corn and potatoes from my own garden." So, my mother went into the collective farm and I with her.

In 1932 people farmed either their own plots or worked in the collective farm. In the Spring of 1933, all the people who had been evicted from their homes were driven off the collective farm. There was no place for them even there. My mother and I were among them. They took everything away from us—only the house remained. It is true that they did not drive us from the house. There used to be a huge building, a barn; they dismantled it. There was a cellar; they removed the bricks from the cellar. All the cattle-sheds were taken away, as was the larder. But we managed to sell the cow. But everything else was taken away; only the house remained. Even the beans were taken. Everything in the garret was taken away. There were some ears of corn hanging in the garret. They were taken away. Absolutely nothing was left. So, we were left without a thing, but we weren't driven out of our house. Afterwards during the Winter, they cleaned us out, and again in the Spring.

People wanting to join the collective farms had to fill out applications. So, once again, those who applied were admitted into the collective farm again. After all, what could people do? As I said, the garden was cut down; only a patch near the porch remained; there wasn't even room for potatoes. How was one supposed to feed a family?! Everything was set up so that you could do nothing else. You could either go down yourself or join the collective farm.

And then the Famine began. There was a good harvest that year, but it was removed. Maybe, somebody had time to hide something in the ground. But it was impossible to do so in the house; the authorities dug in the houses under the clay floor. They dug up the gardens, suspecting that grain was hidden there. And then the Famine began. At first collective farm workers were given something to eat. But eventually this was discontinued, as well. In our village, I have to say, people managed to survive somehow. One gave to another what one had. People shared

potatoes or beets, especially with relatives or neighbors. But it was terrible. Terrible. So, now my story begins about the Famine.

In the cities, there were *torgsins* where one could get some flour, millet, and oil for gold and silver. In the *torgsins* one could get something to eat. Six kilometers from us was an army camp, situated behind the village of Yares'ke. Some officers' wives lived as lodgers in the peasants' homes. So, peasants, who had nice linen, or homespun red skirts, would trade these with the officers' wives for food. For one embroidered towel you could get a loaf of bread. For a scrap of linen—a loaf of bread, a bit of groats, some millet or rice. So, people made ends meet. Many people, mostly children, ventured near the army camp. The soldiers of the Red Army men had witnessed the Famine. They would throw bits of food to the children. The children would also go to the refuse-pit, where garbage from the soldiers' kitchen was thrown out. But later, the children were driven away.

Railroad workers fared better. My sister's husband worked on the railroad, and she, poor soul, shared food with us. Besides us she had a family, a husband and child. We, too, were a family—my mother, I, and my two children. My sister got married during NEP, before the beginning of the horrible Famine. One of my sisters was really still just a girl. And one got married during collectivization, but she somehow managed to make ends meet.

So there we were: My mother, myself, and my children. My son was nine years old, and Liuba—Andrii's mother—five years old. I worked for as long as I had the strength. I had a job, so I was able to get something to eat there. The bread that was given out would crumble to pieces, just crumble. Sometimes, we got only an oilcake and something boiled. So, I ate a little bit and brought some small piece of bread to the children; it crumbled to pieces ... or a small piece of oilcake. At last, I collapsed. Besides this, I fell ill with the flu. So, when I collapsed, I realized that the end was near. The legs and stomach of my deceased son were swollen. My daughter Liuba was so emaciated that, if she had no skin all the bones in her body would scatter. Yet she still managed to get up early and go somewhere.

In the Spring people planted potatoes, not the potatoes themselves, but only the eyes. During the whole Winter people would be cutting out the eyes and putting them aside, if one had the potatoes. And then these were planted. Potatoes grew from the eyes, and even from the peelings plants grew. So, Liuba would get up and head straight for the garden. At that time, small cucumbers were making their appearance. So, she would go there. She was just a little girl—five years old, and she never asked for anything. She only used to say, "Mama, if there's no bread, bake a flat dry shortcake." And my son used to say, "Mama, do you want to eat?"

At last, it came to this—I took off my cross and earrings, and there was some old silver money, 25- and 50-kopeck pieces. There was also a silver spoon. A ring, as well. My mother went to Mirhorod to exchange these things for food at the *torgsin*. All of our better clothing from the chest had already been bartered. Everything had been bartered. Only the clothes we wore remained. So, my mother took everything. These were things, which we had put off selling in anticipation of worse times yet to come. So, my mother took everything and went to the *torgsin*.

Well, we stayed behind; I stayed with the children in the house. There was nothing anywhere, nothing. It is true that the grass had already begun to grow, but what kind of food is grass, anyway? The leaves had already appeared on the trees, but what use are leaves alone, without something to add to them? My son used to

say, "Mama, I'm going to go—he made a fishing-rod—I'm going to go catch some fish." In the meadows where we lived there were a number of rivers and lakes. He would go and catch some. But there was no oil, nothing. If there had been some *kvass*... One can fry food in beet *kvass*. One can eat the beets and use some of the *kvass* for frying. But there was no *kvass*. So, I put the fish in the frying pan in water alone. The fish was tasteless, because there was nothing else to go with it.

I saw that my Kolya now spent most of his time lying in bed. But my little Liuba, though emaciated, was still mobile. But when she started to swell, when her little legs became swollen, it was difficult for her to move around. I saw that my Kolya slept most of the time. So, we waited for grandmother; we waited for grandmother. But she did not come. She was gone one day, then a second day. And we had nothing to eat. I thought then that this was the end. I couldn't bear to see my children dying from starvation. For some reason I thought that we'd die together. Such a strange feeling came over me... I can't explain to you what was in my soul and heart—we would die together or I would die first. And I saw that my Kolya wasn't getting up, and my little Liuba wasn't in the hut. So, what did I do? I took a rope and wanted to... By that time, my son Kolya came in and, grabbing me by the leg, said, "Mama, don't do that; we won't ask for food." Then I—there were icons in my house—I got up and said, "Lord Almighty, keep me from this deed!" Kolya grabbed me by my legs, because he saw that I held the rope in my hands and threw it around the beam. He said, "Mama, don't do that..." Then I thought, "Oh, Lord, oh, my Lord, save me and keep me from such a thought."

That evening our grandmother came. She brought some millet, some flour, not that much, but it was such pure white flour—you know, in *torgsins* everything was American. Also, she bought some oil. Before she had left, I had told her not to buy any meat. People or children were just beginning to be cannibalized, and sausages made of human flesh were being sold in the marketplace. I had already heard of this. I said to my mother, "Don't buy any meat, God forbid! Buy some dairy products and oil." So, she bought sunflower seeds. But she was gone for four days. During these four days, we almost...! It was so bad. The leaves had come out, so we took several leaves and a little bit of the flour. By then the sorrel had already grown, so we pulled it up with the roots. We took a little bit of sorrel, and a little bit of flour. We made a soup—my mother brought some millet, so there were some millet grains in each plate. And by that time a few potatoes were big enough to eat. The vegetables were growing. The worst time was the end of May and the beginning of June. Not for all, of course, but then many people died. People died like flies: There was nothing to eat anywhere. During the Winter some people had a little bit of food, some beets or potatoes. But soon everything was gone. This is the truth and not hearsay. I myself lived through all of this.

Q: You said that a little girl lived with you?

A: I remember about that. Now, my aunt had died. One aunt died in prison in Lubny. On her way from our village to her home, she took a path through a cornfield. She found two ears of corn on the path. She didn't pick them off the stalk; she found them on the ground and picked them up. This was in the Autumn of 1932. The Famine was just beginning. By 1933 it was at its worst. She found the two ears of corn on the ground. The guard posted to watch the field immediately swooped down on her. You see what kind of people we had in those days? Had anyone seen the woman pick the two ears of corn? She was sentenced to prison

because of the two ears, and she perished in the Lubny prison. My mother wanted to visit her there, but she had already died.

A second aunt, my mother's sister also died; she, her husband, and four children died. They lived far from us — 10 or 12 kilometers; all of them died from starvation. The only reason we learned of their death from starvation was because two older girls survived. When the older girls saw what happened, they joined the state farm. And there in the state farm, they survived somehow. They were given work or something like that. In the state farms the management was able to help people, somehow. Some of the poor people, activists may have had some food. They weren't robbed as the average peasants were. The activists weren't persecuted as much, because they were the authorities themselves. So, the older girls survived. They were my cousins. The mother of my uncle [my mother's cousin], died first, and then he was driven from his house and taken to the village of Dykanka where he perished. Nobody knows where he perished. And his wife was left with six children. Only one girl survived. But, my aunt, the wife of my mother's cousin, died, along with her five children. Only one girl, Orishka, survived. She was not the eldest, the eldest was a boy; she was born after the boy. My aunt took the dying children to an abandoned hovel, which was all in ruins. So, she went there with her children. Occasionally, she managed to get some food, but it was difficult with five children. She was very pious, very pious she was. When one child died, the youngest girl, she said to the others who sat and watched her, "Motya, you know, let's take out Horpynka's little liver and eat it." The girl who survived later reported what her mother had said, "Let's take out the little liver and eat it." And she was so pious. She never said a harsh word to a child. She never laid a hand on any child. As long as she was in a normal state of mind. God forbid! She never shouted at a child. She never scolded any child. She's gone. She died.

In the village of Ustymivka where I went to school people had died out in entire streets. Once when I was there with another woman I asked, "What is this? Where are the people?" I had forgotten about the Famine or was preoccupied. And she replied, "Don't you know?" "Oh, that's right," I said, "it's from starvation, isn't it?" "Yes," she said.

At Gogol Railroad Station there was a granary, so full of grain that it seemed it would burst. But, it was so heavily guarded that it was impossible to take a single seed. What are the Soviets saying now? They realize that they can't escape the culpability for the Famine when the whole world is expressing its indignation that it happened. So, they say that there was a drought in Ukraine. Mr. Leonid, there was no drought in Ukraine neither in 1930, nor in 1931, nor in 1932, nor in 1933; there was a good harvest. The harvest was especially good in 1932-33; there was never any drought. People say that in the twenties there was a drought in the Dnipropetrovsk region, in Zaporizhzhia. People came to us from the Dnipropetrovsk region to trade grain. People say there was a drought then, but most likely the Famine was artificially created then also. But it was not as terrible as the one in 1932 which encompassed all Ukraine. This is my story regarding the Famine.

Now, in 1934 or 1935, there were many orphans who were left behind when their parents were taken to Siberia. The children either ran away or were left to fend for themselves when their parents died. Well, the authorities gathered together all of the orphans and sent them to the Kharkiv region. I can't explain why they did this; this was Moscow's policy. We belonged to the Poltava region, but were transferred

to the Kharkiv region. So, for a while, there was only the Kharkiv region. The Poltava region was formed only after the Famine. The district was Dykanka, near the city of Poltava. So, if you needed something, you had to go 60 or 70 kilometers to the regional capital. Why this policy existed, I don't know. The orders came from Moscow. The authorities brought these children—though many had already died—to Kharkiv, to the regional capital. From there the children were first divided among the various districts and then assigned to the village soviets. So, some of the children were assigned to our village.

Oh, getting back to my earlier account—exactly at the time when my mother brought me and the children the food, the potatoes had already started to grow; there were heavy rains, so the potatoes grew fast. One day they were as small as peas, but the next they were much larger. So, we gouged them up and gouged them up, and took the best with us. Then, the corn started growing; although everything was still green and young, we disregarded this and picked what we needed. By that time, the first grain was threshed, and we got it unwinnowed, unventilated. The first time we were given two or three kilograms of rye flour.

Well, so came the children—I'm returning to the orphans. Ten of them were brought to our village. I worked in the orphanage at that time. Where on earth did I not work? And then it happened to be the orphanage. Do you know, why? The chief of our collective farm was my schoolmate. Sometimes, such a godsend happens; he was my classmate from school. And he helped me a great deal. If he hadn't, I don't know what would have happened. He helped me get a job somewhere. He was a Party member, it's true, but he was not a bad man. I don't blame the Party members either, because, you know, some people were forced to join the Party. But others joined for the benefits, the career. There were different kinds of people.

So, ten of these children were in our village. And I worked there in the orphanage. One girl was very attached to me. Do you see, I didn't finish my story about this Ustymivka. Well, I'll finish later. This Natasha was very attached to me. She always used to say, "Aunt Polya, Aunt Polya." She used to come and help me a little in the kitchen and so on. We had a helper, but she was such an interesting girl. Once she said, "Aunt, I want to spend the night at your house." "All right," I said, "come along." "I want to tell you something," she told me. So we went. She said, "Well, I want to sleep near you in bed." So we went to sleep. "Everyone in the village," she said, "died. Those who survived fled." There were no dogs or cats. Even the rats had been eaten. This is what Natasha told me. "Our father," she said, "died first. My mother and the two girls were left, my sister Nadya and I."

"Do you know, aunt," she said, "I betrayed my mother to the authorities; I betrayed her." She said that for a long time her mother had dug potatoes and beets on the fields of the collective farm, until there was nothing more to dig, nothing at all. "And once," she said, "my mother gave me something to eat that looked like jellied meat. And I asked her, 'Mama, what is it?' Mother replied, 'Eat what I give you.' A starving human being is not in his right mind. Mother said, 'Eat what I give you.' I said, 'Oh, this is Nadya we're eating.' She replied, 'Be quiet! Eat it if you like, and if you don't, get up and go.' So, I got up, went outside, sat down on the threshold, and began thinking, 'A nine-year-old girl! Mama and I ate Nadya, and then my Mama will eat me.'"

So she left. There was somebody in the village soviet. I tell you, word of honor, I've forgotten what the name of the village was. Whether it was Obukhivka or Okhtyrka, I don't know—near Kharkiv. "I was still alive," she said, "and so were the authorities. The peasants had all died, but the authorities continued to rule there. Maybe there wasn't anybody to rule over anymore, but a dozen individuals remained." She said, "I went to the militia and told them everything. So, they came and took away my mother. And the rest of the meat was taken. They asked my mother, 'Where is the rest of the meat?' She said, 'In the cellar.' They took," she said, "this meat in a large pot or in some other container. She was younger, my sister, about seven years old. It's terrible, isn't it? Yes, it is!

"So, they took my mother, and they forgot at first about me. I entered the room and sat down. They took my Mama and went away. And I sat up the whole night. I was terrified. I thought 'My God, they took my Mama and they took Nadya's meat. What will happen to me?' After some time," she said, "the militiaman came and took me away, and I was sent to the orphanage. We were brought," she said, "to Kharkiv. We were thrown into a barn or garage; we were given almost nothing to eat; many died there from starvation. But we didn't. There was another barn with some ears of corn, which was heavily guarded. But we were children, you know. So, keeping an eye out for the guard we dug up some corn and stole it. So, some of us survived. Then," she said, "we were assigned to various districts, then various village soviets."

When these children were older, I was no longer working at the orphanage. I worked in another place. So, the children were taken from our village. When they were older they were sent to school. Well, they grew up to be Soviet workers. What was their fate? Maybe, a girl like Natasha—she was nine years old then—forgot everything that happened. They grew up, and maybe they became commissars.

Well, about this village, Ustymivka, by Gogol Station where, as I told you earlier, so much grain was stored! So, ten women or more—I didn't see this with my own eyes; I heard it from the villagers—dressed themselves in all black, took black flags in hand, and walked six kilometers to Gogol Station to get the grain. They were arrested there and vanished without a trace. No one knows where they disappeared; what was done with them; what happened to them. They just disappeared. That's all.

Maybe 40-50 persons died in our village. It wasn't the case that an entire family would die out. Some died; others survived. Only one family, as I said my uncle's cousin's entire family died out. But no—one girl survived. One girl managed to survive by joining the state farm. She grew up and got married during the German occupation.

**Q:** How long did the grain seizures by the Party members continue?

**A:** At first they taxed people, the people who had grain. And then when there was no more grain, they exiled them. They took grain until all the people were in the collective farm, and nobody had anything. The idea was that the peasants would receive everything from the collective farm. All of the people were already in the collective farm. Perhaps one or two percent of the peasants did not join. These were people who later got jobs on the railroad or elsewhere. But before all the peasants were driven into the collective farm, everything was taken from them. After that, it was all over. The grain was taken until no one had any more to give.

**Q:** When collectivization began, was there any resistance? Armed resistance?

**A:** There wasn't. I heard that there were some villages that resisted, so the authorities sent squads of soldiers who shot the villagers. This didn't happen in our village. Our village did not resist. Well, you know how a hungry man is. The authorities first created the Famine; they took everything so that the people would be unable to resist. Then they herded everyone together during collectivization. This was especially true in Ukraine. Why? Because Moscow had bread. Many of our people went to Russia to trade for bread. Our bread! Now, when I sometimes buy *Russkoe Slovo*<sup>†</sup> I learn that the Soviets are buying grain from America now. The Soviets claim that in the past it was Russia that fed the whole of Europe. No! It was not Russia! Russia ate bread that came from Ukraine. This is true; this is not a lie, because in Russia the soil is bad. In the Volga region there was some good soil; the Empress Catherine gave even that to the Germans. The soil in Russia was so poor that except for buckwheat and rye nothing would grow, not even wheat. They ate Ukrainian bread.

**Q:** Did your acquaintances go to Russia for bread?

**A:** No, not from our village. Nobody went from our village. I heard about that here. At home I heard that there was bread in Russia. Where could one go when one was so weak that one could barely stand on his two legs? Where could he go? If he were able to go, he might be fired from his job. But when one worked, one could receive at least some oilcakes.

**Q:** When collectivization began did people see this as a new serfdom?

**A:** People did say this. To tell the truth, I never attended the meetings. My mother used to be forced to attend. But I didn't go. I avoided them. Firstly, I was under suspicion. I was the wife of an enemy of the people, so I shunned the meetings. It was enough for me that I was allowed to work, so I worked without so much as a peep. And I did have two children! I've crossed a difficult path. Very difficult. But—you see—God was kind: I survived. Maybe, it would have been better, if I hadn't survived. If only my son hadn't died, life would be... He, the poor soul, suffered because of the Famine. He was just at that age, five to nine years, when a child needs nutritious food, but it was not available.

**Q:** Thank you very much...

**A:** I forgot to add ... she died before the revolution. So, she was laid out on the table or bench in the house. In our area the deceased were laid out on the bench. A necklace of coins was strung around her neck; it was customary among our people to wear a necklace of coins. She had a cross around her neck when she lay in the house. I was eight years old, so I know. When she was put in the coffin to be buried, the coins were removed. The cross remained, but the coins were taken. A whole necklace—eight or nine rubles. Someone, evidently, had seen that when Todoska was buried, she had on a necklace. During the Famine my aunt's grave was opened; they thought that those coins were still in the coffin, and they planned to take them to exchange at the *torgsin* for food. But there were no coins. The grave of my aunt after that remained opened. Many corpses were laid in this grave. Nobody dug a new grave, because the pit remained uncovered, so they put corpses in that pit. That was that. Whoever died from starvation, was put in that pit. But there were no coins. Somebody, had certainly seen the coins placed in the coffin

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<sup>†</sup>*Novoe Russkoe Slovo* ("The New Russian Word"), Russian émigré newspaper published in New York.



*Case History LH13*

when the young girl died and remembered it all those years. When I saw the unearthed grave, I told my mother, and she said, "That was done because of the coins."

**Q:** Did they take the cross?

**A:** The cross wasn't taken, because it was on a deceased person.

**Q:** But those who opened the grave, did they steal the cross?

**A:** They may have taken it then.

## CASE HISTORY LH30

*Translated from Ukrainian by Sviatoslav Karavansky*

**Question:** The witness testifies anonymously. Please, tell me your date of birth.

**Answer:** My year of birth is 1917. December 1917. December 18th. So, in the hungry years I was young.

**Q:** What region are you from?

**A:** From Poltava region, Bahachansky district.

**Q:** What was your family's occupation?

**A:** My family were farmers. I had an oldest brother who brought us up like a father; we became orphans, without parents, so he was our guardian. Under Soviet rule he was forcibly chosen to be a secretary of the village soviet, but he never wanted that. But when he was chosen, he had to obey, because otherwise he would be punished. So, he went, well, he worked in the village soviet as a secretary during the whole collectivization, when the authorities started to force us and everything we owned into the collective farm. So, he told everything to our family, and we weren't dekulakized, but he came many, many times and told his wife that she should dress the children in more than one shirt, because the activists could come at night and drive us out of the hut in nightwear. So, this is such a tragedy that one cannot tell everything in sequence, because one is hardly able.

The years passed. But, in 1931, we were forced to enter the collective farm, not only my brother—at first only my brother entered—and then in 1931, we joined as well; towards the end of the year, my brother signed up all of us. And we went to work in 1932. They gave us so much grain, so much grain that we did not have any place to store it. So, we stored it in the garret—there were partitions—it was my grandfather's hut—there we stored it. But before Christmas, they took the grain to the last seed. They took everything back. A little bit of grain was left somewhere, so, at Easter we tasted the bread for the last time; everyone of us ate a tiny piece of bread; that was all we had. We didn't have more grain—this was in 1932—we didn't have bread until the harvest. When the collective farmers harvested a bit, they gave us just a bit of grain. In 1933 there was no bread, we had there a kitchen-garden, so we ate this very quickly. Only during the harvest-time, the authorities gave something, but in 1932 people were allowed to leave the village; they could go to the Kuban, to Byelorussia. People carried all the clothing they had, everything that people had, everything was sold. One filled the bag with shirts—as it was once, when girls were married, they had much linen, many shirts, many embroidered towels, kerchiefs, skirts—everything was sold. One went with a bag of clothing, sold it and came back with a little sack of corn or beans. And that's how people survived the year of 1932.

But in 1933 nobody was allowed to go anywhere. People had to stay home and die like flies. Well, and... The year 1933 was very terrible. People just fell, they swelled, they were very thin... I was so thin!—skin and bones—but I did not swell because I worked in the grain-collecting station—they called it "barns"—so, I ate the raw grain. When we worked there, we chewed the raw Indian corn. Sometimes, some hemp seeds arrived—sometimes oilcakes; so, we pounded the seeds and the oilcakes; so, the pigs received more than people. The bread was given only to those who worked—200 grams—it was made from the oilcakes; it was

## Appendix I

such a small piece—only two bites. It was a very hard time. Only those who worked received this. Once a day one was given these 200 grams of bread.

So, our family had 10 members, and only I helped this family to survive, though I was a 15-year-old youth then. I brought home my ration of bread, and it was so bad that you could give it only to children who constantly asked for bread. They were so swollen! My older brother had five children, and besides this, there were three other brothers, my brother's wife and I—ten of us altogether. So, I never ate anything at home, I was not supposed to eat. But I ate at work. I was very thin and very dried out, but I didn't swell. My oldest brother who worked as a secretary, he... They had a kitchen there, and they also received meals. He was given meals, but he couldn't carry anything home, he could not bring a bit home for the children.

Well, and so, you know, we held out, and from Christmas we did not see any bread in 1933. We never saw any flat dry shortcake or any bread in our hut. We lived exclusively on buckwheat chaff. We pounded it, mixed it, and cooked it, you know, with... When I brought ... well, I stole some grain in a small bottle, so we then mixed some buckwheat chaff, then we picked out the core from some corn-cobs—it was, you know, like a sponge inside—so, we took and mixed it, and we lived on that up to the harvest. Many people, who could not refrain from eating much, died when they were given something to eat for the first time during the harvest. Those who refrained survived. And this was done so, you know, the hungry person could not restrain himself, he ate this hot bread and he was already... But those who could refrain survived.

There were such people, let's say ... there was a farmstead (*khutir*) nearby. There were about 30 huts, I can't say exactly, but about 30 huts. So, not a soul survived there. And they were the richest people. Because farmstead dwellers (*khutoriany*) in our area... You understand—there is a difference between a village and a farmstead. The peasants in our village lived much poorer, because they were more densely settled, they had less land than these farmstead dwellers. Each of them was like a farmer here in America. Here was one, there another. The farmstead dwellers were surrounded by their fields. They were very rich. So, some of them were exiled. Some of them. Some others who remained entered the collective farm; they did not resist. And those who were, let us say, the richest, these were taken from the very beginning, as landlords, as such, you know, rich people who had 200 *desiatynas* of land. Such people were very rich in our area, because a *desiatyna* was much greater than a hectare or an acre.<sup>†</sup> Thus, those, who remained, they all perished. Well, their bones were scattered about in weeds, because the rats ate their skin. Well, and it was so ... let's say... The situation was very difficult, but our, my family survived. Only my uncle—my father's brother—died from starvation. His two children died from starvation as well, a daughter and a son. My mother's sister lost six children to hunger. They were not even... How did they bury them? Because this was another village, not in my village—and I only know how they ... (witness choked with tears).

Excuse me. When the Germans came to us, they wanted to seal them up, because all the churches were closed. There were no churches. The churches were closed from the very beginning ... I only remember the last time when I wanted to go for the holy water, and put my boots out to dry, and these boots burned out, and my brother's wife did not let me go, so I don't know what I was like then. This was

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<sup>†</sup> One *desiatyna* = 2.7 acres—staff.

sometime in 1930, I can't tell exactly, I can't tell exactly. So, when the church stood empty, the collective farm stored the grain there. And later on, after a couple of years, the church was ruined, and a club was built there. They took bricks and transferred them to some other place, and the club was built, so, no trace remained of where the church stood. So, many children were unbaptized, I mean, who were born when there was no church; there was no priest; where could one go to baptize the children? And this is so...

I cannot tell everything according to some sequence, because this was very long ago, and I was not of full legal age so that I could remember everything. I did not go to school, because I grew up an orphan, so, I only nursed the children here and there to earn my living. Besides this, I did not know anything, I couldn't, you know, there was no opportunity. Such a time passed that it was not ... and when I grew up a little bit, when the collective farms came, I worked in the collective farm the whole day from morning to sunset. I worked 12-14 hours a day, and that's how I lived.

**Q:** When did you work at the granary, were you thoroughly searched?

**A:** Yes!

**Q:** Can you describe this?

**A:** Yes! There was a very kind... What did they call him? I forgot already. Oh! See, I forgot already. There was a very kind man. He did not search us until he was... He locked us in, you know, because otherwise some hungry people would get in. So, we were always locked in. When we went home, he unlocked the door, but he never searched us. Once we even poured a little bit of grain or corn in our sleeves, you know—mostly corn—because it was easiest to pound in a mortar and cook. So, once, I myself poured some corn in my sleeve, here, you know; I tied up the sleeve so the grain wouldn't pour out, and he just gave us our ration—200 grams of bread. And it happened then that they did not give us this bread, so he weighed some flour for anyone of us; that flour was with awns (beards), because it was from barley, from oilcake, and that was the worst. And it was nothing, just awns, just awns! And he weighed us small sacks of that flour. There was, maybe, a little bottle's worth of that flour, and maybe, there was not even a little bottle, because that was oilcake. And what happened? When I stretched my hand to take this small sack with the flour, the corn poured out of my sleeve, you know. And he did not react, only turned red and said, "You already got yours." But he was the kind of man that could not betray us. He was a very kind man.

But, later on some foreigners came, Russians. Whether they were Young Communist Leaguers, or Party-members, or who they were ... I did not know them. But it was enough that when we had to be home, they came and searched us. They searched us. They ordered us to take our boots off, to take off our coats and to be as we were, and they searched us to see if there was grain in our pockets. But they never searched when we shoved our braids under the blouse, and tied up the edge of a kerchief in an underskirt to hide a bottle's worth of grain and make it look like it was the braid lying there. So, they never guessed this. Besides this, we stole in another way: Only four of us worked there. We helped one another. We brought oilcakes from a factory. We pounded them with small axes, we pounded them, and cut out very thin pieces for ourselves that they should stick to our back, to our loins, and we pushed in these pieces behind the belt and pulled the belt tightly so that

they would not fall out. It was very tough this oilcake, it was like a board, because it came densely packed from the factory.

And we brought them home. We couldn't always do so, because these oilcakes were not always available. We brought them home, and my brother's wife divided the oilcakes among the children, like a piece of chocolate; so that they shook when they placed it in their mouths and ate it. Because their little hands were swollen, their little legs were swollen, and the children repeated endlessly, "I want some bread! I want some bread! I want some bread!" But sometimes I did not bring anything, so they cried bitterly. They cried bitterly. They met me, these children, at the road about a quarter of a kilometer before the hut; they waited, as I walked toward them to see if I might bring something. And this was what Soviet life was like...

Q: Do you know what was done with the grain which was kept in the barn?

A: They took it away. This grain was exclusively for seed grain for Spring sowing. As for the grain, when the machine was threshing, they took it away, they took it away. The grain was taken out to some station, and the trains took it somewhere. Nobody knows where they took it. And there were, well, I heard this later, that there were times when they didn't know what to do with all the grain, so it was stored in piles and rotted. It was heavily guarded so that nobody could come near it. They did not give so much as a kernel to anybody. When in 1933 the harvest came, you did not dare... You worked close by the grain, but you did not dare take so much as a little ear of wheat. The women crushed the ears and ate them, but they were afraid that somebody would see and report them to the authorities: To some brigade leaders or somebody. And after the harvest, they forced the children to gather wheat-ears.

Children from the school. No! The schools were closed. There was nobody to attend school, because the children were swollen. But when the harvest ended, the children themselves went into the fields to look for small ears of wheat, so the parents were tried in court because they did not look after the children, and the children robbed the collective farm's grain.

Q: Did somebody from your family go to Russia or to Byelorussia?

A: My brother's wife went to Byelorussia in 1932, as I said before. She took all the clothing we had; father's sheepskin coats, they were still of good quality, besides this, some felt boots. All of this was taken along and traded for corn and beans. Some people took things to the Kuban. My brother went to the Kuban. He also took two bags of clothing and brought home a *pood* of corn. But how much corn was there in that *pood*? Sixteen kilograms! He brought some corn for all the clothing he took, for all two bags of clothing! It was very hard, very hard! We lost everything—our clothing, our cattle, our land—and were left only with our souls. People, who survived, survived, and those who did not survive, perished.

Q: Did your brother take part in something, besides...

A: No.

Q: ...the village soviet? Did you ever hear about *komnezams*?

A: Oh, *komnezams*,... I even don't understand what they were.

Q: These were the so-called "Committees of Non-Wealthy Peasants."

A: The Bolsheviks compelled him, they forced him. He did not... He knew very well... He let people from the village go—those who were dispossessed as *kulaks*. Many of them were grateful to him that he... I remember that he ordered the dogs

to be locked up for the night, it was before he had joined the collective farm... People locked their dogs in stables, the peasants came, and he wrote them some permits to leave the village and go somewhere else. During the day, when the chairman turned off a little bit somewhere, he stamped the seal, and they could leave freely, flee. In the winter—I was still young—sometimes I slept and sometimes I heard, when people came in the night and nobody could see them, and he gave them documents to leave. He, he was not involved anywhere. He was forced, he was forced to join the Party, but he told them that he didn't have an education and he couldn't learn their Constitution, he couldn't master it. So, they left him alone... He, he wasn't a Party member.

**Q:** How old was your brother, let us say, in 1933?

**A:** In 1933? He was born in 1904, so he was 29 years old.

**Q:** He was still a young man.

**A:** He was a young man. He was not in the Young Communist League, because, I mean ... the Young Communist League. He was not forced to join the Young Communist League. My younger brothers were pressed, but not one joined the League. One of my brothers married—he was my fourth brother, because there were my older brother, then two sisters, then this brother—so, as soon as he married in 1935, he abused a Young Communist Leaguer, he called him a bad word. So he was taken away, and he did not return! He was sentenced. So, nobody from my family ever was in the Party. Not only from my immediate family but even from my extended family, nobody was in the Party.

**Q:** And the Soviets wanted them to be?

**A:** They pressed! As a matter of fact, my youngest brother studied [sigh]. When he studied—because he was the youngest—he was strongly urged to enter the Young Communist League. But he did not want to, he did not join the YCL. My older brother said to him, “Enter the YCL, and maybe you'll manage to get some schooling.” But he did not want to, and when he ended the eighth grade, he went to Poltava and entered a school, and he was not able to stay, because he was given... The Soviets did not charge students with tuition. He was given some kind of scholarship, well, as they said, so that he could live, but this scholarship was very miserly—it was already after the Famine, it was already 1936, 1937—so, he could not continue his studies in this school. He did not have any help from home. There was nobody to help him—our oldest brother, when he was taken ill with consumption, worked a little, but he was ill most of the time, and these relatives drifted apart, scattered, got married, only he and I never married.

Well, he needed some help from home, even a little bit, so, when my brother's wife went to Poltava to see him, he was very bad, like, swollen. Because when he was given a few rubles. I don't remember how much he got, but it was only enough for him to eat a piece of bread a day. And as for sugar, when he bought 200 grams of sugar, he divided it for the whole week in order to sweeten the water a little bit and to eat with that bread. He ate nothing more. And my sister had already left the village—she was married also—she was the third sister. She went with her husband to Donbas (Donets Basin).

My younger brother went there to the sister in order to get a job and work for his living. And then he wrote a letter to Voroshilov, saying that he wanted to join the army voluntarily in order to go to school, because he wanted to study. He wrote not long before he would be called up for the military service anyway. It was

very close to that time that he would be called up. He wrote this—I try to be correct—less than a year before he would be called up for military service, when he should go to the army. But Voroshilov wrote him that he should wait for his turn. But my brother changed our name. If I may say so, he changed it completely, because the army would not take him if they knew that his brother was a convict. But he wanted to go into the army to get some schooling. Because, if he were in school, he could choose a military school, and after the military service he could go to some other school. But Voroshilov wrote him, and he had changed our name completely, in order not to... You could get away with this if you wanted to, because they did not try to find out much at that time. If they took him under his father's name, they couldn't enroll him, because his brother was tried for politics. They considered his brother political only because he had called the Young Communist Leaguer a bad word. So, my youngest brother was called for the military service only in 1939, was taken into the army, and he went. He was very sick with a stomach ulcer. They put him in a hospital and cured him. He was in the hospital for six weeks. Then he recovered and was immediately taken into the school, and was in a military school. When the war started, he had a rank already. He was a squad leader. And after that he was killed. He is no longer alive, he was killed in the war. Because, when I started to correspond, my relatives wrote me that he was killed.

Q: Did the fact that your father was sentenced have an effect on...

A: On our family? Maybe—maybe on somebody, somewhere, somehow... But I did not hear anything. Maybe on some of the adults. Maybe it meant something for my oldest brother, but nothing happened. Nobody was tried or sentenced. Only him.

Q: How much land did your family have before collectivization?

A: We had eight *desiatynas*, eight *desiatynas* we had, but this land was under trustees, because we were orphans. The land was divided among four brothers—sisters weren't counted—only the four brothers were owners. So, two *desiatynas* belonged to each brother. I mean, we had this land prior to entering or being forced into the collective farm.

Q: But you said that there was a chance that your brother could be dekulakized too?

A: He could have been dekulakized because it was said, "If the grandfather had ten *desiatynas* (27 acres), his family should be dekulakized also." The only reason we weren't dekulakized was that we were orphans. We were orphans. But still, my brother did not believe that, and he would tell us that we should always be ready, fully dressed when we went to bed, because we could be thrown out.

Q: Do you remember in what language services were held in your church?

A: In Old Slavonic.

Q: Still in Old Slavonic?

A: Yes. I can't remember, I only heard. But in 1921, when the churches had already switched to Ukrainian, when the Church separated from Moscow, there were many churches where the services were held in Ukrainian, but in our village there we still had services in Old Church Slavonic. Because many priests didn't ... or maybe the switch to the Ukrainian language hadn't occurred yet? But in our village the church was closed soon, so it did not come to that; it was not spread so quickly. I think so, I don't know, because there was a law that said, "The elder

cannot teach the younger,” and that meant that the elders did not explain anything to the young people. As for me, I don’t know this well ... I cannot know this.

Q: Didn’t your brother or your uncles tell you anything?

A: No.

Q: For instance, about the Revolution, or...

A: No, no, nothing. They never said anything. And then, when the Germans came, I already had... Because mother’s family was farther away. As for father’s family, he had only one brother. Because he had been a prisoner of war in the First World War, he knew German... He would say he knew what there was... There was no Communism, but they had National Socialism; it was the name of their country, or something like that. And he heard that this was not good. So, he told us—he was already very old—so he said, “Oh, Lord Almighty, if only somebody else would come, because these are the same pants, only inside out!” This was what he said. I remembered this very well.

Q: He said wise things.

A: Yes. He said to us, “If somebody else would come, it would be good, but these same pants are coming, only inside out!” And nothing more was said. Because if somebody said something, he could be reported and would vanish, even though he was already quite old. And everyone was afraid of death or torture. And they would not just take him alone; he also had children. He had sons and grandsons and everything. So, it was very hard.

Q: Do you remember, how other people were dekulakized?

A: Very little.

Q: Were you small?

A: I heard that they were taken, that they were dekulakized. But I can’t say I saw this—I didn’t. Well, because the richest *kulaks* were dekulakized, in 1927, 1928, 1929, before, I mean, during... The landlords were dispossessed when the autocracy collapsed, well, let’s say, when the tsar was overthrown, the land was given to the poor people. I mean, to those who did not have any land at all, or who had a big family and a little land. So, land was given to them. During the NEP, as they say, people lived well. It’s what I heard, but I don’t remember. But people say that then the land was given to the poor people who had not enough land. I would say, for each additional person they were given a *desiatyna* or something like that, so that people owned it and lived better. At that time one could buy everything in stores, people say, everything. But I don’t remember that. I only heard what people said, that’s all...

Q: And do you remember collectivization?

A: Yes, I remember collectivization, because, you know, every day people talked. People were coerced every day. Well, the men were not allowed to go home for three days. They had to sit there, and they were coerced, “You should sign! You should sign!” I can tell a joke, but I don’t know if I can include it in my testimony?

Q: You can.

A: This was, this was true, this was not... When, you know, all the people were already driven into the collective farm... The authorities cut... When a person, who did not want to go into the collective farm held out for a long time and was the last one in the village to join, his kitchen-garden was reduced to a little bit close to his hut. And he was taxed and taxed, so that he had to supply so much in meat or



other foodstuffs and so much in money. So, people had to enter the collective farm, there was no other way out. So, they were kept, and kept, and kept there for three or four days, the men weren't allowed to go home, until they would sign up to join the collective farm.

Everything was already taken from him. He did not have anything, but he had to sign that he wanted to enter the collective farm or he would be exiled somewhere, I forget where. When the authorities achieved what they wanted, when there weren't any—how did they call them? Individual peasants or something like that—when a person did not enter the collective farm. So such individual peasants were no longer around. Then the authorities started to force people, both young and old. Even if a person was not of legal age. All had to go. So, the young in schools had to repeat over and over again that there is no God, that it's just a fable, a *kulak's* fable, a bourgeois fable.

There was an old man sitting. He was old enough that he did not care what may happen to him. And this man says to him—they were all foreigners who were sent to us, all of them were Muscovites—and he said to this Muscovite, "Well," he said, "You know everything, you explain everything so cleverly... Tell me, please," he said—I did not hear this old man talk. I only heard this from my family, from adults. He sat and asked, "Tell me, please. Here," he said, "some sheep go and a cow goes, and they graze on the grass. Why do sheep's turds look like nuts, while a cow's look like a pancake?"

The speaker looked and said that he could not explain it. Then, the old man said, "If you're covered with shit, why then do you touch God?" He said so to him. I don't know if this is appropriate...

Q: No, it's all right to record something like that. It's quite all right.

A: That's what I heard when adults talked.

Q: So, people didn't want to join?

A: They were very much against joining. Very much. The authorities oppressed the people, they robbed the people very much, they forced the people by means of the Famine...

Under the Tsar there was no great luxury either. But people had enough bread, and one could go somewhere, for instance, to earn a little bit of money, so that when he left and worked for a Summer, he brought back bags full of clothing to dress his entire family, and he had enough bread! That is what people said. Whether this was so or... Because people said, "Moscow smothered us both then and now, but it was better, after all, under the Tsar." When there was serfdom, people said it was a misfortune. But under the last tsars, things were much easier.

Q: Did old people say that?

A: Yes, old people said so.

Q: And how did they look upon what Moscow did?

A: As a matter of fact, they did not like it. But what could they do when they had no strength to do anything about it? And that's all.

Q: It is interesting that you said agitators and communists were mostly foreigners.

A: And why? They were Muscovites! Maybe, somewhere there was a non-Muscovite, but when he talked Russian, who could tell what his origin was? Since one could change his name, there could have been non-Muscovites as well. But mostly they were Muscovites, outsiders.

**Q:** Were there local communists in the village?

**A:** There was only one that I knew of.

**Q:** Only one?

**A:** There was one in the village, this I know for certain. He was the chairman of the village soviet. I mean, I cannot say when he was there, because I don't know. But he wasn't such a bad man. He was always under the supervision of others. He never ruled by himself. Outsiders were sent to our village, who coerced and harassed him that this should be done a certain way and that should be done a certain way. Everything was forced. As for me, I don't remember him or what kind of person he was.

Even his sons were... One son was as old as I was. The Germans came, and the father fled. His son remained because he was not an official, but a simple peasant. He worked on the collective farm like me and the others. The Germans shot him, because he was a Party member's son, and did not allow him to be buried. But he was neither a Party member nor anything else. He didn't even have a good education. Because they lived in poverty, too. If one was, let's say, a Ukrainian Party member in the village, he had as much as anyone else, only, maybe, he received a larger piece of bread, that's all.

**Q:** Did your brother want to join the collective farm?

**A:** Of course not.

**Q:** Oh, you said that when people weren't registered...

**A:** When people weren't... He was forced to join, because he was coerced every day. He was not allowed to go home. He often did not come home for three, for four days, because he had to work as a secretary. At that time, everything was written by hand. There were no typewriters or anything. He had to write everything by hand. The head of the collective farm never allowed him to leave his duties. He had no rights, nothing. He only wrote what they said, he wrote things down. That's all.

**Q:** Can you describe how they searched for the grain?

**A:** They searched for... They came to the hut. They came, three or four persons at a time and looked everywhere. They didn't miss a single corner. They searched in the rafters. They searched with pikes to see if there was something hidden somewhere, because it was easy to find out. They had iron spikes. When they pierced the thatched roof, which covered our huts—in our area the huts were mostly covered by straw or thatch—so, they would pierce the roof to find out if there was a hidden sack or something. Oh, they poked around even in the oven—the huge ovens where bread was baked. So, they poked around in these ovens. The ovens were lit and the bread was baked in them. It was put in these ovens; so, they poked in these stoves; also wood was burned in them and sacks and other things that stood in corners were pierced to see if something was hidden in them. They searched so thoroughly! They walked around the hut; they went into the stables, if any... They walked all over your land, all over your homestead, and searched and poked the ground noisily in search of a soft spot where something might be hidden. It was a very thorough search. It was hard to hide something, because they searched everywhere. And if somebody, some lucky person managed to hide something that wasn't found, he escaped the Famine. Because, if during the night he got a handful of something from his sack and cooked some *kasha* or

something, then he survived. His family did not die from starvation. But everyone, to the last person, was hungry.

Once the Party organization from the district (*raion*) demanded that each head of the collective farm send a man from every team, a man who, as they said, was a Stakhanovite<sup>†</sup> who worked himself and forced others to work. Well, and I was 15 years old in 1933. So, the head of the collective farm asked my brother, "For God's sake, send her," he said, "let her go only so that..." Because the Party members demanded it. The chief of the collective farm was not a Party man. "In order to get her out of this somehow!" Well, and who else could be sent when everyone was swollen?

They were ashamed! They themselves were ashamed to go to the district, because those Party members had... Yes, outsiders in the district did not go hungry. Those who were Party members [I told you there was one Party member in the village] were given, maybe, an additional piece of bread, maybe, some flour from the collective farm's store, but they did not have anything for themselves. But there in the district, there were judges, there were others... Those living in the district were better off... So, he took me.

We rode in the cart—in the cart we rode—the trees along the road were bare. The leaves, you know, were torn off, and he said... No, he did not say anything. But I said, "You know,"—I called him "uncle" because in our area, when a man was older, nobody called him anything but uncle—"Do you know," I said, "Uncle, what is that?" He knew very well, but he didn't say anything. And I said that people had eaten them. And he said, "How do you know?" I said, "Because our Varka—my brother's wife—does this. She does this. She tears leaves from the trees, dries them, then rubs them, salts them, and cooks them up. And we eat this." And he said, "What are you saying!" I said, "It's true!" So, he said nothing, you know, he said nothing, because I was not of legal age, what could he expect from me?

Whether he said something to my brother or not, I don't know. We returned home that night. When we were in the district he took me to a restaurant—they called it an eating house—he took me to the eating house and bought me a little cutlet—it was potatoes and a little bit of meat mixed together; it was for the employees who worked there. As I was eating what he bought me, I thought to myself that he should take me there every day! We came home—he lived not far from us—and he took me to his hut and told his wife that she should fill a little sack of flour for me, because he had one for himself already. She poured some flour, maybe, three kilograms into the little sack. He hid it under the flap of his coat and escorted me home. And he said, "Don't say anything to anybody!" That meant that I should not tell anyone I didn't know about it. I gave it to my brother's wife, and she used it for her family. What kind of a Stakhanovite did I make—15 years old and only skin and bones? My skin was transparent like that of Indians who had fasted so long that every bone could be counted. That's what I remember!

Q: How was it in your district with the Stakhanovites?

A: Do you think that I remember that? I absolutely do not remember! Because I didn't hear that they were only that way there... Oh, I remember they all said that these people were supposed to get great awards only for doing their jobs well in order to encourage others to do the same. But I wasn't given anything. I don't

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<sup>†</sup>The narrator probably meant "shock worker," (*udarnyk*) rather than Stakhanovite. The interviewer did not correct her confusion of terms.

remember being given anything, for I was still only a child! This, this... I don't remember. I cannot say what they talked about then. I only remember that they said we were supposed to work... Beyond that—as far as what was going on there, or whether or not such workers asked some sort of questions—I don't remember anything whatsoever!

Q: How many of you were there?

A: Well, there was a hall with several... There were people not only from one collective farm, but from the entire district. Each head of the collective farm brought along two or three people, so there were a lot of people. But how many exactly, I can't say.

Q: It would be interesting to hear about how the district town looked?

A: I don't remember anything! I don't remember anything! It wasn't a big city. Now, people say, this town is much more developed. But in those days, it was... I don't remember, I don't remember.

Q: Were there a lot of hungry people in the village?

A: [Sigh] I can't tell you, I can't tell you. Because the village was rather remote. If there was village nearby, or something like that, I don't remember, I can't tell. I can't tell you about that...

Q: Thank you for your testimony.

A: Don't mention it.

Q: How was it that your brother was appointed secretary?

A: Because he was selected. They chose him, because there wasn't anyone else in our village who could do secretarial work. He was simply forced to do it. There were the children of the rich people who were educated, but they didn't stay in the village. They all left the village and worked in the cities. But he didn't leave, because we were orphans. He was the eldest and didn't want to abandon us. He did not have much education, because father was already gone, and mother sent him only to become a scribe so that he could find easier work. Because he was not of good health, mother wanted him to work somewhere other than on the farm. Well, so, he only remained because of this, and he was forced to be a secretary in their *komnezam*. And what was this *komnezam*? I was a minor, so, I don't know anything. I don't even know what it means. Nobody ever explained that to me. Nothing was ever written about this anywhere when I was older. When I became older, nobody described or explained what it meant. So, I don't know.

Q: When you were at the collective farm, did you work all the time where the grain was stored?

A: Eh, no. I worked there for quite some time, and later on was sent along with the others to work on the harvest. But when Autumn came and the harvest and threshing were over, I worked only in the grain-collecting station. Later there was much more work. We worked in two shifts, especially, when there was an inventory and the grain had to be weighed over again. The grain was sorted again. There were machines that combined grains of the highest quality. This was our work. Then the grain was weighed over again. Constant control was exercised over the seed grain. Grain of inferior quality was given to the collective farmers. The best grain was always taken away! The best grain was sent away, taken away, and the collective farm was given higher and higher grain quotas to meet. But even if some grain remained, there was never enough bread up to the very beginning of the war. It was always limited. If the children did not eat, only a small piece of their food

was given the parents. The rest of the food was apportioned, because they were afraid of the Famine. Even ripened tomatoes were dried out and stored in sacks, because after that famine, people were afraid of starvation. They were afraid of famine to such an extent that no food was wasted, everything was dried. But what kind of food is a dried tomato when there's only a very thin skin left! But people did not care, they dried out tomatoes, at first in the sun, and then in the oven, and put them in sacks to eat during the winter in case of food shortage. And there wasn't enough bread up to the very beginning of the war.

**Q:** It's very interesting that nobody talked about this, that people were so scared after that famine?

**A:** People were very much afraid. They were terribly scared! As I said before—cantaloupes were dried out as soon as they ripened. Tomatoes were dried out. Not a single cucumber was wasted. People did their best. Plots of land—40 hundredths of a hectare—were allotted for gardens. People tried their best to sow some hemp, because fabric had to be spun and woven for shirts... Because there was no money to buy them with, and one could not sow much on 40 hundredths of a hectare. So, they did their best. But you couldn't say that life was really good before the war. Everything was bad, bad, bad and limited.

**Q:** How did the Ukrainians get along with the Russians?

**A:** I don't know anything about this. They didn't like the Russians. They didn't like them, I know this, because there was a military subsidiary farm near our village. So, sometimes, when the military men came into the village, nobody liked them. If he was a Russian, he was not liked. One man from our village was in the army, and when he married a Russian woman and brought her home, she stayed no longer than three months. Nobody wanted to sit near her; nobody wanted to work with her, so she was left alone all the time and eventually left. That's what I know.

Nobody spoke Russian in our village, no Russian ever worked with us except for the Party men who came here and drove our people into the collective farm or gave other instructions. There was always some orders these Party men were giving. Party-men came to determine how much grain the collective farm should supply. As soon as one of them would leave the village another would take his place. All the Party members were from the district, and they came from the district to the village soviet. Besides these, we didn't have any Russians, so, I cannot say that... But people didn't like either the Russians or the Russian language.

**Q:** Did people want Ukraine to be independent?

**A:** They didn't talk about this. This, this was very... Maybe, some of the adults did, but none of the younger people every mentioned it, because the topic was very dangerous! A person would be sentenced, and not only he himself, but his entire family, as well, and no one would know why and where they disappeared.

There was a Polish family in our village. One Pole was married to a Rumanian woman. How they found their way to our village, I don't know. They had two children, and their boy was my age. I don't know how close it was to the beginning of the war, whether it was 1938 or 1939, they were taken without a trace! There was also a German family. They also disappeared without a trace. These people were taken in the dead of night. And nobody in the village knew what happened. People didn't know, no one offered any explanation.

One boy was my age, or maybe, a year older. He had married young, I mean, he married a teacher who came here from somewhere and taught second and third

grade. Once, while slightly drunk he drove all the young people who were 18 years old to a collective farm meeting. What the agenda was there, I can't recall. He was slightly drunk and took the representative who had come to this meeting. The representative was standing on a dais giving a speech when he grabbed him by the sleeve and knocked him down. He was taken without a trace. He, I mean, said to the representative, "You are lying," he said and knocked him down. So, he was taken at once, and before his wife found, as they say, a defense attorney, he had already disappeared—he was nowhere to be found. The same thing happened to my brother. Before his wife—he was already married—could find him a defense attorney in Poltava—since he was sent to Poltava—he disappeared. "There is no such a person," she was told. And so he disappeared completely. And this man that I talked about, also. He was perhaps one year older than I was, or perhaps two, I don't know, but it's enough that we were close in age. He, too, disappeared.

Q: In your area was there any resistance to collectivization? I mean, in some other regions the women would completely demolish the collective farm, or there would be uprisings. Was there something like that in your village?

A: I don't remember, I don't remember. I mean, because people ... I was young; if there was something somewhere, I couldn't say ... whether there were or there weren't such events. Because activists watched people so closely, if two people got together, they were dispersed at once. Before these times, in the past, I heard people say that in the past three or more persons would meet, play cards... But during collectivization this was not possible. The activists walked around and peered into windows where a light was shining. So, we were watched over closely. People could not meet in a large group to discuss anything. But when people were driven to meetings, every person was watched. And you never knew who was watching you and how. So, people were afraid. They were so afraid that even a son didn't tell his father anything, and a father didn't tell his son anything. Each was afraid of the other. So, people were afraid of those who might report on them, especially, of youngsters. So, I can't say anything about this.

Q: How were people punished who, as they say, "stole the collective farm's property?"

A: They were tried and sentenced. People were deprived of their workdays,<sup>†</sup> and if the theft was great, they were exiled, and that was that. Take, for example, my brother—the third one—who carried the grain on a truck, the truck driver. So, he was returning from the station where he had taken some grain. He had some loaders who loaded and unloaded the truck, while he only drove. So, he drove along the melon field where some watermelons were planted. Children would go there to steal them. The guard who kept watch there was a little old man, because old men who were no longer able to work in other places were assigned there. So, he guarded the melon field from the children and from the grown-ups. Since he knew the village, he could report the name of any adult he caught stealing the melons. But he did not know the children, so, he drove them away. If he caught the child, he would beat it. My brother saw this, he stopped the truck and struck the old man. He was sentenced to one year in prison. He served his term. He was not classified as "political" criminal, only as a "hooligan." One who had the courage to lift his hand against somebody and strike somebody was classified as

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<sup>†</sup>*Trudodni.*

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“hooligan,” because this was not permitted. So, he served a year in prison. When adults stole something, they were also tried in court.

**Q:** And your other brother who verbally abused a Young Communist Leaguer?

**A:** He was classified as a political criminal because he called him a bad word.

**Q:** Was this slander or what?

**A:** Yes! This meant that you are against Soviet power when you oppose the Young Communist Leaguer. And that was almost for nothing. Some young boys came to our village from a nearby town. There was a small town nearby. They came from this town to meet with girls in our village, as boys are wont to do. It was only four kilometers from us. This was already after the Famine, in 1935. But the boys from our village didn't want them coming around and started to drive them out. It turns out that the visitors were members of the Young Communist League. Their town was a little larger than our village. There was a high school there and everything. Some of the boys were compelled to enter the Young Communist League, because otherwise they wouldn't be admitted into the school. And one boy from the group was an inveterate Young Communist Leaguer. I did not know him—who he was and what he was. I know only that... My brother was already married and lived at the other end of the village. So, these boys from town attacked our boys, and my brother, because of his youth, rose up in their defense. He ran after this Young Communist Leaguer calling him “you so and so.” He called him a bad word, “You—Young Communist Leaguer!” After that, he was taken without a trace.

**Q:** For that one word?

**A:** For that one word! He didn't strike him, he only called him something, and the latter reported him. Who knows? They believed what he said, but what my brother really said, nobody knows. And he was taken as a political criminal and was tortured to death, so... He was carried off somewhere and tortured to death... Not a line, sheet of paper, or letter from him was ever received by his wife. And he was married to her for only two or three years, I can't say exactly... He got married before the Famine, I think, in 1931.

**Q:** You told a lot about the neighboring farmstead, about your family. But how many people died in your village altogether?

**A:** Many died. As I said, nobody survived on the farmstead. As for our village, I can't give a number. There was a village nearby where people said that a great many died, and that people ate people. But this was not in our village. In our village only one family was suspected of cannibalism. I knew these people, but I've forgotten their name now. They are fresh in my memory, people said that they'd eaten their child. The little boy was three years old. They said to people that he fell into the well, but people said that they'd eaten the child.

**Q:** Weren't they punished?

**A:** No! Who got punished for something like that? Who could punish anyone when there was such a famine, and the Bolsheviks were glad that people were driven into the collective farm! The Bolsheviks didn't care one bit! It wasn't their business if people ate one another, or beat one another, or did anything else to one another. As long as nothing was said against them and nobody took back their property, because they took everything from the people. No one wanted this, no one! Just imagine, you have something to eat, and they come and take everything. How painful that is! But here it's not so painful, because you can go somewhere

and earn your living. But where could you go there when you were fed from the land for many generations? You inherited the land, you worked the land. And the farmers lived from their land. So it was like tearing out their hearts! Many peasants hanged themselves, poisoned themselves, committed suicide, because they didn't want to join the collective farm. They fell into despair and went mad from this anguish. Two people went mad in our village. They were taken to the mad-house, and they were smothered there! Will the Bolsheviks feed a mad man? What do they need him for?

**Q:** Was this dekulakization?

**A:** No, it was not dekulakization, it was forcing people into the collective farm. I would say... Yes! The Bolsheviks dispossessed all peasants! When they took the last crumbs from you, they left you your shirt and an empty hut. They treated all the peasants as *kulaks*. If only they had said, "Are you joining the collective farm? Give what you like, and live as you want. We can take your land, but you can keep a cow or two, if you want to, if you are able to. Keep them for yourself!"

But, they took everything! I think that if somebody had 200 head of cattle, he didn't need them after he was dispossessed. But why did they take cattle from those who had only one or two cows? His cows were taken also! That means he was also dekulakized! Everything was taken from him—his cart, his trap, his plough, his harrow, his cultivator, his wooden plough. This meant he was dekulakized. But they forced him to sign. "Sign that you gave it, that you are joining the collective farm voluntarily." But who joined voluntarily? Everyone wanted to work on his own land and to live in peace. And if the Bolsheviks couldn't compel somebody to sign, what then? There were many who didn't sign. So, they were exiled to Siberia for five or seven years. Only a few returned. For instance, in our village only one returned. And this was already after the Famine; his father died from starvation—his father was old already. He was a farmer. His child died from starvation. But he later returned from Siberia, after serving seven years; he returned in 1930 or 1939. I can't say whether he was there seven years or less, but I knew that man, because he lived not far from us. So, instead of his father... So, he went to Siberia and stayed alive, it's true. His father died from starvation. His son died from starvation also.

**Q:** Would you like to add something?

**A:** I don't know if I could remember everything in sequence. But now I know nothing... Too much...

**Q:** I still want to ask you. It's true, we already talked. But can it be said that people blamed anybody for the Famine?

**A:** Everyone was very well aware that the Famine was made deliberately, and they all complained about it. Everyone, I'd say, from the oldest to the youngest, knew that Moscow did it to force the people into collective farms and to take everything away from the peasants. They would not have been able to do this otherwise, because there was resistance. I mean that not only one village resisted, but all Ukraine resisted. Otherwise the Bolsheviks wouldn't have been able to do this. They had to oppress people so that they wouldn't be able to think about anything, except a piece of bread. So, the Bolsheviks created a situation such that children cried for a little piece of bread, old people cried and died. Many parents died, but the children remained, because any mother, as hungry as she was, gave her child what food she could. She cooked grass and gave it to her child rather than to



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herself. So, many orphans remained. As for the men, they were the first to perish. The men went first. Because, who was oppressed the most? The men. So, more men than women died. The children also perished in great numbers, because there was nothing to eat, and that was that! Nobody had—I mean—a dog, or a cat, or a hen, nothing. Where should one get sustenance?

Sometimes people had something somewhere. We still had a cow. But how was it that we still had her? Because I raised her. This cow we kept in the entrance-hall, I mean, almost in the house, because otherwise the hungry people would steal her. Thus, we kept the cow until she calved, around Easter in May, so we had some milk already. We took her to pasture, holding her by the rope, and led her back to the house so that nobody might take her away. So, there were, maybe, three or four cows that remained alive in the entire farmstead where I lived. There was no other cattle, nothing!

**Q:** Did people slaughter the cattle during the Famine?

**A:** The cattle that wasn't taken were eaten. Yes... During 1932 we didn't have bread after Christmas... We didn't eat after Easter. We didn't even see it. So, I mean... We had sheep, a couple of sheep. We ate them in the Winter of 1932. In the Winter there was only one small piece of bread per person and nothing more. We ate the sheep. People ate hens, if there were any, but it wasn't nourishing enough without the bread, but there was no bread. I survived. But in 1932 and 1933, there was no bread. There was nothing, like I said. We kept one little cow. We managed to keep her so that she should survive to calve. Then there would be some drops of milk for the children, and we would be able to give milk to some other people.

**Q:** And did you see the calving at last?

**A:** Yes, we did! The cow calved and this rescued not only our family, but my uncle's family as well; we had three uncles. So, sometimes we gave a cup of milk to them, and they added some water to it and drank it together with their children. That's the way it was.

**Q:** Thank you.

**A:** Don't mention it.

## CASE HISTORY LH36

*Translated from Ukrainian by Darian Diachok*

**Question:** This testimony is given anonymously. Please state when you were born.

**Answer:** I was born on October 25, 1914.

**Q:** Please state your place of birth.

**A:** This was in the Zhytomyr region, Korostyshiv district, the village of Berezivka (Berezy).

**Q:** What did your parents do?

**A:** Oh, my father worked as a mechanic at a large mill; he was a machinist and worked at the mill. I went to Kiev to study and studied there until the outbreak of the Famine in 1932. In 1933, as I was walking along a major thoroughfare of Kiev, I came upon an acquaintance, a man from my village. I will not give you his name. I will just tell you that his name was Vasyl'. I used to go to school with his two brothers. He was a lot older than I. I didn't recognize him on the street; he recognized me. I complimented him on his appearance, saying that he looked well-fed, healthy, attractive, and said that he obviously was not doing badly during the period of famine that our country and our people were going through. "Yes," he replied, "I'm not doing badly at all, and I've got the kind of a job where there's a lot of food, actually plenty of it. If you want, and if you're hungry, why don't you come over to my place, and I'll treat you." We went to the Podil' (section of Kiev). In Podil', close to a river port on the Dnieper, we came upon an old church with a stone wall around it. And we went inside. I saw a lot of little children and asked him to explain what was going on. I said, "I am in charge of the dining hall here at the church. The police bring the starving children here that have been coming from the villages to Kiev to look for food and falling and dying in the city. And we get these children from the police after they round them up and bring them here. We feed them three or four weeks, five weeks, until they number 250-300 children, maybe more. And for these three or five weeks, we feed the children and give them a place to sleep to make sure they don't run away. There is a guard on duty and the gate is locked at night. After that, when an appropriate number of children is collected—say 250-300, or more—they're taken to a port on the Dnieper River and put on steamers." I think he gave the name of the steamer as the *Taras Shevchenko*. "The children are transported by steamer to fields about 40-50 kilometers away from Kiev. And there they are thrown out right onto the shore where they run off in different directions. A child may eventually reach some other place, but the majority die in the fields."

He showed me several boys, one by the name of Vasyl', the other, I think, Hryts'ko. He said, "These two have already made it back to Kiev two or three times; but the rest of them, you understand, die on the way!" So, you see, starving children that came to the towns were not put into any orphanages or anything like that; they were disposed of in this way.

I can tell you of another incident in my own village. I went to my village during the harvest. The ears of wheat were still green; the kernels were just beginning to swell. People were hungry, but none were starving to death. I believe that in our area in Volyn', in the region of Zhytomyr, there were no deaths from hunger.

Why? It so happened that an administrator, that is, a leader at the district level from Zhytomyr Region came to our village. He was a genuinely good-hearted man. He saw that the people had swollen feet, that they were hungry, and he gave permission to have the green rye cut and dried and cooked into some sort of gruel. This was the way the villagers survived. His name was Skorokhod, or Skorokhodov, I can no longer remember for certain. When I returned to my village a few years later, my father told me the following story. One day they brought Skorokhodov to the village to be tried. All the villagers were assembled in the club, and a public prosecutor, an investigator, went about questioning the villagers. The trial of this man began. He was being tried for having saved the people from the Famine, and for having granted people permission to cut, dry, and eat the rye. So, when the judge sentenced the man to 20 years, people began to weep terribly, and to cry, "This man is our saviour! He saved us from the Famine; he saved us from death; why should he receive such a severe punishment?" The judge threw up his hands and also began to weep, saying, "My good people, there's nothing I can do. I have to punish and sentence him." My father said this was a terrible tragedy. It was unbearable. There was such weeping. People bellowed like cattle, and the man himself cried, and the judge cried, and everyone cried.

These two facts which I relate to you are both actual incidents which I myself witnessed. They offer additional evidence that the Bolshevik regime wanted our people dead, and they did this consciously and deliberately. I feel that one day a punishment will be meted out to them for this. That's all I have to say.

**Q:** Well, I still have a few questions I would like to ask you. Earlier you had mentioned...

**A:** Yes?

**Q:** Earlier you mentioned that at the place where an acquaintance from your village—you referred to him as Vasyl'—had worked there was yet another person in charge of the dining hall.

**A:** Yes, there was another person in charge of the dining hall. He also arranged to have the children taken in by some people who saved them and looked after them. In Kiev, for example, there were teachers who took in children. Sometimes so did the police themselves, the decent ones among them, would take the children in. So did other civil servants, and in general working people who had enough extra food to feed the children. But he was punished for having done this, actually punished and sentenced for this. The time that I spoke with this Vasyl' he gave me some bread and margarine, and he asked me not to tell anyone that this is going on in Kiev and not to come by anymore, because he was not allowed to have any contact with people, so that no one would know that the children were being deported. So he said, "I'm not sure that my predecessor, the fellow who had been in charge earlier, I'm not sure that he wasn't shot." So as you can see, he was quite afraid. He said, "Please don't come here anymore." And he gave me two loaves of bread, a stick of margarine, and that was the end of that.

**Q:** These are two concrete examples of people being punished for helping others.

**A:** True. You weren't allowed to help anyone; you weren't allowed to save anyone, because those that were saving others from the Famine, were punished; the goal was to starve the people to death; the authorities wanted the people to die.

**Q:** What was the situation like for the townspeople of Kiev?

**A:** The situation was difficult. Food was available to those who had jobs. A distant relative of mine, Bukach by name, lived on Pushkin Street in a building of the Academy of Sciences and was in charge of the dining hall in the Academy of Sciences. Provisions were made for the Academicians and scientists to receive some food, you understand. But the portions were meager and not very nutritious. A dish like Ukrainian *borshch*, for example, was the most common because it's made from beets and cabbage and was easy to prepare. I used to go there several times a week, and he used to bring provisions home for me and in this way I was able to stay fed throughout this period.

Afterwards, I worked in the military theater where I sang in the choir. I had a card and was permitted to enter the military dining hall. I wasn't allowed to eat there, but I was allowed to take something from the buffet. We could buy a vinaigrette, or a few salted fish, like kippered herring. Some of us were more clever, and managed to get in several times; those that did would make a number of purchases, and then speculate with the provisions. Life was very difficult, especially for students. Students were given aid: They received some groats, some sugar. These were emergency rations, called "*paiki*." It was virtually impossible to purchase anything at the marketplace, because if a merchant tried to sell anything, starving people would throw themselves at him and tear away whatever food he might have been carrying in his bag. The city's civil servants got emergency rations. It was easier for them since they were entitled to emergency rations, which consisted of sugar, groats, margarine, and from time to time, bread.

Bread in the stores constituted a major problem. People used to get up at 12 o'clock midnight, and from one o'clock onward stand in line and wait until nine or eight o'clock, until the bakery opened. And when it did open, there would be hundreds of people waiting in line for the bread. Oh, they used to sell one loaf at a time, or half a loaf, I can no longer remember. The appearance of bread always brought on a frightening spectacle. As to other food items—milk, or butter—these, too, were hard to come by.

**Q:** Do you remember what the prices for bread or grain were at that time?

**A:** Well, I can't say exactly; I can't remember.

**Q:** And when did the influx of starving peasants into the cities actually begin?

**A:** In 1932, I think. By that time, peasants were coming into the Ukrainian cities *en masse*. For example, I had a friend named Alexander Tosich, who lived at No. 16, Lenin Street. Between the buildings in the courtyard a store was set up where bread was sold. And, to enter this makeshift store, you had to pass through the portals of a gate. And already by evening people would begin signing up one after another in a long waiting line along that big street. Well, when the moment came to open that gate, the line would surge forward with such force, that some old woman would be knocked down and crushed to death, along with three or four other persons, before the crowd could push through the portals into the courtyard to the store where the bread was being distributed. The police later had to close down the store and reopen it in another location, and then they opened the store right there on the street to avoid the pressing crowds, so that people would not get crushed. The people were so hungry that they would just drop dead in the streets. And police trucks would drive about and scoop them up, and often they would pick up a person who was still breathing and just throw him into the back of the truck

with the corpses, and they would all be taken out somewhere beyond the city limits and buried in common graves.

**Q:** Were there any explicit orders from the police as to how the residents of Kiev were supposed to act toward the starving?

**A:** I don't specifically recall. I can't tell you whether there were any specific orders. I think that there couldn't have been any such orders spoken out loud, because the press was officially maintaining that there was no famine; newspapers weren't mentioning the Famine at all. They kept silent about it and concealed it. The police guarded all the railway terminals and stations, all the main roads, and prevented people from entering the cities; but people kept finding all sorts of ways of getting into the cities through the fields, or forests.

**Q:** Did you ever see any examples of police brutality, or any cases of the police abusing the people?

**A:** The only specific example I can recall is when the French minister—I think his name was Herriot—came on a state visit to Kiev, and he was told that there was no famine in Ukraine. They drove him all around and convinced him of it. One morning on Lenin Street, a street that had actually been called Fundykleev Street before the Revolution, there was a long line of people waiting at the bread store, and the police came and dispersed them. It was terrible. The people had no idea what it was all about, you know. The policemen just rode up on horseback and everyone fell to the ground, sat down, and the police went about dispersing them. The people didn't know what was going on, namely, that the police were under orders to scatter the crowd so that the minister wouldn't see them when he rode by in an automobile. The mounted police yanked the people by their hair. They sat on horseback and pulled the people about by their hair and spurred their horses on the people... People fell on the roads, against the pavement; they were grabbed by their arms and legs, dragged along for a while, then dumped like cattle, like blocks of wood. The people understood full well that the authorities did not want them to buy bread; they must have told the people this, because they started dispersing voluntarily, feeling no doubt that once they ran off, they could form a new queue again a few hours later. I remember this incident very well, because some people had actually been killed during the episode; the line had been very long, up to a thousand people, and ten people were signing up at a time, a group of ten. Because it often happened that there wouldn't be enough bread, and perhaps 200, or 150 people would get through, while the rest would remain there, without bread, because there wasn't enough. So the ones that remained would be signed up, you know, to maintain order; and so they complied since everyone wanted to get some bread.

**Q:** Were the people signing up by themselves?

**A:** Yes, the people were signing up by themselves.

**Q:** Was there a criminal element at this time in Kiev?

**A:** I beg your pardon.

**Q:** Was there a criminal element in Kiev, gangsters or something?

**A:** Oh, yes, of course. There had to be; indeed there had to be. Robbers entered people's houses through their windows or doors. There were a lot of robberies. The stolen goods would be taken to the market place and sold. There was widespread theft and murder. Well, what else can I tell you?

**Q:** Did you ever observe the peasants trying to exchange their belongings for food? Did they bring in their belongings from their villages to the marketplace?

**A:** Well, you see, the peasants didn't own anything good enough to bring to market. By 1932 and 1933, people no longer had such belongings. The urban dwellers, on the other hand, did have worthwhile possessions which would bring good money to buy bread with. You couldn't get bread in the stores directly in exchange for belongings—you had to have money. Bread was extremely difficult to get at the marketplace, and it was generally difficult and dangerous for women to bring bread to the marketplace, because starving children and teenagers would lunge at them and steal the bread. At the marketplace you could generally get such things as trousers, a shirt, a pair of boots, perhaps, footwear, different kinds of carpets. Many civil servants from the town would barter here, and then buy bread with the money they received.

**Q:** What can you tell us about the so-called “*torgsins*”?

**A:** The *torgsin*? Yes, I know about that; it was a way of cheating people out of their gold, gold which the Bolshevik Government needed: Valuable keepsakes, antiques, all kinds of expensive watches, special gold, silver. People were turning in their gold coins, all kinds of bracelets and rings. They were cheated: They would get two pounds of some kind of groats and some butter in exchange for their valuables. And that was the *torgsin*. Yes, indeed, it existed.

**Q:** Was there talk in Kiev at the time that there was no famine in Russia? What were people saying?

**A:** I remember quite well, and was actually extremely upset, that in *Pravda* or in *Izvestiia* they were saying that the capitalist countries of Europe and America were proclaiming the big lie that there was a famine in Ukraine. In the Russian newspapers you could read about the “malicious slander against the Ukrainian people and against the Soviet Government,” and about what an outright lie and an insult to the state it was to claim that there was a famine. And yet people were dying on the streets, children were being thrown out into the fields to die, and *Pravda* was saying that all of this was nothing but “malicious slander,” slander against “the Soviet way of life and the Soviet Union itself.” Yes, I'll never forget what I read in the newspaper. There was no famine in Russia. Our people were trying to get to Russia to save themselves and to buy bread and food, but they were being turned back; they were being thrown from the trains, turned back on the roads, turned back to die. This was all part of a policy to exhaust Ukraine and to weaken it, to make it incapable of any further resistance. All because our nation had been causing them trouble, even as we are to this day. Because we are a great and industrious nation, because our land is rich and plentiful and because we share a border with Russia. Russia needs the Ukrainian lands. It is afraid that Ukraine might break away from Russia, and that is why they are constantly trying to suppress the Ukrainian love of independence. In 1937 and 1938 I was in Kiev and lived through the reign of terror, when our intelligentsia, our professors, and our scholars were arrested and shot by the NKVD by the thousands and thousands. In the Ukrainian section of Kiev University the language, literature, and history departments had to be closed down for two years because all the teachers had been arrested and shot.

I had a close acquaintance from my village, a professor of mathematics who had been a very close friend of my father. His name was Volodymyr Mozhar. And

there was another professor at the University that I knew well, a professor of physics named Kravchuk. Both men were professors at the University and were capable men, very much beloved by their students. But because they insisted on conducting their lectures in the Ukrainian language, they were arrested by the NKVD and shot. I knew his wife, Maria. They lived in No. 5, Hoholivs'ka Street and had a little son, a clever, good looking little boy.

And so they destroyed our cadre of professors, and our students, our young people, just wept. I have to emphasize that I am not an anti-Semite; in fact, I am against anyone who dislikes the Jews and is against the Jews; I do not count myself among those who do. I had wonderful friends in Kiev who happened to be Jews. But to my great consternation, I have to confirm that in 1937 and 1938, the majority of interrogators in the NKVD were Jewish Communists, and if they happened to get their hands on a Ukrainian who spoke Ukrainian, then to them it was a foregone conclusion that this person was a Petliurist. He might have had nothing at all to do with Petliura in any way, but if he happened to speak Ukrainian, then he had to be a Petliurist and was tortured in hideous ways. Later, in 1939, after the Ukrainian intelligentsia had been destroyed at the hands of the Jews, it was their turn to be destroyed. All the Jewish interrogators were shot, destroyed.

**Q:** How would you characterize the general relationship between the various nationalities in Kiev?

**A:** It was not good, not good. But let me finish what I was telling you. In the Academy of Sciences, there was a Division of Ethnography, and within this division there was a Jewish section comprised of eight Jewish scholars, very talented and competent scholars. Within this section there was a subsection dealing with national Jewish folk art.

**Q:** Was that the actual term used?

**A:** Yes, there was a section by this name, and suddenly this section was liquidated; and all of the section's wealth of materials, the manuscripts of Jewish folklore and culture, all the national Jewish creativity, was destroyed; and all of the scholars were arrested and deported. I recall one particular incident. When the Red Army had just liberated Western Ukraine from the control of the Polish capitalist government, a wonderful musician and pianist, Münzer, Professor Münzer, was brought to Kiev. This man was a Chopin specialist. On this occasion the Jews of Kiev organized a colossal concert for this musician, Münzer. He performed in the large, newly built, conservatory hall. The concert was so successful and so well attended that a second concert was arranged for the following day. The pianist was already quite old, hunchbacked. And he played beautifully, but only Chopin, the Polish composer. The Jews organized yet a third concert in the same concert hall. Such a mass of people showed up that chairs had to be arranged all around the performer to accommodate all of them. When the pianist went back home, the arrests of Jews began in Kiev. What had actually happened? When he had been at the hotel ... let me see ... the name of the hotel ... oh, it will come to me... Anyway, when the performer was here, many of [the city's] prominent Jews went to visit him in his hotel room. Microphones had been planted in his room, and apparently his visitors began voicing their complaints about the kind of lives that they had been leading. Afterwards, masses of Jews were arrested and subsequently deported. Well, believe it or not, into that very same concert hall they brought in 12 Jews, managers of food stores and speculators, to be tried.

I personally knew one particular Jew, an older man, perhaps 72 or 73 years old, who lived at No. 16, Lenin Street. The man was a tailor and sewed men's clothes. He had made me a very elegant suit from very fine material for 1,000 rubles. I remember it quite well. He was brought to trial for the offense of operating an underground tailor shop. Well, in that very same concert hall, on that very same stage, the trial of the Jews took place, the ones who were accused of speculation and similar offenses. And after those wonderfully successful concerts, the arrests started, and many, many Jews were arrested. Professors, scholars, and members of the Folklore Section of the Academy of Sciences were liquidated.

One evening in 1936—at least I think it was in that year. I am no longer sure—they organized a special commemorative evening to honor the memory of the Jewish writer, Shalom Aleichem. This took place in the club run by the Ukrainian Writers' Cooperative. At that commemorative evening devoted to Shalom Aleichem, it was announced that a street in the Podil' was being renamed in the writer's honor as Shalom Aleichem Street, and that arrangements had been made to publish his works in the Ukrainian language. But at the very same time in all libraries, not only in Kiev, but throughout Ukraine, in institutes, in schools, in all Departments of Jewish Literature (every library at the time had departments of Ukrainian, Russian, Jewish, and Polish literature) ... in all these places, Jewish literature was destroyed. It was all burned.

So, you see, the plans to destroy the cultures of other nationalities had been very cleverly disguised. Once Professor Magaziner, who had been a professor of the musical conservatory and taught the violin, managed to get an interview with Khrushchev. I don't recall the exact year, but I don't doubt the veracity of what was told me, since the professor had a long-standing acquaintanceship with Khrushchev, stemming from an earlier concert somewhere. So, the two of them sat down for a heart to heart chat at Khrushchev's place. The professor said to him, "Mykyta Serhiiovich, they are burning all our books everywhere in all the institutes, schools and all the Jewish literature departments!" He said, "They have destroyed our Jewish Folklore Department at the Academy of Sciences. They have arrested our scholars. This is our very culture that is being destroyed! What can you do to help?" And so on. Khrushchev replied, "Yes, I have heard about all of this. Others have approached me on this, and I have been in contact with Moscow on the subject, and what they told me was that none of this literature is necessary for our new proletarian culture, that all of it is just trash. There's nothing I can do."

There was a Jewish poet living in Kiev by the name of Isaac Pfeffer. I had a book of his poetry in my hands once, a book which had obviously been soaked with kerosene. And all that this little book did was sing the praises of Stalin, the proletarian culture, the Soviet Union, and the brotherhood of nations. The book was written in the current Soviet style. There was nothing in it that could be construed to be harmful in any way or anti-Soviet, but this didn't matter. They simply had to destroy it. And when they gave the poet his book, he ran straight to the NKVD to report what had happened. They told him not to utter a word to anyone about the book, not to take the matter up with anyone else, because he would not gain anything if he did; he would only lose. It was the Jews themselves who told him this, and so he finally quieted down. I myself kept that little book which had been soaked in kerosene.



They did the same thing with Ukrainian literature. At the Academy of Sciences, at the universities, for example, they burned the works of Hrushevs'kyi, Vynnychenko, Kulish. My uncle on my mother's side was the head of the village soviet in my village. And once when he came to Kiev in his truck, his daughter, who had been working and studying at the University of Kiev, managed, with the help of several other women, to save three sacks filled with literature, which had been designated for burning. My uncle drove back to the village with the sacks, and didn't really know what to do with the books of Hrushevs'kyi, Vynnychenko, and another author, this fellow from the SVU, Iefremov. The *Kobzar* of Taras Shevchenko and the other books were already soaked in kerosene. And afterwards the women were supposed to carry these books in boxes straight to the furnaces, but while there, next to the furnaces, they put the books into sacks and placed them aside.

**Q:** What about the nationalists?

**A:** The nationalists? I'll tell you about nationalists. In Volyn', Kiev, and other areas we had a lot of minorities, and an especially large minority of Poles, followed by Jews, then the Bulgarians, and a lot of others. But the most prominent were the Poles. For example, in the cities of Berdichev, Korostyn, Koziatyn, Zhytomyr, the minorities were very much in evidence during the time of Skrypnyk, Petrovs'kyi, Zatons'kyi and Liubchenko. This was when the culture of these minorities blossomed, the years 1926, 1927, and 1928. They all had their own schools—not only primary schools, but also secondary and middle schools and technical institutes. For example, in Zhytomyr, there was a Jewish pedagogical institute, and in Kiev there was a Polish pedagogical institute. So, in addition to schools, they also had their teachers' colleges. They had their own libraries, their own journals, their own newspapers. In such towns as Korostyn, Koziatyn, and Shepetivka, region or district seats, there were more newspapers in non-Ukrainian languages, say Jewish or Polish, than in Ukrainian or Russian.

And what I am leading up to is this. In 1917 these minorities committed a great error in becoming so infatuated with Communism, Russian culture, Russian art. About 99% of their youth supported the Bolsheviks. They were against Ukrainian independence. They did not support Hrushevs'kyi or Petliura. The entire youth of the Jewish and Polish minorities supported the Bolsheviks. And in so doing, they did us very great harm, because they fell for those international slogans: "Freedom for all the nations!" and "Away with the tsarist prison of peoples—Freedom for all nations!" They fell for this subterfuge. So they were staunchly against the formation of an independent Ukrainian government and did us great harm. If all the Poles, Jews, and Bulgarians who had been living in Ukraine at the time, if they had been with us and supported our army, the Army of the Ukrainian Peoples' Republic, then I am sure that we would not be here in America today. No, we would be back home. But instead they supported the Bolsheviks against our Army of the Ukrainian Peoples' Republic, opposed Hrushevs'kyi and Petliura, and so we had to lose, because, you see, they controlled the cities. The majority of the Ukrainian people were in the villages, while the cities of Ukraine were dominated by the minorities—Poles, Jews, Greeks, Bulgarians, Rumanians. This is the result of our history.

It was quite a bit later when the Russian Bolsheviks, together with Stalin, began to exhaust and destroy the Ukrainian nation through famine. They also began to

destroy the cultures of the minorities. For example in places like Vinnytsia or Zhytomyr, there were entire Polish villages, and not only villages, but entire Polish cantons, where groups of eight or 12 villages were ethnically Polish. In the years 1937 and 1938, they started to deport entire regions like this. In the administrative units and the collective farm headquarters business was conducted in both Polish and Ukrainian. This all ended in 1937 and 1938. They started deporting people. NKVD agents would arrive in their cars at night and would say, "You have two hours to get yourselves ready. Put on your warm clothes; get yourselves a spoon, a bowl..." The cattle and the houses were all left behind. They destroyed all these people; deported them to Siberia. They got rid of all the Poles in Volyn'—whole villages, whole districts.

And, in the region of Vinnytsia—I witnessed the deportation of these people with my own eyes; I had just arrived in Vinnytsia at one o'clock in the morning. (This was still before the war in 1939.) The train station was completely packed with hundreds and thousands of people. There they were, those unfortunate people, just sitting there on the concrete in the middle of the freezing cold night. The NKVD agents wore white fur coats and carried automatic rifles. Women, children, old people—it was terrible to look at the sight. Then, the train arrived and they were all herded into the boxcars—boxcars, you understand—and deported. I can never forget that night.

**Q:** What was the ethnic composition of the Communist Party in your area, in the towns and villages of Zhytomyr province? Who actually belonged to the Communist Party?

**A:** The members of the Party were the representatives of the people that lived there. The villages in our area near Zhytomyr were of mixed composition, Polish and Ukrainian.

For example, in our village the head of the collective farm was a Pole named Syngajewski. But he didn't make a big show of the fact that he was Polish. In fact, he spoke beautiful Ukrainian. Some people knew that he was Polish, others didn't. My own sister, Vira, for example, married a Polish man from a neighboring village. His father had been the musical director of a wind instrument orchestra, a very fine orchestra. He was Polish and the orchestra was a fine one. He himself was a very decent person. My sister, Vira, was a teacher, and her husband was also; he taught in the Ukrainian school. The Poles in the area completely changed their allegiance to... The years 1937, 1938, and 1939 were ones of terrible destruction. They began to destroy the minorities and their culture. All of the Jewish newspapers, schools, periodicals, theaters and orchestras were shut down, and the intelligentsia, and all the musical directors and the drama directors were arrested.

In our area, in Volyn', in the Zhytomyr region, a terrible tragedy occurred—the destruction of the culture of the minorities. The minorities had hoped for the same kind of blossoming of culture which was more or less taking place in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Ukraine at the time had pretty much its own government: Liubchenko, Skrypnyk, Zaton's'kyi, during the time of Petrov's'kyi. The minorities enjoyed great freedom and they greatly expanded their culture. And this was not appreciated in Moscow; the Russian, Muscovite chauvinists did not like this, and with Stalin and Molotov in the lead, they began destroying the culture of the Jews and Poles of Kiev. The Poles and Jews who worked for the NKVD began to destroy the Ukrainian intelligentsia. This was after Skrypnyk and Khvyliovyi

committed suicide and Liubchenko was shot [*sic*—Panas Liubchenko committed suicide in 1937], and Postyshev and Khrushchev came to Ukraine. After the destruction of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, the culture of the Poles and Jews was destroyed.

**Q:** What had your opinion been of the Ukrainian Communists you just mentioned—such as Skrypnyk and Shums'kyi.

**A:** They were Ukrainian patriots, fine Ukrainian patriots. They only wanted a socialist government in Ukraine. They wanted power to be in the hands of the workers and peasants. And they were destroyed because of this. A lot of Communists had come here from Galicia—superb people, very capable people: Krushel'nyts'kyi with his two sons; Rudnyts'kyi, the composer and director who died here in New York. He had performed in Kharkiv as a musical director and in Dnipropetrovsk. I personally knew the aged Vasyl' Verkhovynets, an exceptionally wonderful human being, who was a musical director, composer. Verkhovynets had mastered Ukrainian folk dances used to stage performances at the Franko Theater. He was a wonderful, humane person. You know, you just wanted to cry when they arrested and shot him. And what for? Because he was building Ukrainian culture. He put on dance performances at the theater, and he used to sing in the choir at the Ivan Franko Theater, where, incidentally, I originally met him. In fact, I have a collection of songs he put together.

And there was such a mass of people who had returned from Europe, from all over the world, the United States, Canada, Ukrainian Communists. And why had they returned? They were returning to their native land, and they firmly believed that this was going to be a socialistic, workers' government in Ukraine, which was what they all wanted. But the Muscovite chauvinists back then wanted everything in their empire to be Russian only, nothing but Russian. That's why they destroyed those Communists who returned from abroad. Take Volodymyr Zatons'kyi, for example, or Liubchenko. I had heard their speeches, especially that of Zatons'kyi, who was a marvelous speaker, and who spoke Ukrainian beautifully. They were all destroyed because they were Ukrainian. The only Ukrainian Communists allowed to live were those who spoke Russian at home with their wives and children. They spared this kind of Ukrainian Communist, as well as Poles, Bulgarians and Jews, because they needed them. But if a Ukrainian Communist were to display in his home a portrait of Shevchenko, Ivan Franko, or Lesia Ukraïnka, rather than a portrait of Gorky or Tolstoy he was destroyed. They just needed the kind of Communists who would speak and think only in Russian. But, if a Ukrainian Communist were to long for or hunger after anything that might be Ukrainian, they would just destroy him.

**Q:** What was your reaction to the suicides of Skrypnyk, Khvyliovyi, Liubchenko. What were your thoughts?

**A:** I was very young at the time; I was very young and we were all confused. That's just the way it was. Consider this situation. Some great man is being celebrated. His memory is being honored. Take, for example, Tobilevych. All at once he's being published, either some book of his or all the dramatic works. Or there is an announcement of an imminent publication dedicated to the memory of the Tobilevych brothers—Saksahans'kyi, Mykola Sadovs'kyi and Ivan Tobilevych. These were three Ukrainian brothers, active in the theater as drama directors and great actors. So, a new book is being published, written by so-and-so, and at the

same time everything that was ever written about them and all of their works is being destroyed in all the libraries. This is exactly as it is with the Jews. They pay special tribute to Shalom Aleichem, announce that henceforth a street in the Podil' section of Kiev will be named after him, that a collection of his works will be published in the Ukrainian language; and at the same time, in all the libraries, institutes, and schools, all Jewish literature is being burned. Another example. They bring in a great artist, a pianist from L'viv for a concert and all the newspapers proclaim him to be a musical genius who interprets the works of Chopin. But he is also a Jew, mind you. And within three or four days, massive arrests of Jewish activists throughout the republic begin—professors, writers, artists.

I recall yet another incident. In 1939, when Galicia was being liberated from capitalist Poland, they arrested Colonel Volonets' of the UNR army. Only they didn't accuse him of having been a colonel in that army, but rather a colonel in Petliura's Army, which was supposed to have carried out pogroms. He was arrested in L'viv and brought to Vinnytsia for trial. He was put on trial in a Jewish club on Lenin Street in Vinnytsia, not far from the opera house, I believe. So, Volonets' was tried, but he was never involved in any pogroms. That was an outright lie. They just needed to accuse him of that. And they drove him to the trial in a black raven, which is what those NKVD cars were called, because they were black in color. Thousands of Jews from the towns and villages of Vinnytsia gathered at his trial. The town overflowed with visitors. And when they were escorting him out of the black raven into the street to the club to start the trial, the spectators began screaming in a delirium, "Murderer! Murderer! Hang the murderer!" It was awful. The earth itself seemed to shake from their cries.

And they sentenced him and shot him, but a few weeks later mass arrests of Jews began all over the region. Teachers and members of the intelligentsia were arrested. The club itself was shut down, and the club library was burned down. All the newspapers announced, "The Petliurist *Otaman* Volynets, apprehended in L'viv, has been put on trial in Vinnytsia for his pogroms against the Jews." But after the trial, you understand, came the destruction of Jewish culture and the Jewish intelligentsia. And this two-faced way of doing business has been going on now for 60 years.

Q: So they wanted the Jews to make themselves known?

A: They wanted the Jews to come out into the open. They wanted to know exactly how many of them there were, and how powerful they were. Just as in Kiev in 1934. At that time there was a jubilee in honor of the aged Saksahans'kyi put on at the opera house. By this time, he was paralyzed over half his body on the left side. They dressed him up as Voznyi and he made an appearance on the stage even though one side of his body was not functioning. There was such a crowd present that they raised the price of a ticket to 50 karbovantsi<sup>†</sup> to get into that commemorative evening in honor of Saksahans'kyi. And on the very next day, thousands of our people, members of our intelligentsia came out and demonstrated their national fervor. And you know, the authorities loved to see the people demonstrate for their nation, because then they could prove that there were still a lot of nationalists about! And then they would immediately take action. They did this every time. I could give you many such examples.

Q: That's extraordinarily interesting.

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<sup>†</sup>Ukrainian for rubles.

A: If you like, I could recount another story for you, although it's a bit long.

Q: Please do.

A: I was studying at the conservatory in Kiev in 1938. The person in charge of developing the curriculum at the conservatory, Glezer by name, was a Jew. And he did not like Ukrainians. The actual director was a man named Lufe, also a Jew. He was a pianist and a very pleasant human being. He spoke Ukrainian just beautifully, and was especially very helpful to Ukrainian students. He was the first person to ever master Revuts'kyi's *Second Piano Concerto*. Yes, this man, Lufe, the director of the conservatory, was simply a decent man. And so this fellow Glezer called me in to see him. I walked into his private office and who should happen to be sitting there but Hryhorii Viriovka, my professor, who said, "Comrade P-ko, in a moment the chief of the Vinnytsia Red Army headquarters will enter. They are in need of a musical director for the women's *bandura* ensemble, and we want to recommend you for the job."

I was still quite young, but in Viriovka's class, I was the best of the lot, the best in musical arrangements. I was the best out of a class of eight students. The professor liked my arrangements the most, and he considered them competent and successful. So, he recommended me. The colonel walked in, Colonel Bezprozvannyi, a Jew. He was a very handsome man—tall, good-looking, and intelligent. The offer included a monthly wage of 1,000 karbovantsi and a reimbursement for the return trip to Vinnytsia, as well as for the hotels, where I might stay. I was to arrive every Friday night by train, board the train and travel to Vinnytsia. Saturday and Sunday I was to spend there and return back to Kiev on Sunday. They had a women's ensemble of *bandura* players there, which had been organized a few years earlier by the musical director, Pika, who was followed by Palatai, the *bandura* player. Palatai had a prominent moustache which caused Colonel Bezprozvannyi to dislike him.

So, when I arrived, he called me into his office, and said, "Comrade P-ko, you are a member of the *Komsomol*. You are a young person. Why are you studying the *bandura* at the musical conservatory?" I replied that I had originally begun to study the violin, but I had to give it up, because I had injured my left hand. I couldn't tell him that I had injured my hand because of strenuous work I did in my village upon arriving there in 1933. I had severely sprained my tendons and got this enormous swelling in my left arm. The doctor had given me orders not to play anymore and to avoid lifting any heavy objects with my left hand. When I was asked about my *bandura* studies, I replied, "You are in need of a musical director; there's a class on the *bandura* at the conservatory; someone has to go and study it." I was trying to weasel my way out of this line of questioning. And then he added, "You know, when the girls perform the *dumy*, I noticed that ... why is it that when I listen to a piano concert, a violin concert, or a symphony orchestra, or a choir, I always notice that the audience listens politely. But when they listen to the women's *bandura* choir, and they get to singing the *dumy*, then I see tears welling up in the eyes of the Red Army soldiers?" Then he added, "You know, these *banduras* have a Petliurist soul."

And I answered, "Comrade chief, I don't know who this fellow Petliura might have been, perhaps some sort of *otaman*, someone, I believe, who was around in 1917. But, I was very young then."

"No, of course, you don't know who he was." And so on.

And then the following occurred. A Jewish choir used to come to Vinnytsia to perform at concerts. It was a government choir from Kiev, a Jewish choir, the only choir in the entire USSR that did not require a subsidy. The hall was packed with Jews at every concert. And they paid such sums to attend that this choir did not need any outside financial support. The government simply paid them their salaries. But it had the best financial backing, this mixed Jewish choir, directed by Professor Shenin. Shenin, I might add, was a true Ukrainophobe. He could not stand Ukrainians, and refused to perform any Ukrainian songs, except for one brigand's song that went, "Oh, Halya, young Halya! The boys took Halya and tied her to a spruce by her braids..." That kind of a song. And so this Jewish choir arrived at the Opera House in Vinnytsia.

The chief of the Red Army quarters summoned me and asked, "Comrade P-ko, are you going to the concert?"

"Well, what do you think? Of course! It's a wonderful choir, a magnificent musical director," I answered, "And I've also told all the women to go."

"Well, thank you. That's good. That's good," he said.

The choir finished its performance at the concert, and the chief of the Red Army quarters booked it to sing in the Red Army building. It was a full house at the concert hall. Officers of the Red Army, the air force, and tank unit divisions were present. An expensive banquet was prepared for this group. Thousands of rubles were spent for the food alone, all in honor of the choir. A few weeks later, we read in the papers, "In view of the fact that the Jewish state choir by the name of 'Ievokantz' and under the direction of Shepin, limits its repertoire to a narrow selection of Jewish songs and cantor's canticles, the government has approved the liquidation of this choir."

One day when I arrived in Vinnytsia, the chief called me in and asked, "Comrade, what's going on? What is all this?"

I said that I didn't understand how they could liquidate such high culture, such an exceptional choir. "Why, just the very thought?! It's a scandal! It's a disgrace! How can our own Soviet government behave in such a way?", I said.

"It can," he said. I saw that he had turned positively blue from outrage. And then I told him in Russian (I normally spoke with him in Russian), "You see, Comrade manager. Do you recall when you asked me why the Ukrainian *bandura* has that special tone that makes people cry when they listen to it, and you said that this instrument reflects the very soul of Petliura. And I answered you that it's simply the embodiment of the national spirit. The *bandura* moves people, and especially so if a person misses his native land, his father and mother, or if a person has the kind of life that is filled with burdens and disappointments, or if there is pain and outrage all around him and the person is in tears. I can see that you are very outraged at this very moment." He was not himself. "Well, now I ask you to apologize to me for what you said," I told him. And he apologized.

**Q:** This is truly an interesting episode. What can you tell me about the politics behind the selection of repertoires. How were songs selected? What songs was it forbidden to perform, and under what conditions? That sort of thing.

**A:** Yes, the repertoire division was part of the Ministry of Culture. We had to report there and submit our song lists, which the choir or the ensemble was supposed to perform. I also used to submit my song lists to the chief when I worked there, but I knew full well what was required. As my first selection I always

chose some Soviet song, like, "Down the Long Road"<sup>†</sup> or "How Spacious Is My Native Land."<sup>‡</sup> And once he saw that, he was satisfied. He had to accept the selection, because he had Professor Palatai fired, the one with the moustache only because he had sensed the Petliurist spirit in him. And I told him the same thing. "Look," I said, "they liquidated the choir because it was a nationalistic Jewish choir. But what else can it possibly be, but a Jewish choir? A Jewish choir is not going to perform Moldavian or Chinese songs. You see, they liquidated it because it had such power over the people's souls. It was high art, beautiful craftsmanship, and people were proud of it." "In the same way," I continued, "among us Ukrainians, if something is beautiful and has a Ukrainian character, it's immediately condemned as Petliurist. They took Palatai," I continued, "and fired him, only because of that moustache, because he was getting on in years."

He apologized, "I'm sorry, but it wasn't my fault."

But when I was working in Detroit in a company by the name of "Becker(?)," the supervisor was a Pole. He was an American of Polish descent and a staunch pro-Communist. He got very upset that I had come to America while still such a young man. "Why didn't you go back? Why did you come to America?" he demanded. "You collaborated with the German Fascists." He went on and on. I told him that I was not a collaborator, and that was definitely not the reason why I came here, but rather because of Russian Fascism, Communist, Bolshevik, Russian Fascism! I said that there was no Communism back there only ordinary Russian, Bolshevik Fascism. "How can that be?!" he said. And on it went. I told him that's the way it was, and I began telling him about life there, about my father, who had been a working man, a mechanic at a mill, and how we had lived in poverty the whole time. He refused to believe a thing I told him. One day he brought me a little pink book about the Famine of 1933 in Ukraine. He said, "This is all lies. What are your people doing? You're compromising your reputation with the Americans with these tales of the Soviet Government causing a famine specifically designed to starve people to death. That's impossible. No one will believe you!"

I told him that it was very difficult for him to believe such things, because he'd grown up in different circumstances. He had been protected by the humanistic laws of the church and a constitution which upheld the democratic process. I said, "For you it's unbelievable. Even we ourselves have a hard time believing that it really happened, and why it happened, and for what purpose."

He brushed me off and said, "On this page it says that two women were walking through a field in the Spring and managed to collect some wheat-ears that had been left under the wet snow from the previous winter. Although the wheat-ears had already turned black, they had picked them up. On the way home, they were stopped and afterwards sentenced to ten years in Siberia for having picked up the wheat-ears. Could such a thing really have happened?!"

And I said, "Absolutely. Absolutely." I told him that my own parents had lived through that.

And he said, "So you expect me to believe that the government begrudged the people even rotting ears of wheat?!"

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<sup>†</sup> *V put' dorozhku dal'nyuyu.*

<sup>‡</sup> *Shyroka strana maya rodnaya.*

"Yes," I told him, "because those women were supposed to die of hunger, but instead, they came up with the idea of trying to save their lives by gathering the wheat-ears."

And at this point, he began hurling terrible insults at me and left. About half-a-year later, he called me over to him, "Come on, P—, I want to apologize to you about those women, about that incident." Well, what had happened in the meantime? His wife had been studying in Warsaw and was perfectly bilingual in English and Polish. He said that a fellow Pole had just returned from a visit to Warsaw and began to tell him all about how things were over there. The fellow countryman was very glad that there's a workers' government in Poland, a Communist government, and so on. But then, one day, another man, a relative, arrived in Detroit from Poland for a holiday. "For three days now," my colleague continued, "he's been telling us jokes and anecdotes about how life really is over there. And," he went on, "my belly hurt from laughing so hard. I want to apologize to you for what I said about the women."

"Well, how did this come about?" I asked.

"I'll tell you," he said, "there's one anecdote that my relative from Poland told me similar to the story of the two women and how the government had begrudged them the withered wheat-ears, which had blackened in the fields during the Winter. It happened that a Polish peasant came with his wife to market in Warsaw. He intended to sell his cabbages, but business was poor, and he couldn't sell anything. There they were without money or food. Well, what to do? They couldn't just eat the cabbage. The wife says, 'Tell you what. Take a handful of hay and go to see our leader, Beirut.' Beirut was, at the time, the secretary of the Communist Party in Poland. "'Go right to his office; go right in and start eating the hay. When he sees how hungry you are, that you've been reduced to eating hay, he'll give you some food or money.' The Pole took the hay, ran quickly over to Beirut's office, stood in front of his desk, and started eating the hay. And Beirut says, 'Have you gone out of your mind?! You want to shame us in front of the Americans; there's a lot of them around. You want them to see you?! Here. Take this money. Buy yourself some food, you madman.' And he counted him out a pile of money—one, two, three... Well, he takes the money back to his cart, and his wife exclaims, 'Wow. What luck! You know what I think?! If this Polish beggar of ours gave us such a pile of money, imagine how much we would get if you went to see Stalin in Moscow with two handfuls of hay. You know he's the biggest boss in the world.' So the Pole grabbed two handfuls of hay and made his way to see Stalin. He stood there in front of him, eating away until his eyes bugged out. Stalin pulled open his drawer, took out his pipe, filled it with tobacco, took a few puffs, and, walking up to the Pole said, 'Comrade Pole,' he said, slapping him on the back, 'we've been trying to teach you Socialist agriculture for ten years now. In the Summer, you're supposed to graze ... save that hay for the Winter!' So you see," my colleague went on, "if Stalin begrudged our Pole a bit of hay, then I can very well believe that he would have begrudged those women the wheat-ears, and that they would have been sentenced for it."

Q: Moving on to another topic, what do you know about the persecution of the church, let's say, either in your own village, or in Kiev? What did you see? What did you hear? What was going on with the church choirs, for example?



*Appendix I*

**A:** Oh, you see, the general terror and the persecution of the church was so great that only very courageous, pious people would meet secretly to pray and sing religious songs. They only did this if they had the utmost confidence in each other. And the circumstances were such that if a neighbor were to hear that something was going on, he would go and inform on them. It was tragic. They would be arrested and destroyed. You were not allowed to keep any religious literature, you know. Whoever engaged in any religious activities did so at a great personal risk; but risk it they did, and they paid very dearly for it. In our village we had a lot of Evangelicals or Baptists, as they were called. They used to congregate at each other's houses, and even after joining the collective farm they continued to meet. The majority of them were under surveillance and were subsequently arrested and deported. Priests were severely persecuted. A priest could not risk being seen with a cross or the consequences were a forgone conclusion. He had to dress in civilian clothing, like everyone else. But if he were to perform his religious duties surreptitiously, sooner or later he would be found out, arrested, deported to Siberia to work in a penal colony.

They say that there are up to ten or 15 million such prisoners in Siberia; that there are huge factories there, mines, plants where the government finds it convenient to use these arrested people for this, because they work for free. Food is cheap, although of poor quality; housing is very cheap; and there is almost no pay to speak of. So what really goes on is that they arrest anyone at all on the suspicion of not being happy with the Soviet regime and deport him. Such people just work there without pay. The government has had huge profits from the slave labor in these concentration camps; and they do this for two basic reasons—to eliminate potential enemies among the nationalities strong enough to oppose the regime actively and to make sure these people are not around to influence the young. So, they've arrested all these people and sent them to develop Siberia, work in the factories. These people then raise the national production at virtually no cost. That is the system. That is the government. Half the people work without pay. The same thing is true of the collective farms. It's slave labor, nothing but exploitation of the people. A person works from morning until night, and what does he or she have to show for it? Nothing. Winter comes, and the person just sits and shivers without any food in a cold house. It's a slave's life.

A few years ago Professor Vasyl' Zavitnevych died in New York. He used to teach the Ukrainian language at the conservatory in Kiev; he gave lectures to the students on the Ukrainian language and grammar. There was another professor, Professor Zhuravel', a very old man. He enjoyed boasting that as a child, he used to sit in the lap of Nechui-Levyts'kyi. Nechui-Levyts'kyi was a Ukrainian writer who used to visit their home. The professor was very small at the time and used to sit on the writer's lap and play. Well, in the class there were about 30 students. As I already mentioned, the student body of Kiev was a very mixed lot with lots of minorities—Poles, Russians, Jews, Bulgarians. And so every institute in Kiev, actually in the whole of Ukraine, had representatives from these minorities. The largest number of students at the conservatory were Jews, followed by Russians, and then the Ukrainians. There were only six or seven Ukrainians in our class; the rest were Jews, Russians, and Poles. Everyone spoke mainly Russian.

The Ukrainians always sat together in a group. One day during and after a break between classes, one female student pulled a photograph out of her briefcase and

started passing it around. It was a photograph of a pogrom. I don't recall the town where this pogrom is supposed to have occurred, but, according to the student, followers of Petliura and his Army carried out atrocities against Jewish women and children. One student, a Ukrainian, said, "I beg your pardon, but I'm from that very town myself. It wasn't the Petliurists who carried out this pogrom, but one particular *ataman*, *Ataman* so-and-so. I don't remember the name. But it was he who carried out the pogrom together with the Russian Black Hundreds." What do you think? The next day that student disappeared and never turned up again. So, what is it that they wanted? They wanted to discredit the Ukrainian Army in front of the young people. They wanted to discredit Petliura and the Ukrainian liberation movement of 1917. They wanted to say that the Ukrainian Government of Hrushevs'kyi was not in any way a legitimate government, but merely a usurper; that Petliura was a pogromist. So these are the kind of ideas they would introduce and propagate among the students, and if anyone opposed this line of thinking, he would immediately be reported. It's really unfortunate that I can't recall that student's surname. But he vanished.

Another example. Professor Zhuravel' told a student that he was ignoring the Ukrainian language, "You're not studying. You don't know it. You can't write it correctly." The student replied in Russian, "I don't need the Ukrainian language. Knowing Russian is enough." The professor said, "But it's a curriculum requirement; you have to know Ukrainian. It's a required subject. And I can't give you a poor grade." And the student answered, "So, give me a good grade." To which the professor said, "But I don't have the right to give you a good grade if you don't know the language." The matter came to a head and the rest of the class rose in the student's defense and began pressuring the professor. The professor, who was quite an old man, became flustered. He ended his lecture early and was summoned to the departmental office. There they began to accuse him of bourgeois-nationalism, and even of being a follower of Petliura. He fainted, and they had to call an ambulance. They took him to a hospital. Then we went to the next lecture in the Russian language, and I remember quite well the teacher we had for that hour. It was a Jewish woman. She began the lecture with the words, "Comrades, what have you done with Professor Zhuravel'?" We studied at the university together, and I've been friends with him since my youth. He's a wonderful human being, a very highly cultured person, a real intellectual. What have you done," she continued, "what have you done? Aren't you ashamed of yourselves? You young people are obliged to conduct yourselves in a morally upright manner. You must show respect to your professors, your teachers. How could you have offended him so deeply? The poor man is in a hospital today." She was a very impartial, good woman. She stood up in defense of the Ukrainian language, even though she herself taught Russian and was Jewish. She was a very fine cultured person, a real human being.

Q: And did she survive the entire decade of the 1930s?

A: That I can't tell you. Abraham Moiseievich was a professor at the conservatory, a historian, and an expert in world literature. He was also the head of the repertory group at the Russian language Lesia Ukraïnka Theater. He translated Lesia Ukraïnka's work *The Stone Master*<sup>†</sup> into Russian,<sup>‡</sup> and he

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<sup>†</sup>*Kaminnyi Hospodar*.

<sup>‡</sup>*Kamiennyi Vlastelin* in Russian.

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recommended that the theater group stage a production of the play. The students in our class got free passes, complimentary tickets, for opening night and a group of about 12-15 of us students went to the premiere of the drama written by Lesia Ukraïka, *The Stone Master*. And it was Abraham Moiseievich himself who had translated the work into Russian, and he was the head of the literary section of the theater; he also delivered a short lecture before the performance began. And here is what he said, "I have already read more than 100 authors on the theme of Don Juan: Shakespeare, Byron, the French authors, Pushkin. All of these writers have written works on this theme, but the very best treatment and the most artistic rendering of this theme is given by the Ukrainian genius, the poet Lesia Ukraïka." You know, a deathly silence fell over the theater. Not a whisper could be heard. Who would have expected Lesia Ukraïka to do a better job than Pushkin, than Shakespeare? What in the world was this? This was something that perhaps a Ukrainian professor might say. And were he to say something like this, he would be immediately, you know... But Abraham Moiseievich did say this... Well, we Ukrainian students were extraordinarily... I then went to the conservatory. There were a lot of people there who had already become russified. They said, "And why did that happen? How is it that Abraham Moiseievich would have regarded Lesia Ukraïka ... and so on."

After the war, I believe, they transferred him to Leningrad. He knew the Ukrainian language very, very well, and he treated the work of Lesia Ukraïka with very great respect, because Lesia Ukraïka in some of her works, such as *Cassandra*, regarded the suffering of the Jewish people very sympathetically and wrote about them and with great warmth. Of course this couldn't fail to make an impression on the Jews.

Q: Do you know what happened to him?

A: I think he died in Leningrad; he was transferred to Leningrad after the war. [Portion of text inaudible.]

Q: In other words, he died a natural death?

A: I can't tell you. I think he did die a natural death, but I really can't say. I really don't know.

Q: Was informing widespread among the students at the conservatory? I mean, what was the moral climate like for the students around you? Did they manage to resist the pressure?

A: There had to be a great deal of informing going on—because people are people, you know. One person was able to take the risk of resisting and refuse to comply, while another person would comply out of tremendous fear, if somebody asks, "Why don't you go and listen to what they are saying over there—that one and that one and that one there—and come and tell us. We'll be back in three weeks. You just circulate. Go with him over there and with him and him, or with those girls over there... It's not going to do you any harm." This person may have fled from his village because his father was dekulakized, you know, and he thinks to himself, "Maybe they already know that I'm the son of a *kulak*. After all, people are being arrested for this." And, I tell you, that's how I think they recruited informers. Here, let me show you this little book; I wouldn't want this to be overheard."

Q: Did your parents take part in the Revolution? Or later...?

**A:** Thank you very much. You've asked me a very good question. My father was with the UNR Army; my uncle Ivan was with the UNR Army; and the oldest uncle among them, Iakiv, also was with the UNR Army. All three of them were with the UNR Army. Uncle Ivan was some sort of liaison between the Sich Riflemen<sup>†</sup> of Konovalets and the Army of the UNR; he'd been given some sort of commission, and, consequently, was in constant contact with the Army and the headquarters staff of the UNR. My uncle Iakiv was killed in a battle near Kiev; but my uncle Ivan was up to the Second World War... This whole time he—how shall I put it—was deeply affected by the defeat of our national cause, was under very great psychological stress, and was deeply depressed. He was a great patriot. Whenever he came home after a drink, he would ask his wife to close all the windows, because he discovered that he could not fall asleep, unless he first sang the Ukrainian national anthem, *Shche ne vmerla Ukraina*.<sup>‡</sup> Only after singing it could he lie down and fall asleep.

During the Second World War—fighting had just broken out—a group of infantry men made up of Ukrainian nationalists from Zhytomyr passed through. Later, I found out that the group was under the leadership of Mykola Klymyshyn. It was a group of about eight or ten young men. They were walking down the streets of the town, going from house to house in search for a place where they could spend the night and get something to eat. People, however, were afraid of them. They had been terrorized by the German policy of shooting anyone who provided aid to Ukrainian nationalists, or who tried to hide Jews. The young men of this group were all strangers and the townspeople refused to take them in. They were dressed in embroidered shirts; they were young and good-looking. But the people were afraid of them. Finally, in one house they were told, "Go down to the fourth house, to the P-kos. They'll surely take you in." So they came to our house. I happened to be there at the time. My uncle Ivan lived in a house just across the road. When the boys showed up at our house, my father said, "Well, praise the Lord! Come in, boys, please come in and make yourselves comfortable." And he asked my mother to cook some potatoes. My mother and father began preparing dinner, while I was sent across the street to fetch my uncle Ivan. As soon as he ran into the room and saw the boys in their embroidered shirts, Uncle Ivan burst into tears and cried, "Oh, my dear Sich Riflemen!" He had always regarded the Sich Riflemen with the utmost respect. He went around, embracing and kissing each one individually and saying, "My dear Sich Riflemen!" The young men said that they had gone through the entire week without having come across such hospitality and that they were sure they would be victorious if people everywhere would treat them this way. I will never forget that meeting with our first members of the OUN<sup>§</sup> in Ukraine.

**Q:** This is an extraordinarily interesting fact. Although your father was a laborer, still...

**A:** My father was a laborer and a former member of UNR; we treated the young men well and gave them some food for the road, you understand. It was a most pleasant encounter.

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<sup>†</sup> *Sichovi Striltsi*.

<sup>‡</sup> *Ukraine Has not Perished Yet*.

<sup>§</sup> Members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists.

You've already asked me, whether my family had been patriotic or took part in the events of 1917? Well, from our village, much to my sorrow, there were no more than three or four families that took part. Why, you may ask, were the three brothers such patriots, having served in the Army of the UNR and defended the Ukrainian Government? I'll tell you the reason. It's because they loved their native art, songs, the theater. My father always used to play the parts of Karas' and Vybornyi in performances. He and my uncles Ivan and Iakiv loved the Ukrainian theater; they used to take part in the productions. It was because of their love of the stage and music—they spoke beautiful Ukrainian—that they were so active in the Revolution.

Q: And did the Communists know that your father was a former Petliurist, if I may use that term?

A: Well, what can I tell you—I, well, if the fact were readily known, then most certainly he would have been... They destroyed all the Petliurists, all the former members of Petliura's Army. I don't think the whole village knew about it. The only ones that knew were our closest neighbors. They were Evangelicals, religious people. They were politically passive as to the national question. The neighbors knew, but they were fine people, and because of that, my father managed to escape scrutiny all the way up to the war.

Q: Was your father able to tell you about the struggle for national liberation? Or not?

A: He was very, very cautious. He never told me that he had been in Petliura's Army.

Q: You didn't find this out until...

A: I found this out during the Second World War. I hadn't known that my father and uncles had been in that army.

Q: And how did you react to all of this, once you found out about it?

A: Well, I already knew about my Uncle Ivan's intoxicated renditions of *Shche ne vmerla Ukraïna*. I knew this when I was still very young, a schoolboy. But one spoke very, very quietly about this. You know, it was simply a case of a child hearing adults speaking among themselves, laughing, joking, and that sort of thing. Ivan still hasn't forgotten his *Shche ne vmerla Ukraïna*, and still sings it every night. So, you see, you could only become aware of these things in stages, you could never really piece the pattern together entirely.

It wasn't until after the war that I acquired the means, mainly through books to learn about all these things more fully. The books of Vynnychenko and Iefremov, for example. My father used to hide Kulish's books in the attic. Oh, and when I read them, my father would warn me, waving his finger at me sternly, "God forbid that you take a single one of those books out of this house! If anyone were to see you...!" In their time, the works of Vynnychenko, especially, *The Sun Machine*,<sup>†</sup> *Pug-Nosed Mephistopheles*,<sup>‡</sup> and *The Necklace*,<sup>§</sup> were very popular, very much beloved, and people would keep them hidden. And there was Iefremov's *History of Ukrainian Literature*, Hrushevs'kyi's works. God forbid if you were caught with any of these works. Everything was read in great secrecy.

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<sup>†</sup> *Sonyashna Mashyna*.

<sup>‡</sup> *Kyrypatyi Mefistofel'*.

<sup>§</sup> *Namysto*.

My father used to be friends with the teachers. He played the guitar and the mandolin, and they used to get together and play. And the teachers used to respect my father deeply for his active participation and helped in staging the performances. That is why my father was so familiar with literature, but he was still cautious about being seen with certain books. And there a lot of incidents that had a strong impact on me.

**Q:** Did your father ever have any trouble with either the GPU or the NKVD? Did they in any way ever get to him...?

**A:** Well, I don't remember. The only time he ever had any trouble, I think, was when... Something did happen to him once. This was already after the war when the Red Army and the NKVD came back. When the war got under way, there was an order from Moscow to scatter all the cattle, to destroy all the machinery, all the motors, so that everything of value in the collective farms and in the villages would be destroyed by the time the Germans came, and the Germans would be unable to profit from the economy or exploit what was there. Well, my father, as I told you, had been working as a mechanic at the mill, received an order to destroy all of the collective farm's machinery used for grinding grain—rye and wheat. My father took a very large hammer and made a big show of going out to do his job, so that everyone would see. Then he simply dismantled the machinery and hid the parts away, leaving the basic parts intact. He then stuffed the latter with hay and all sorts of rags. Well, the inspector, who was a Communist, came by to make sure the machinery was no longer operational. But when the Germans returned, my father reassembled all the motors, and the grinding continued. When the Red Army returned toward the end of the war, my father was arrested, and, as far as I can tell, tortured to death. I received word about my father's death from my sister, Vira. So that's the way things turned out.

My uncle, Ivan, was killed at the front. He had been taken when the Red Army came and sent to the front lines. He was killed somewhere between Zhytomyr and L'viv. They just seized him and forced him to go out there, and he was killed.

**Q:** What do you know about the pogroms in your area?

**A:** We never had any pogroms. I can't recall any pogroms. In the area where I lived, there were never any pogroms. There might have been something in Zhytomyr, but I really can't recall for certain. I was born in 1914, so at that time I was very young.

**Q:** Had you ever heard anything about the *otamans* who used to go around in the early part of the 1920s. Did you see them in your area, the insurgents and *otamans*?

**A:** Yes, I did hear about all this, but nothing really very concrete. But I can't really recall any *otamans* causing great damage to the local Soviet governing bodies. But they definitely did exist, these *otamans*. But I wouldn't say they played any great political role.

From the standpoint of political significance there is one particular story I can recall to you. Immediately after coming to power, the Bolsheviks began sending commissars to carry out their work in the village. These commissars arrived with all sorts of prepared speeches and lectures. And whenever one such speech-making commissar visited Zhytomyr, he would be taken back in a horse-drawn wagon. As his wagon was passing through a forest, some unknown person would suddenly jump in and bash the commissar over the head with a blunt object. The lethal

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weapon would be left behind in the wagon with a note tied to it bearing the name, "Zh. B. Shvorin'." A *shvorin'* is a large bolt which joins the front axle of the wagon with the rest of the wagon. This *shvorin'* is such a thick, massive object that a single blow was enough to kill the commissar. And this assailant got himself one, two, three commissars. They couldn't catch him, because his assault was so quick and unexpected. And in the neighboring village there was a musical threesome—a violin, a base of some sort, and a drummer by the name of Kindrat. This fellow was so proficient on the drums, that no wedding could take pace without him. The orchestra was nothing without him. He was a marvelous performer. But he also suffered from tuberculosis, this fellow Kindrat. One day they found him dead in his own house. The man had died. Inside the pocket of his vest in the pocket they found a document identifying him as an officer of the UNR army. They also found a yellow and blue *shvorin'*. And they simply couldn't figure out what it was. He had been an officer in Petliura's Army and this yellow and blue *shvorin'* which he used to ..., well, you get it...

**Q:** Yes... I sincerely thank you for the very valuable testimony.

**A:** You're very welcome.

## CASE HISTORY LH38

*Translated from Ukrainian by Darian Diachok*

**Question:** Please state your name.

**Answer:** My name is Oleksander Honcharenko.

**Q:** What is the year of your birth?

**A:** Nineteen hundred and thirteen.

**Q:** Where were you born?

**A:** I was born in the town of Smila in the Kiev area. Smila was formerly a Cossack enclave.

**Q:** What did your parents do?

**A:** Under the Tsar my grandfather and father, who was still a boy, were banished to the Caucasus for a period of 12 years. After he returned from the Caucasus, my father worked as a guard at a sugar mill not far from Smila. Although he normally wore a uniform that resembled a constable's, the guards themselves were not policemen, rather they were simply guards stationed at the gates of the sugar mill. After the Revolution, in order to gain admission to the communist party, his own sister showed the communist a photograph with him in uniform, saying, "My brother was a gendarme." This happened in 1922. In 1922, they also withdrew his right of suffrage, that is, he was stripped of his right to vote or to be elected. Furthermore, his children—myself, my sister, and my brother—upon reaching the legal voting age of 18, were similarly stripped of their right of suffrage and branded "enemies of the people." All three of us lost our freedom.

**Q:** All of this because of one photograph?

**A:** One photograph and because of his sister's betrayal, based on false evidence. After we were deprived of our rights—I had not yet reached the age of 18—the communist government confiscated all of my father's property. They took everything that we had, threw us out of our house, and showed no concern whatever for our fate. Well, I had to fend for myself, go somewhere and earn my living. So I went to the Donbas, and worked there. I was able to earn my daily keep there, and my brother also got by teaching school. My brother had the following written crosswise on his military identification card: "socially alien element," which, of course, meant that he was an "enemy of the people." There you have it! I myself did not have this particular "appellation." I hid out. It was not until 1934 that they found me at the place where I was working and sentenced me to ten years in prison. But, there were some good people about who gave me 72 hours to get myself ready. So in these 72 hours, I sold some of my belongings and fled from Kiev, again to the Donbas. This was how the communist government forced Ukrainians to work in the Donbas. There was a great need for a labor force in the Donbas. And how did they manage to get all of these workers to go there? Since no one wanted to go there voluntarily, the authorities were forced to fabricate offenses against a person for which he would then be sentenced. The person had no choice but to flee to the Donbas, and no one went after him to bring him back. And that's how I wound up in the Donbas. I stayed for a few years in the Donbas, but still I felt a great longing to return to Ukraine. So I did and worked there until the outbreak of the Revolution. So this is how it happened. What else do you want to know?



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**Q:** Do you know what your father and grandfather were sentenced for?

**A:** Yes, I do. They sentenced my grandfather for the following: He speared a wild boar during Lent. Normally, everyone speared male pigs during Lent, because the period during which meat was allowed was only a few days away. Since everyone was doing it, he did it also. But on the other side of the road there lived a priest. The priest's daughter, as well as my father and uncle sat nearby and watched the pig being singed. After the pig had been singed, it was customary to cut off the tip of its tail and give it to whoever was watching. This piece was not meant to be eaten, but rather as something for the children to play with. This time the piece was given to the priest's daughter. She took it home and the priest asked her, "Where did you get this?" She answered that Grandfather Maksym had given it to her. The priest went and reported it to the police, and, as a result, my grandfather was sentenced to 12 years in the Caucasus for this affair. For 12 years he baked bread in the Caucasus.

**Q:** Well, it seems obvious that your family doesn't have the best regard for the Tsarist...

**A:** Neither for the Tsarist nor the Communist regime. Both brought equal harm to our family, and both are Russian. The difference is that one is decked out in white, the other in red. Either way, neither treated Ukrainians very well... They liked Ukrainian bread; Ukrainian workers ... but they don't know the Ukrainian soul.

**Q:** You mentioned the fact that the Smila area was—how did you put it?—a Cossack enclave.

**A:** Indeed, it was: Chyhyryn, Smila, Uman'.

**Q:** Can you say something about how generally the Cossack traditions got passed on?

**A:** The Cossack traditions were mostly passed on in the remotest villages. That's where they were the strongest, because there no one heard any distorted versions of history. Grandfathers simply told their children, and these children told their own children. That's how history got passed on from generation to generation. And because of that people got the unadorned truth: How the Cossacks first appeared; how they were destroyed; all about the Garrison at Zaporizhzhia. They knew all of this from top to bottom. Shevchenko described all of this. They talked about this only in the villages. But if you went to the city, which was populated by Russians, then you heard historical truth twisted to such an extent that even Shevchenko turned out to be a revolutionary, because he was against the rich. And who actually were the rich in Ukraine? There were the Polish settlers and the Russians who owned lands given to them by the tsar. And who were the poor? The peasants, of course! There you have it; and because of that, they're trying to make out Shevchenko to be a revolutionary, because he was against the rich.

**Q:** Were Ukrainians generally proud of their Cossack heritage?

**A:** They are proud of it to this day, regardless of who you ask. Whoever can trace his lineage back to the Cossacks is very proud of it and is never ashamed to say, "I am a descendant of the Cossacks." This is true both here and in Ukraine. With one exception, which occurred between the years 1937 and 1939. During these years the Russians persecuted and destroyed the upper stratum of the Ukrainian population—teachers, doctors, all types of scholars. They literally

destroyed them. During this period, no one admitted to being a descendent of the Cossacks, because were he to do so, he would certainly disappear the next day.

**Q:** And how did the descendents of the Cossacks take to the Russians in general?

**A:** This is a question that doesn't even deserve an answer. Everyone knows that a Cossack is a defender of the Ukrainian nation and its traditions. And regardless of whether the invader was a Pole, a Turk, a Tatar, or a Russian, the Cossacks disliked him, because they fought against them. This means that there was plenty of hatred, and it still exists and will continue to exist, for as long as the Ukrainian nation exists.

**Q:** So, the descendents of the Cossacks haven't forgotten a thing?

**A:** They never forgot. How can you forget about your parents, who love their traditions, their nation, their people?! Are you able to forget? No! Neither can their children and grandchildren and so on. None of this is forgotten; nor can it be uprooted.

**Q:** The Bolsheviks are trying...

**A:** They're trying, but, as you see, nothing... Take Poland, for example. People there are more used to freedom than our own Ukrainian people. The Poles are openly fighting the Russians. In our case, we've been up against the Russians for 300 years; we have been suppressed for over 300 years by Russian governments, regardless of whether they happen to be Red or White. By now we've formed calluses from the pressure of their rule and have become accustomed to silence. We've not forgotten a thing; we're just keeping quiet and keeping everything stored up in our soul. But the Polish people, who've only just recently lost their freedom, are openly challenging the Communist government and struggling against it. But the Communist government is nothing more than the Russian government! It isn't the Ukrainian government! "The Soviet Socialist Republic" is really Russian!

**Q:** Was there talk about the Revolution in your family, or about later uprisings? Or was the atmosphere not conducive for such discussions?

**A:** Which revolution are you referring to?

**Q:** Nineteen hundred and seventeen.

**A:** Ah, 1917. Well, you see, the situation was like this: Lenin managed to deceive all nations, not just the Ukrainian nation. Throughout the entire Soviet Union his slogan was proclaimed that the Revolution, when it came, would place the reins of power in the hands of the proletariat and the peasants. The land that up to then had been controlled by the Tsar and the Polish nobility would go to the peasants, while the factories and industrial plants would go over to the workers. But, these slogans were only circulated to break the power of the Tsarist government, that is, the Russian White Tsarist Government. Lenin achieved victory with his slogan. Everyone was enthusiastic about it, even my father. But after the Revolution, NEP (New Economic Policy) was the only concession granted to the people by the government. During the brief period of NEP, people were permitted to work undisturbed on their own lands. Although the workers didn't own their own factories, they were able to work for wages—they could make money at the industrial plants and factories. And the peasants produced their own grain on their own land. And later, in 1929, this land was confiscated from them. But my father didn't wait until 1929. By 1922 he already saw that the power was not in the hands of the workers and peasants, but the Communist Party. Because of this he

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took a dislike to the Communist Party. That's one reason. The other reason was that at precisely this time his sister betrayed him for the sake of her career. Somewhere around these years, though frankly, I can't recall the exact year, perhaps 1928 or 1929, we in Ukraine organized something called the League for the Liberation of Ukraine, the SVU.<sup>†</sup> My father, in fact, belonged to this organization. That's why he was sentenced in Kiev. He was sentenced to be shot, but later his sentence was commuted to ten years in prison. Two years later, in 1932 or 1933, he died in Solovky, the Solovets'ki Islands.

**Q:** Do you recall any Ukrainians, who might have been members of the SVU, ever coming to your father's house?

**A:** They would hold meetings almost every evening at our house. Not all of them, but one or two might come, and then the conversations would begin. They would lock us children up in a separate room. But I could still listen through the door, and I heard what they were saying, "Fedir! (to my father) Fedir! You've got two sons. If these two sons of yours can get two more to join them, we'll organize an entire army against the Communist government." But my mother was afraid because she could see how powerful the Communist government was, that it could have us all killed. So she said, "You can do whatever you want, but leave our sons alone." And that is why my father didn't even mention a thing to us about this whole business. They used to hold their meetings in ravines located in a clearing north of a stream that flowed near where we lived. It was here that they would make their plans. An informer ultimately infiltrated their group and reported them to the authorities. They were all subsequently arrested and sentenced.

**Q:** And who were these people? Teachers or who?

**A:** Well, there was one teacher, that I know for sure. But the rest all were well-to-do peasants who took pleasure in farming the land. There was also one teacher. And a doctor. That's all that you would find in a village. All the rest were peasants who enjoyed working the land, and because of this made a little more money because they would also work the land of the poor peasants who didn't want to work their own land. Such peasants would also take half of the harvest for themselves, while handing over the other half to the authorities in payment for owning land. That's how it was. So these were the people who held meetings in order to figure out a plan of action to liberate Ukraine from Soviet and Russian control.

**Q:** One hears quite often that the SVU never existed, that it was all a fabrication. But, apparently, something did indeed take place.

**A:** Well, whatever anyone one says about SVU not existing all you have to do is mention Iefremov, everyone knows who he was. Skrypnyk, everyone knows who he was, as well. You can't say that they were guilty of fabrication. I'm a living witness to the fact that in our village such a group existed and that the entire group was sent to Solovky. I am a living witness to this. No one can say that this was untrue.

**Q:** This is a very important piece of information that you're giving us.

**A:** It's really a fact. I'm not afraid of anyone, because what I'm saying is the simple, honest truth. My brother and sister also know the truth, because these conversations took place in our house.

**Q:** Did this take place in Smila itself, or throughout the entire region?

**A:** No, this occurred not far from Bila Tserkva, where my father was born. And that's the same place where my brother and sister were born. But, I was born in

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<sup>†</sup>*Spilka Vyzvolennia Ukraïny.*

Smila, because my father worked as a guard at the sugarbeet factory there after returning from exile.

**Q:** So the events that you were describing actually took place near Bila Tserkva?

**A:** Yes, they did.

**Q:** It's important to record this. Right after the Revolution, in 1922 or so, was there any uprising against the Bolsheviks?

**A:** There was no uprising against the Bolsheviks in our area, because in the year 1922, there were a lot of Poles and Germans among us. The Soviet government had to fight against the Poles and Germans, as well as against our own Ukrainians. A lot of deserters didn't go over to the Soviets, because these were people who understood full well what kind of government the Soviets had introduced. But many, in fact, did join the Red Army, Tarashchanskyi's group, for example...

**Q:** Wasn't he called "Bohun"?

**A:** Bozhenko! Bohun was a Cossack, while Bozhenko was a revolutionary who had been with the Reds. He had his own division, known as the Tarashchans'kyi Division. A lot of people joined up because they believed that a Communist government would give them everything. But 1929 proved otherwise. Everything was confiscated, everything, even what little they had had under the Tsar.

**Q:** What did people think of Petliura?

**A:** About Petliura? A lot of people served under him, thought well of him, and still do. We will never heal from his loss. Where I lived, Petliura was regarded as a saint. This opinion was shared by child and adult alike, with the exception of the Communists, of course. Communists are brainwashed to be such fanatic believers in their system. By now, half a century has passed, and the Communist government still has yet to prove that it can be beneficial to its subjects. This is so evident that even a stupid person can understand by now, that a Communist government will not be accepted no matter how long it remains in power.

**Q:** What was the composition of the membership of the Party apparatus in your area?

**A:** It was based on the unmotivated poor peasants, who hated the more affluent peasants, who received half the latter's crops in return for working their fields. They hated them because they themselves didn't have enough grain from one harvest to the next. The more industrious peasants, on the other hand, had a surplus, which they were able to sell because they worked. The others just spent the whole Summer lolling around in the shade, not doing a thing. And that's the kind of peasant who joined the Party. The Party gave him a high-ranking position in the administration of the collective farm. He was in charge of the collection and storage of the grain. He could even be made the head of the village soviet or perhaps the secretary. Another lazy peasant could serve as the head of the collective farm. They occupied all the top administrative posts. And they were just charlatans, riffraff, con-artists, who didn't want to work. When the Famine came, they all croaked as well.

**Q:** Did your father work the land?

**A:** My father worked his own land as well as the land of my mother's sister's husband – a man who never did a lick of work.

**Q:** This was the husband of the woman who betrayed your...?

**A:** No. No. No. This was my mother's sister, not my father's. As for my father's sister, she sure made her way to the top. She was in charge of a prison in

Kiev where they normally jailed those people who were unable to pay their taxes, or for similar offenses.

**Q:** How much land did your father farm?

**A:** He had five *desiatynas*. This was the equivalent of about five hectares, perhaps four *morgens*, not more than about 20 acres of land. The land was divided up one *desiatyna* of land per person. Regardless of whether you were rich or poor, you got just one *desiatyna* per member in your household. If you had five members in your family, you got five *desiatynas* of land; if you had seven, you got seven. My mother's sister had seven in her household, so she got seven *desiatynas*. My father had his five *desiatynas*, and also worked her seven, so that he worked twelve *desiatynas* in all every year.

**Q:** And for how many years did he do this?

**A:** Six years, from 1922 to 1929. He had a fine house, a good food supply from harvest to harvest, a fine pair of boots, while my mother's sister didn't have anything at all and didn't even have enough to last her from harvest to harvest.

**Q:** Was it possible to live reasonably well during NEP?

**A:** If NEP had lasted, Ukraine today would have been a power to reckon with. Everyone had the energy to work hard. Everyone put his best efforts into farming. And what soil there was in Ukraine, you must have heard about it! The fine, black top soil was a whole yard, a meter thick. All that's thrown into it just shoots up, all that's needed is a bit of work. This is what made Ukraine the bread basket of the entire Soviet Union. If Ukraine has a bad harvest, the Soviet Union must buy American wheat.

Who would want to join a collective farm voluntarily?! If you work your own land, you try your best to bring about the best possible harvest. Because it's yours. But if you work in a collective farm, the fruit of your labor doesn't belong to you. On the collective farm, if it rains on freshly-cut wheat, let it sit, no one cares. And, it spoils. Or, let's say that heavy clouds are approaching, and it's time to stack the sheaves into a pile so that they don't soak through. You know that your independent peasant will run out there in the rain, and work to save the wheat. But, in a collective farm, he just shrugs his shoulders, and off he goes. The rains come, soak everything, and the harvest is lost. Either way, the harvest isn't his. This is the difference between the collective farm and private property.

**Q:** Could you describe the process of dekulakization as you saw it?

**A:** Dekulakization? I'll tell you how it went. When all of these poor peasants got power in their hands, they manifested their hatred for the rich ones who used to work their lands. But what kind of rich peasants were these, anyway? Well, they were the ones who had everything while the others didn't have a thing. And that was that. A rich peasant wasn't a millionaire or anything like that. So, you see, the Soviet government at the local level was composed of these poor peasants. The other side of the story is that workers were needed in the Donbas. So what was the policy? They levied these taxes. And, for example, they would establish a tax of 1,000 karbovantsi per household. Now to come up with this sum, that is, 1,000 karbovantsi, a peasant would have to sell his cow (he usually had two), sell all the grain he had, sell his horses, or ox. He would collect the 1,000 dollars and pay the tax, so that he wouldn't be punished or banished somewhere. The poor peasants would see that he had managed to pay off his tax and would hit him with another thousand!" Well, a second tax of that magnitude he was no longer able to pay off,

so he did nothing. Soon, a commission pays him a visit when he's not home. The lock is torn off his door and his house is forcibly entered. The members of this commission sit down and begin to make a list of possessions, "This watch is worth one karbovanets'; the picture, two karbovantsi; that lamp, three, that bed over there, five karbovantsi." And so they would write down, make a list. They discover that he doesn't have enough to pay the second thousand dollars. But then they add in the cow, then, let's see – what's left? The horse. The chickens. They write down literally everything he owns and at the end state that the items on the list come out to exactly 1,000 karbovantsi. Then they hand him a document certifying that all his property has been sold. And as for the dispossessed individual, he can go where he will. And where is this? The Donbas. Because he knows that workers are needed down there, and the authorities won't go looking for former *kulaks* who've fled their village. This was the purely artificial means they used to induce people to go to the Donbas, "Go and work underground, because you know how to work." And the riffraff, the poor peasants, stayed behind to work on the collective farms. Because of this, the collective farm was never productive and never will be productive. Do I make myself clear?

**Q:** Yes, it's very interesting. Do you think that people would not go to the Donbas of their own accord?

**A:** Well, whoever did not go to the Donbas was rounded up in railroad boxcars and banished to Siberia or to Solovky. And once there, you were sentenced for not having paid your taxes or using hired labor. We were just little when my father used to work someone else's land. Since he couldn't very well manage two horses at once he would hire a boy to help him. My father paid him very well. But still, this was considered hired labor. And just for having hired someone like this he was sentenced to ten years in prison and exiled. Where? Wherever you were needed. If they needed you to cut lumber in Siberia, they'd send you there; or else they might need someone for a job in Solovky, off you'd go to Solovky, and you'd die there. And that's how they deported everyone. My father died in his second year at Solovky. He had been sentenced to be shot; and then his sentence was commuted to ten years, but he only survived two. My wife's father was exiled on a ten-year sentence, and he wound up spending 19 years in Siberia.

**Q:** And your father was also sentenced?

**A:** Yes, for his membership in the SVU.

**Q:** And what was the charge? It wasn't stated, was it?

**A:** Against whom?

**Q:** Was the charge against him stated or not?

**A:** We were dekulakized!

**Q:** Dekulakized. Yes, dekulakized. And then?

**A:** We were dekulakized. My father was taken and sentenced for having been a member of the SVU, the League for the Liberation of Ukraine. They sentenced him to be shot, but then commuted the sentence to ten years. Then they deported him to Solovky, to the Solovets'ki Islands. He himself was sent to the island of Popov in the White Sea, in the North, not far from Finland. Two years later he died there.

In the meantime, just as soon as he was deported him, they made a list of all the possessions in his house and tore off the lock. At the time I was working on the railroad and was repairing the track. My mother was at her parents' house, and the

lock was on the door. So they just tore the lock off. And when I came home for lunch, the commission was already there, making a list of everything we had in the house. All I had time to do was get two suits, my sheepskin coat, my hat and boots. This was in the Autumn. I put all this on, so that at least I would have something to wear. By this time I knew full well what was going on. As soon as they confiscated everything and wrote everything down, they would arrest me, and off I'd go, following my father into exile. Well, I've describe all of this to you already. There was also the matter of the pantry. It, too, was locked. They asked me for the key. I said that my mother had it. Then they asked me where she was, and I replied that she stepped out to see some friends. They asked if she had gone far, and I told them it was about a five-minute walk. They told me to run and get the key from her or they would break the door. And they sent a member of the *Komsomol*<sup>†</sup> along with me to make sure that I would not run away. And off we went.

And this man asks me, "Just where exactly is your mother?"

I replied, "Oh, let's go just a bit further." So, we walked a little bit further. And then another little bit until we had gone a full three kilometers.

When we reached the outskirts of the village, and my escort says, "Turn around!"

I replied, "Go back if you have to—I personally am not going back."

So he ran off to report that I'd escaped. I went straight through the forest to my grandfather's house and told him what had happened, how they had taken everything away from us, torn our lock off, written down everything we had in the house. Since there was obviously no reason to return to the house, I made my way to the neighboring village of Rokytna where my uncle, my mother's brother, worked on the railroad as an assistant station master. He bought me a ticket with his own money, and so I traveled from there to Smila, since no one knew there that I'd been dekulakized. So I established myself there, working for a while also in Cherkasy, until I came to the realization that I hadn't really fled far enough away from my village. So, I got a little money together and went to Donbas, where I had a brother waiting for me, who had fled earlier. This is how they dekulakized us, banished my father, and scattered the whole family in all directions. We managed to save ourselves by going to Donbas just as the Famine was getting under way. We survived conditions that weren't the worst, because in the worst conditions, people were dying of hunger under the Soviets.

Q: Where were you during the Famine?

A: During the Famine I returned from Donbas and settled in a town two stations, or some 25 kilometers, distant from the village where I was dekulakized. I went there because my other uncle, my mother's brother, had a job working on the railroad. I was hired there also to take charge of the records. I kept track of how many hours people worked, how much money they earned. I worked there for a few years, until the NKVD discovered me there. They took me and gave me a ten-year sentence. For what? For having gotten into the union, just for having gotten into the union. And how did I manage to get in? Under the Soviet government, if you don't have a labor union booklet, you don't have the right to work anywhere. You simply cannot get work. I had to get my hands on this booklet. And that's why I joined the union, although I really didn't have the right to, since I had been deprived of all of my rights. For this offense, they gave me a

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<sup>†</sup> Communist Youth League.

ten-year prison sentence, and 72 hours to get ready. So, I cleared out of there and made my way back to Donbas.

Q: Where did this happen?

A: Near Bila Tserkva.

Q: Do you wish to give the name of the village?

A: I can give you the name. I was working in Sukholisy. It was Sukholisy.

Q: And what district was this in?

A: This was in Rokytiens'kyi district.

Q: So, you never actually witnessed collectivization as such?

A: Yes, I did. They began to collectivize in 1929. My father was arrested in 1930, and I witnessed collectivization in 1929. I can tell you all about collectivization from beginning to end. They used to send us school children from house to house, to make a list of the agricultural implements people owned—who had a plough; who had a harrow; who had a shredder; who had a cow, a horse; what kind of a house it was; was there a cattle-shed; was there a store house—everything was written down from top to bottom. They did this so that no one could hide anything from them. When my uncle asked me why I was writing all these things down, I pulled out instructions stating that the head of the village soviet wanted to know what was lacking in the village so that that item would be supplied as quickly as possible to facilitate effective farming. If you didn't have a plough, they'd give you a new one next year. People willingly gave this information for us to record. In the early Spring of 1929, the members of the *komnezam* (Committee of Non-Wealthy Peasants), with these lists in hand, went from house to house collecting all the ploughs, all the harrows and all the horses, and they took all of it to the collective farm. Shortly thereafter a protest broke out. The women went to the collective farm and began reclaiming their belongings. One woman grabs her plough; the other her horse; a third, her cow. It was just terrible, what was going on. But the Soviets were in power. The army came and chased all of these women away, and all of the confiscated items, agricultural implements and horses, once again became part of the collective farm. The people were told they had to join the collective farm and work. The time a person worked would be recorded in the following way: He would be paid for every day he worked in units called "workdays"<sup>†</sup> and would receive his wages at the end of the year. This was forced collectivization.

Q: Were there agitators who came to the village?

A: Let me tell you about the groundwork that paved the way for collectivization. In 1929, my aunt, my father's sister, the one who had sold her own brother for the price of a promotion, received instructions from district headquarters to organize a commune. Listen very carefully to the kind of commune this was and to what its purpose was. They took the very best land, an area of 40 *desiatynas* located right next to the village. They took land close by so that it would not be necessary to travel very far, since some plots lay as far as seven kilometers from the village. But this land was right at the edge of the village. Actually, it was 41 *desiatynas*, which is about 41 hectares. So they brought together good, hard working people, like my father who had horses and all the agricultural implements, who worked their own land, as well as the land of others, taking half of what they produced for themselves. There were seven such men whose households, taken together, contained a total of

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<sup>†</sup>*Trudodni.*



41 *desiatynas*. It was their land that went into the 41 *desiatynas* set aside for the commune. The men were told, "Go and work this land. Do whatever you like! Plant whatever you want! You've got your own agronomist. Whatever you produce is yours to keep. If you want, you can sell your surplus at the market. There was an ambassador from the Soviet Union to Switzerland, who while stationed in Switzerland, purchased—that is, the Soviet Union purchased—a threshing machine and a chaff-cutter, something that cuts and hauls bales of hay. The ambassador sent this machinery to the commune saying, "This is a present for you. Go farm the soil!" And we did. This was still in 1922. We worked the land and divided the harvest into *kopy*—hocks of 60 sheaves—which were divided evenly among the workers according to the number of persons in their household. It was a joint effort. The sheaves were driven to the first household, then to the second, and so on, until all seven got their fair share. Proportionately, we had twice as large a harvest on those 41 *desiatynas* than the rest of the villagers had on their plots. So why was all this done in the first place? To show what the word "commune" meant, and to prove that anyone could be as well off as the seven farmers if they joined the commune. Well, these seven were relatively easy to organize. But, if you wanted seven more, you would have to go a bit further out; and if you want still another seven after that, well, you would have to go out quite a good distance. In fact you would have to drive out a full eight kilometers before you got to your land. And the land that far out was not nearly as good as the land here. All this was quite obvious to anyone who was smart, who was aware of what was going on and what the whole reason behind it was. But some of the people thought, "Well, a commune..." But a lot of other people strongly disliked those who had taken part in the commune, and called them Communists. Our parents ... Communists?! Some people even hated my parents. The men would call us names on sight. The Communist regime at that time was not particularly powerful, but it was very cagey. A few years later another commune was organized, just like the first one, except that this one really was a commune. It was an example of what was called Cooperative Farming of the Land<sup>†</sup> or SOZ. They actually organized a SOZ. I believe there were 12 members in this commune, all of them good people. And they gave them a different plot of land to demonstrate that the system worked equally well with this combination of people as well. They also designated a special tract of land, 60 *desiatynas* to be leased. This land was to be held in reserve. If a stranger new to the village needed land, he would be leased part of this land, so that no land had to be taken away from its owners. This SOZ set to working the land it was given. Their harvest was even better than that of the original commune. But all of this occurred only between the years 1922 to 1929. In 1929 everyone was forced to join the collective farm. People were forced, because no one wanted to go voluntarily. Aside from the seven farmers that had made up the first commune organized by my aunt and the members of the SOZ, which had constituted a total of 12 households, no one else wanted to join. Because she knew what they had to look forward to. And since they couldn't be persuaded to join, they would just have to be forced into collectivization. This was true not only in our village, but all over Ukraine, as well.

Q: Would you care to give the name of the village where this commune was organized?

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<sup>†</sup> *Spil'na obrobka zemli.*

**A:** The commune – this was organized in the village of Vil'shanka.

**Q:** That's familiar.

**A:** You know it? This was one commune. Elsewhere in the same district there was another one, in Nastezhka. These were the only two communes in the entire district. Out of 11 villages, there were only two such communes. At Vil'shanka and at Nastezhka.

**Q:** And when everyone was being forced into the collective farms, were there agitators who came to your village, say, from Kharkiv or from the region?

**A:** When they had forced everyone into the collective, then the so-called Twenty-Five Thousanders arrived. They sent 25,000 Russians throughout Ukraine, to almost every single collective farm. The Twenty-Five Thousander was a propagandist-agitator. His job was to convince the peasants how wonderful life was under the Soviets. But, who listened? No one. This liar made his way from one end of the village to the other. No one wanted anything to do with him. Everyone knew what was going on. Why should someone try to convince me of something I can't see for myself. If I can see something for myself, no one has to tell me about it. His name was Niziaev.

**Q:** Well, why not? It was a fact, wasn't it?

**A:** Sure, it's a fact. But, with a name like Niziaev, it's obvious that this fellow was a Russian.

**Q:** And that means that these agitators were not well received?

**A:** Well, they weren't accepted at all. I don't know where for sure, but I do know that in some places, these people were actually beaten up. These Twenty-Five Thousanders were all Russians.

**Q:** So that's how they were regarded.

**A:** Yes, indeed, that's how they were regarded.

**Q:** Was the militia close by?

**A:** There was a militia at the district level, but not at the village level. In case of any kind of insurrection the district would send in the militiamen. The NKVD controlled the railroads, while at the village and district it was the militia. But the militia was mainly occupied with catching bandits and thieves. For anything of a Party nature, no militia was necessary. They went after you, took you, and that was that.

**Q:** The rebellion you mentioned, didn't it occur in Vil'shanky?

**A:** You're referring to the SVU? Oh, you mean the women's riots.<sup>†</sup> These occurred not only in Vil'shanka, but also in our village. There were two villages out of 11 that had communes. In the village of Nastezhka there was even bloodshed. The militia beat up several men and women. In our village, the militia merely dispersed the people; there were no casualties.

**Q:** Was the power of the GPU evident at the village level? Did representatives of the secret police ever come to the village?

**A:** No, neither to the village nor to the railroad station. There was nothing for them to do there. Although I can't say for certain, rumor has it that the NKVD was present in larger cities like Kiev and Bila Tserkva. Since I never had the occasion to go there, I can't confirm whether these rumors were true or false. I can only speak of what I experienced first hand. I will not speak of that which I didn't

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<sup>†</sup>*Babs'ki bunty.*

witness myself. I'm sure there are others who can tell you more about the GPU and the NKVD.

**Q:** Did any of you manage to avoid joining the collective farm, or, did everyone go?

**A:** Some resisted joining the collective farm. But when the time came, they were all sent either to Solovky or to Siberia. You could either join the collective farm or go to Siberia. There's a matter of political importance that we've omitted. After the organization of the commune, in about 1924, the district issued a directive informing us that you could get twice as much land as you had in Ukraine if you went to Tashkent in Central Asia. This was virgin soil. Do you remember when Khrushchev broke the virgin soil? They were sending whoever wanted to go. "Here you've only got your five hectares, your five *desiatynas*. There you can have ten *desiatynas* of land to settle and cultivate, unlike Ukraine, where they have overpopulated the land." The *Komsomol* members who are sent there have their instructions. "For whatever reasons you were sent there, and regardless of what you happen to see there, you will say only what we tell you to say." An attempt was made to encourage groups of competent farmers and good workers to settle and work in Central Asia. But it was still under the system of collectivization, which you couldn't escape even by going to Central Asia. Well, what was the main goal they hoped to achieve with this project? It was to take Ukrainians out of their native land, resettle them in Tashkent in Central Asia. I don't think I have to tell you who will take their places in Ukraine.

Well, they sent a family out there by the name of Khodak. One of the Khodaks was my first cousin, older than me by five or six years. When he returned from Central Asia he paid me a visit as a close relative. He didn't mention if there were things he was not supposed to say, but he let everyone know the plain truth. He wasn't stupid. He said, "There is land out there, that's true. There are tall grasses growing and the rains are normal." He had lived there for almost six months to find out the whole story. But he said, "Just a few inches below ground you find sand. If the topsoil is disturbed during plowing the sand rises to the surface; during the dry seasons the sand is blown everywhere by strong winds. There is nothing left, but sand, and what can you do with sand?" No one from our area signed up for that program, and no one went, until Khrushchev came to power. It was he who sent enormous tractors out there, with the intention of planting a major crop there. But, the winds came along and carried everything away, proving that you can't settle people there. It was all part of the government's trick to settle the land out there.

**Q:** Was this still in 1924?

**A:** Yes, it was. But the trick failed. No one went there.

**Q:** These tricks seem to have gone on without interruption.

**A:** They have and still are. But you can't be a witness to all of it.

**Q:** What kind of a school did you have?

**A:** In our village we had a four-year school. During the Revolution, my brother couldn't attend school, because the schools were shut down. There was a war going on, then a revolution, one thing after another. I was six years old, still too young by one year to be officially admitted, but I went to school anyway. My brother and sister attended different classes. The three of us completed all four years. My sister stayed at home after completing the fourth year, while my brother and I attended the seven-year school in Rokytna.

**Q:** Did you have good teachers?

**A:** The teachers were genuine Ukrainian patriots. I can't recall a single one who was a Communist. They were all Ukrainian patriots. They knew very well what was going on in the country.

**Q:** So the teachers were well-liked?

**A:** The priests and the teachers were revered without exception by the peasants.

**Q:** How long did the church exist in your village?

**A:** Our church continued to exist until the beginning of collectivization. One night, at that time, members of the Young Communist League were ordered by the village soviet to destroy the entire church interior. They tore down the iconostasis, pulled down the chandelier, and converted the church into a storehouse for grain.

**Q:** They did this at night, so that no one would see what they were doing?

**A:** If they did this during the day people would see and talk about it. But at night, even if someone bashed you over the head you wouldn't be able to tell who it was. So, the churches were sacked, not just in our village, but all over Ukraine. After the church was destroyed during that one night, I left to join my brother in Donbas. In Donbas, however, the very same thing was happening. During the destruction of the churches in Ukraine that I just mentioned—I think it was in 1929—in accordance with directives from either district headquarters or the village soviet, a group of Party activists got together at night to vandalize the church. As I said, they knocked the lock off the church door, entered the church and began destroying it, as I told you. They destroyed the iconostasis and tore down the chandelier. There was one particular activist among them by the name of Kanars'kyi. He donned the priest's vestments, took hold of the chandelier and started clowning around in the church, stomping all over the iconostasis. Well, I can't say how it happened, whether or not it was God's will or the work of some organization or individual, but in the morning they found his body in a ditch about half a kilometer from the church. No one knew who killed him. The whole affair was covered up.

Another incident which happened in our village concerned the secretary of the village soviet, who was in the habit of always exaggerating the facts in the documents of well-to-do peasants. If someone asked him, "Give me an affidavit so that I can get a passport—actually, at that time there were no passports yet—then he would most certainly write something so damning in the affidavit or certificate that it could not be shown to anyone. He would invariably use such expressions as, "very wealthy," "kulak," "kulak supporter." He just had to put them in. And, just as with the other fellow, one night, as the villagers were walking back home after a meeting of the village soviet, they found him dead on the road. And who killed him, no one knew. And that's about all that happened of this nature in our village.

**Q:** Thank you. But, already after collectivization and the Famine, such incidents...

**A:** This happened after collectivization.

**Q:** But, after the Famine, such incidents...

**A:** After the Famine, I can't tell you about what happened, because I was no longer there. I was already roaming around either in Donbas or Kiev, so that I was no longer home. And what went on there afterwards, I don't know.

**Q:** What happened to the priest?

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**A:** With the priest? I don't really know, but I do know he disappeared. He didn't go of his own free will to Donbas or anywhere else. He was forcibly taken away.

**Q:** Was service said in Ukrainian or in Church Slavonic?

**A:** In Church Slavonic. In Church Slavonic. In our village the Ukrainian Orthodox Church began functioning after the Revolution, in 1918 and 1919, when everyone believed that Ukraine was to be independent. That's when they began saying the liturgy in Ukrainian. Until then, it was said in Church Slavonic.

**Q:** Was the priest in your village Ukrainian?

**A:** We had several priests in the village and all of them were Ukrainian. There was one Romanov, who had a Russian surname, but he was really a Ukrainian, and a sincere Ukrainian at that.

**Q:** So they were indeed patriots, not just people who were grieving for the loss of the Tsar?

**A:** No. No. They were Ukrainian patriots. No one grieved for the Tsar.

**Q:** Were there any people who were sincere atheists, enemies of the Church?

**A:** There were. In every village there were members of the Communist Youth League who carried out widespread agitation against religion. Every week they received detailed instructions—what to do, where to do it, and how to do it. And the instructions all had to do with destroying religion. This was the greatest struggle. It's very difficult to convince people who have always believed in God not to do so. Well, how can this be done? No matter how many times a person is brainwashed he will continue to believe in God.

**Q:** In your village was there a very sharp distinction between the Communists, members of the Communist Youth League, and the rest of the villagers?

**A:** Yes, the difference between the Communists and the *Komsomol* members was one of age.

**Q:** No, I mean, the difference between these two groups and the villagers. Did they have anything to do with each other?

**A:** No, they generally didn't have anything to do with one another, although they did, of course, have their run-ins. A non-Party member would come up to a communist and say something like, "So, now you're putting on airs, just because you're a communist." Oh, the people didn't like the communists very much at all, and began to fear them only in the 1930s, after collectivization. A whisper against the communist government and you disappeared.

**Q:** Were people able to speak out against the communist government before this?

**A:** Yes, they were able to.

**Q:** What were the conditions in Donbas the first time you went there?

**A:** In Ukraine both before and during the Famine a civil servant got 200 grams. How can you possibly understand what 200 grams of bread a day means? I had a ration card, but the card was only good for getting bread. The problem was to get something else, like some sugar, a piece of meat or some butter. In Donbas only those who worked below ground got one kilogram of bread a day. Whoever worked above ground got only 400 grams of bread. I, for example, worked the whole time in offices at the mines. I was an accountant or records keeper, this or that. They kept transferring me from one place to another. I received 400 grams of bread. Since I also got 150 karbovantsi a month I was always able to buy myself a

kilogram of bread every day at the market. Miners didn't get that much a month. They got perhaps 80, or 90 karbovantsi, which in general was not enough. Such a person would have to sell some of his bread for money. I, who had the money but no bread, would buy it from him. An interesting thing happened to me once. I walked up to a man selling bread and asked him if he had any bread. He answered, "Yes, I do." As he turned to face me I recognized him as the same member of the Communist Youth League who had dekulakized me. And I said to him, "Why did you come here?"

He answered, "Only for the money."

I asked, "Are you selling bread?"

He answered, "Yes, I am."

And I said, "Well, I'm buying."

"Why are you buying?" he asked. "Because I'm working in the administration, and you—you're just a member of the *Komsomol*."

Q: This was the same man, who...

A: The same one who was in my house when I returned home to find the lock torn off. There he sat, making a list of all my possessions, appraising the painting and the clock.

Q: He couldn't do you any more dirt?

A: He couldn't because they were not hunting down *kulaks* in the Donbas. As a matter of fact, they lured *kulaks* to the Donbas, so that they would work there. But not all *kulaks* went underground. I, for example, was a *kulak*, but I worked above ground the entire time.

Q: But there was something about the Donbas which you obviously didn't like.

A: I was being drawn back to Ukraine. Why? Because Donbas is Donbas. It's also Ukraine, of course, but the real Ukraine is where nature is bountiful and that's in the area where I lived—Smila, Bila Tserkva, Korsiv, Bohuslav. For me these parts are the dearest and most beautiful in the world. But in Donbas you have the wilderness, the coal, and the wide steppe, and that's all. Perhaps the Cossacks, who were accustomed to the steppe preferred to live there. As for me, I wanted to return the entire time I was there.

Q: Can we now turn to the topic of the Famine?

A: The topic of the Famine. Yes, I can tell you about it. The Famine began in the Fall of 1932. This was still in 1932, but after forced collectivization, when people still had something to eat from their home gardens. They might have planted some rye, a bit of barley, or some other crop. There was in general enough food to survive the Winter. An order came from the regional headquarters to levy a ton of grain on the villagers, and people had to come up with it! Where you got it was your business, not theirs. Well, these *komnezams*,<sup>†</sup> *Komsomol* members, and Party members organized so-called "Committees for Pumping Out Grain", and they went ahead and did it. There were a lot of fellows who would take a sack of grain and bury it behind their houses. They knew full well that the *komnezam* members would come around to confiscate the grain, because this is what they were doing elsewhere. So he buried it. The *komnezam* members would come by with their long pikes and probe soft earth where something might possibly be buried. They

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<sup>†</sup>Committees of Non-Wealthy Peasants.

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even found bread that had been buried and took absolutely everything. They cleaned out the storehouses, left nothing.

And why? It was necessary to create an artificial famine. If you take a bird or an animal you can only train him through the use of hunger. Similarly, the authorities used hunger as a tool to force people to enter collective farms. Because a lot of people did not want to join the collective farms, not even in 1934, nor in 1932. So how do you get people to join? Through force! They took away all the grain, and then set up a common kitchen. If you worked on the collective farm you got dinner, even breakfast and lunch at the common kitchen. But if you didn't go to the collective farm, then you didn't get anything to eat because they'd already taken everything.

Some of the Party members bent the rules a bit. They wanted to make things even better and took absolutely and literally everything. Moscow refused to allow a contribution to that common kitchen, saying "You still have bread! You wrote in your own reports that you've been discovering grain hidden behind the house with your special pikes. So obviously, you still have bread. You'll survive." And they wouldn't give anything out. And in the meantime, there were entire warehouses filled with grain next to the railroad station. The grain was destined to be shipped to Moscow. The militia kept close watch over the stored grain but would not give the people any. Then the people began dying of hunger. First they would swell up; then they began falling like flies. Moscow then issued the directive to make commercial bread available, but only in large cities, not in villages. One kilogram of bread, or two pounds, cost one karbovanets'. You were allowed to go to the store and buy this one kilogram of bread, but no more, just one kilogram. There were lines a kilometer long, one-and-a-half kilometer long in front of every store to get that bread. And it was like this: You gave your karbovanets', but you didn't get your loaf. You got it only a few hours later, and sometimes there was no bread left. You continued to wait in line the entire day and night, into the next day. You waited until your turn came up to buy the loaf. And people would stand in line for over two or three days. Some would collapse and die while waiting in line. I saw this with my own eyes in Kiev. And the same thing happened in Bila Tserkva. Kiev and Bila Tserkva had these stores but not the villages. And this is the way the Famine was created artificially to force people to join the collective farms. But our Ukrainian communists ingratiated themselves with Moscow to such an extent, and bent the rules to such an extent, that people began dropping like flies from hunger.

I saw all of this with my very own eyes. I was working at the time in Sukholisy and lived in a kind of post office between Sukholisy and Rokytna. Nights, my mother would steal off to the collective farm fields to dig up the potatoes she had planted. She made soup from the potatoes and, thus, survived the Famine. Walking along the railroad tracks every morning on the way to work, I would come upon two or three corpses daily, but I would step over them and continue walking. The Famine had robbed me of my conscience, human soul and feelings. Stepping over the corpses, I felt absolutely nothing, as if I were stepping over logs. Hunger turns a human being into an animal. There were instances in which human bones would be found in mounds of earth where someone had cut all the flesh cleanly from the bone, cooked and eaten it. I saw bones like these at one planting site. At the marketplace in Kiev I didn't actually see people eating people. But I was told if you ate a meat pie purchased at the market you could come across a human finger

in it. I hadn't personally seen it, but was told from reliable sources—the entire village knew about it—how one man butchered his two children and ate them, then killed his wife, and hanged himself. Those kinds of things did occur. And all of this was created artificially! My mother had distended feet which were already starting to swell. But I was lucky, because I had gotten this other job with a superintendent, where I was given a bit more to eat, and thus survived. Otherwise, my mother and I would have died in the Famine.

**Q:** How did others survive?

**A:** Other people? Those that worked at strenuous jobs got up to 800 grams of bread a day. That was just enough to survive. But the person that didn't have a job or that only had light work, got only 200 grams, and a person like that would eventually be reduced to eating dried bark and pulling reeds out from the mud. People ate everything, including frogs, a delicacy in France, but definitely not so in Ukraine. People ate rats; they ate hedgehogs; they ate everything that could possibly be eaten to save their own lives.

Somewhere south of the village of Vil'shanka, near Shevchenko's birthplace, near Kyrylivka, was the village of Medved'. It was far away from the railroad and from any large cities. Bohuslav and Tarashcha were equidistant in opposite directions and the village of Medved' was situated between these two cities. These three large towns—Bohuslav, Tarashcha, and Myronivka—were some 20 kilometers away from the village. It was virtually cut off from the rest of the world. The people in this village began to die like flies. The communists from the village soviet would make the rounds every morning to remove the dead bodies for burial. Later, they stopped bothering to bury the bodies, and just drove them straight out to the cemetery and dumped them in a heap. And then they themselves died in the cemetery. Not one single person was left alive in the village. A passer-by, seeing this, made a large cross out of planks and planted it in the middle of the village, Medved', in the district of Bohuslav, where neither a dog, cat, nor human being remained.

**Q:** Did people say there was also a famine in Russia at the time?

**A:** Ah, when people discovered there was no famine in Russia, whoever was able traveled to Moscow to buy Ukrainian bread there. So do you think if a person were to return from Moscow with two loaves of bread he wouldn't tell his neighbors that this was Ukrainian bread that he bought in Moscow? Why, everyone knew who was responsible for what was happening. It all stemmed from the fact that no one wanted to join the collective farms. The Famine was designed to force people to do so, and they were handing out soup out on the collective farms in the beginning. But then Moscow forbade even this.

**Q:** Did the peasants make their way to Ukrainian cities to exchange their belongings for food or to beg for food?

**A:** What was there to exchange if no one had anything, anyway? You could take some of your finery to exchange, say, your sheepskin coat, but then well, everyone already had their own sheepskin coats. You would get yourself one sheepskin coat for life. You could go with your belongings to the village, but there was no bread there anyway. No one could give you even the smallest piece of bread for your sheepskin coat because no one had any to give. You certainly couldn't go across the Zbruch River to Poland to trade, or to Rumania, you could only do this in your own locality. But in your own locality no one had anything because it literally had



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all been taken away. The sole exception was the Russians. But if you were to go to Russia, you would not find anything there either, because no one there would give you anything. In the cities, you could only buy a piece of bread with money.

**Q:** Were you ever in Kiev during the Famine?

**A:** No, I was only near Kiev. During the Famine I was in the following places: the Donbas, then Sukholisy. In Sukholisy, I lived through the major part of the Famine.

**Q:** When did you see those lines in Kiev?

**A:** I traveled to Kiev for bread, when they opened up the commercial stores, as they were called, where you could get a kilogram of bread per head. So I used to go to Kiev for the bread, and I would stand in line and look at the dead bodies. And at that time, I was still getting a larger ration than almost anyone else, since I was working for the superintendent. And because of this I was physically able to endure standing in line for those several days. But those other people, who were already nothing but skin and bones also stood in line. Well, there were even instances when someone on the verge of starvation would get a loaf of bread, walk off, eat it, and die, because by this time all of his intestines would have shriveled up; once he started to eat an entire loaf of bread the size of an ingot he would gulp it all down quickly and die of intestinal cramps.

**Q:** From your observations, who was better able to survive the Famine, the young or the old?

**A:** For some reason women were better able to survive than the men, while age itself had no meaning. Whoever was somehow able to escape the predicament, survived. Whoever had the slightest inclination to work, found a way of earning a piece of bread. Perhaps he was even able to go into the forest to do some digging, or tear some bark from a tree, cook it and eat it. But there were people who just folded their hands and waited for death. Most of those who died were ones who lived off others, that is, *komezam* members. These died in greater numbers than the *kulaks*. Oh, yes! The *Komsomol* member who happened to see me in Donbas said to me, "A *kulak* never dies!"

**Q:** Did people think at this time that the Famine was exclusively the result of...?

**A:** ...forced membership in the collective farms? Yes, everyone was aware of that.

**Q:** Did the people also think about the national aspects of the Famine?

**A:** Well, I'll tell you—when a person is starving, he loses all feelings, not only nationalistic but also human. You're walking along, and happen to step over a human body, and it doesn't even enter into your head that the person is dying! He's still breathing, but you have absolutely no feeling for him. And so, what kind of talk can there possibly be about national feelings? He's starving! He has only one thought: Where can he get something to tide him over to the next day? Weapons?! An insurrection?! Forget it! Where would you get the weapons? Who would you fight? Would you kill Stalin from your own village—the man who was responsible for all this? And you won't get near Moscow carrying a rifle. The police? There's no police. What's the purpose of having them around? Only for the purpose of collecting the corpses and transporting them to cemeteries, that's all.

**Q:** How long did things go on this way?

**A:** The most critical period was from 1932 to the Spring of 1933. By the Spring of 1933, you were already able to buy the commercial bread people realized that

they would be able to survive by planting potatoes. When bushes appeared over where the potatoes were sown, people knew that tiny potatoes were ready to be eaten. That's when people began to survive. After the potatoes came the tomatoes and the cucumbers. All of this was planted on any spare patch of earth around the houses. This meant that those in the towns who didn't have gardens continued dying even after life for the villager improved.

**Q:** How did the passport system work?

**A:** The passport system was introduced toward the end of 1932. I was in Sukholisy at the time. Passports weren't needed in the villages. They were mainly needed in the cities. Why were passports introduced? To control people, to tell them where they were allowed to go, where they were allowed to work. For this you were given a passport. But when you went to sign up for permission to live or work where you wanted to, you'd be told that no apartment was available, or that there was no more space available in an apartment, or you'd be asked if you already had a job there. The passport was used to push you where they needed you; but there was never any room where you wanted to go. The passport system was also introduced in the railways, where I worked the entire time. I processed the passports myself, even though I was, a so-called "enemy of the people." I would personally go to the administrative headquarters in Sukholisy to collect documents about a particular individual who was seeking work on the railroad. I would then go to the NKVD, to fill out the passports there myself with my own hand, and then all my superiors would do was review what I had done, stamp the documents, and sign them. I would then give the passport to the person, after which he would start working on the railroad. But, if this person wanted to work in another village or a different railroad station, he would have to go there with a special request and he would be told that there was no work for him there, which meant he would have to go back to his old place of work. In other words, the passport system was introduced to force people to work wherever the government wanted them to work, and not wherever they wanted to.

**Q:** Were you ever able to obtain a passport for a dekulakized person? Was this an impossibility?

**A:** Yes, this was indeed possible, and people did do it.

**Q:** Did you live in fear that someone might inform on you?

**A:** Every second of the day. I constantly kept looking over my shoulder to see whether an NKVD agent was following me. You know, sometimes you might have an argument with your wife, your very own wife, and you'll just pick up and leave the house for a while for some peace and quiet. Well, you come back home, and you have no way of knowing whether or not the NKVD was waiting for you there. There was always a lingering thought that in the heat of anger my wife would say something. The situation was such that brother was afraid of brother, son was afraid of father. And it did happen that one brother would turn another brother in, the way my aunt turned my father in to improve her status with the Party. If you wanted to be superior to someone, you had to step on his head to achieve your goal. If you wanted to be given privileges by the Communist Party, you had to somehow earn its trust. You could do this if you betrayed someone from your own immediate family, either your father, or your brother.

**Q:** Who was it that finally informed on you in 1934?

## Appendix I

**A:** I was in Sukholisy at the time working as a timekeeper on the railroad. The former head of the collective farm from our village was passing through Sukholisy and caught a glimpse of me standing on the platform, dressed in my railway uniform. He jumped off the train and inquired who I was. Someone told him it was Oleksander Honcharenko and that I was working on the railroad. After learning the name of my supervisor, he got back on the train, stopped off at Fastov and reported me to the NKVD there. The next day, the NKVD came and took me away and I was sent to Solovky. The name of the former head of our collective farm was Tkalich. At the time he turned me in he was already a district administrator and a good communist.

**Q:** What can you say about the role played by non-Ukrainians in the Party, in the police, or local government? You already mentioned the Twenty-Five Thousanders? Were there other outsiders?

**A:** Well, I don't really know what was happening at the district level. All we ever got from the district headquarters were directives on what to do and how to do it. The directives were sent either to the head of the village soviet or the head of the collective farm to be used as a basis for any demands made on the villagers. For example, they would demand to know, "What have you been doing?" Your reply was, "Why have you decided to pick on me?" Their answer would then be, "I have a directive from district headquarters." For example, they give you a meat quota of eight *poods* of meat to be met within a year. So, you take your calf, which might be worth eight *poods* of meat, to the slaughterhouse toward the fulfillment of this quota. But, then another quota comes in: Four more *poods* of meat. So you go up to them and say, "Listen, I just turned in eight *poods* of meat in accordance with your orders. Why do I have give more?" They would reply, that it was a directive from district headquarters. I had to obey the directive. The directive came from district headquarters where there were both Russian and Ukrainian communists. But who actually issued the directives I can't say.

**Q:** Let's take someone like yourself. You might have been a civil servant, you might have been young, but you had already seen something of the world. Were you interested in politics; in what was going on in Kharkiv and Moscow?

**A:** I was interested in one thing only—surviving and keeping myself hidden. That's what interested me. I never really had strong nationalistic feelings until the Second World War came along. But I loved my Cossack heritage and its traditions. I loved all of that. But I never had the inclination to follow today's battle cry, "Beat them! Hack them! Free our brothers!" Well, for me to go and hack someone, you know, I didn't have any of that in me. Under the circumstances there was no real alternative but to watch out for your own skin. To keep out of sight so that they wouldn't arrest you, or deport you, or send you to where your father perished.

**Q:** In my opinion, it was their specific policy to drive people to such a state that...

**A:** During their 300-year occupation in Ukraine, they succeeded doing what they set out to do. Nothing out of the ordinary in that. I don't hide the fact that I kept silent.

**Q:** Do you wish to add anything to this?

**A:** I don't think so. I've told you everything that would interest you.

**Q:** Well, there is one more thing I would like to ask: Did you, I mean both you and your family, become interested in the *bandura* back home or in emigration?

A: Well, we had contact with this instrument from 1922. It began after the Revolution, when Ukrainians felt that Ukraine was a free country. They either wanted desperately to believe this, or they were fooled, or whatever. And it was only at this time that *bandura* players emerged from underground. They had been banned from playing under the Tsar, and then they emerged and began to remind everyone openly about their Cossack past and to awaken feelings of nationalism in young children. A *bandurist* would go about the schools, playing a song like *Morozenko*, as well as some light-hearted songs. Once, it was in 1922, in the village of Ol'shanytsia, he walked into our classroom, played several songs and then explained what kind of an instrument the *bandura* was, where it had come from, how long it had been in existence, and how it had been a pleasant diversion in the Cossack encampments of the past.

We became quite interested in the *bandura* for its beautiful, pleasant sound and its fine timber. Afterwards, when we came home, the first thing we set out to do was make our own *banduras*. Of course, we lacked the technical know-how of professional makers of musical instruments. You just went ahead and found a pine log and started to work the wood with your knife. We made a few wooden forms for stretching the strings, set in the pegs and nails for attaching the strings, and tuned the strings according to the scale "*do, re, mi, fa, so, la...*" and began to play. We learned to play a few songs on our crudely-fashioned *banduras* and then asked my father, who was an excellent carpenter, to make us real ones. And he made us a *bandura*, then another one. We were so taken with the *bandura* that we always had one with us. When we emigrated, we left the *banduras* behind. During dekulakization, they had thrown one of our *banduras* away, having set its value at five karbovantsi. Later when we came to American-occupied territory, at the very first opportunity we went to a lumberyard, got some wood, and began making *banduras*. We made the first *banduras* in Ulm and began to play them there. Then the *Bandurist* Choir, "Kapelia Banduristiv," heard about us—our singing and playing had been written up in the press. They sent the administrator, Chernenko, to see us and he took us to Ingolstadt, and in this way we joined the *Bandurist* Choir.

Q: And what do you know about the persecution of the *bandurists*?

A: I think you can find out much more about that in literature.

Q: Well, yes, but do you know of any specific incidents?

A: No. I only know that many people loved the *bandura* in Ukraine, but no one actually made *banduras*. If you wanted to play, you had to make your own *bandura*. There were neither factories nor plants nor any handicraft industries of any kind. And none were being sold. If you wanted a *bandura* you had to make one yourself. But who knew how? Not everyone is capable of making a *bandura*. Because of all this, there were very few of them around. Furthermore, I know from reading literature that Tsarist Russia prohibited the instrument, because the *bandura* had the power to awaken nationalistic feelings among Ukrainians and illuminate the heroic battles of our Cossack ancestors against the Russians. I read about this, but was not an actual witness.

Q: I want to thank you very sincerely for your testimony.

A: You're very welcome.

During the destruction of the churches in Ukraine—I think it was in 1929—in accordance with directives from either district headquarters or the village soviet, a group of Party activists got together at night to vandalize the church. They knocked

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the lock off the church door, entered the church and began destroying it, as I told you. They destroyed the iconostasis and tore down the chandelier. There was one particular activist among them by the name of Kanars'kyi. He donned the priest's vestments, took hold of the chandelier and started clowning around in the church, stomping all over the iconostasis. Well, I can't say how it happened, whether or not it was the will of God, or whether it was the work of some organization or individual, but in the morning they found his body in a ditch about half a kilometer from the church. No one knew who killed him. The entire affair was covered up. Another incident which happened in our village concerned the secretary of the village soviet, who was in the habit of always exaggerating the facts in the documents of well-to-do peasants. If someone asked him, "Give me an affidavit so that I can get a passport<sup>†</sup> then he would most certainly write something so damning in the affidavit or certificate that it could not be shown to anyone. He would invariably use such expressions as, "very wealthy," "*kulak*," "*kulak* supporter." He just had to put them in. And, just as with the other fellow, one night, as the villagers were walking back home after a meeting of the village soviet, they found him dead on the road. And who killed him, no one knew. And that's about all that happened of this nature in our village.

Q: Thank you. But, already after collectivization and the Famine, such incidents...

A: This happened after collectivization.

Q: But, after the Famine, such incidents...

A: After the Famine, I can't tell you about what happened, because I was no longer there. I was already roaming around either in Donbas or Kiev, so that I was no longer home. And what went on there afterwards, I don't know.

Q: Thank you.

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<sup>†</sup> Actually, at that time there were no passports yet – staff insert.

## CASE HISTORY LH46

*Translated from Ukrainian by Darian Diachok*

**Question:** The witness is testifying anonymously. Please state your year of birth.

**Answer:** Nineteen twenty-three.

**Q:** Where were you born?

**A:** In the region of Dnipropetrovsk.

**Q:** What was the occupation of your parents?

**A:** My parents were peasants. They farmed.

**Q:** Do you remember how much land your father had?

**A:** No. I don't recall. I just know that there were fields, pastures, watermelons, melons, that kind of thing. But how much there was of all of this I don't recall.

**Q:** How well off were you during your childhood before collectivization?

**A:** Up to collectivization, our lives, you could say, were normal. I was quite young then, but I know that everything was fine.

**Q:** What sort of attitude did your parents have toward the Soviet Government? Let's say in the twenties, when you were quite young?

**A:** Well, when it comes to their attitudes, I can't say, since I was a child then. I just ran around and played and was not interested in such things. But I do know that my father didn't want to join the collective farm when they started organizing collective farms. Then they started imposing taxes on us. They took the cattle, horses, and cows. They taxed us more and more. They took away the cow, yet they imposed tax quotas on butter, cheese, and milk, which we didn't have anymore! And then at that point they started to dekulakize us. We used to deliver all of the levies ourselves until there was nothing left to deliver. So, they would ride in and seize whatever was left, such as grain left over from sowing. Then they began to break into our grain bins where we kept the seed. They would drive up in their horse-drawn carts, load up the carts, taking everything. After the seed, they started taking our clothes. The confiscation happened in stages. They took away all the clothes usually kept in storehouses, such as sheepskin coats, heavy drab coats, and horse-cloths. Well, they came and took away all these things. This went on interminably. One time they would announce their arrival; the next time they would descend on us like a whirlwind to terrify us into submission. Everybody was scared out of his wits; everyone shook with fear as they entered the house. The door was always thrown wide open, regardless of whether it was Winter or Summer. They walked around the house, as if they owned the place, while we stood there, trembling with fear.

I recall the time they came to take away the very last remnants of what we had. It was Winter. They took away absolutely everything in the house. They even pulled down the *zhetkas*, brackets on the walls used to hang up clothing. They took all our Winter clothes, the sheepskin coats, and cloaks, as well as other clothes. Then they started taking the clothes off our backs. I recall many memories of my childhood as if through a mist, but the particularly painful experiences, such as these have remained in my memory. I remember one night, after they took away everything we had, they came to throw us out of our house. This was in the dead of Winter. They entered the house and said, "Get out! This house is not yours! Since you failed to meet your tax quotas, we're throwing you out!"

*Appendix I*

In our family there were seven children, a grandfather and grandmother and my mother. My father was no longer with us. He was somewhere in Siberia. My mother said to them, "Well, where can I go? I have seven children. There are two old people. Where can I go with all of them in the middle of Winter? Who'll take in such a horde?!"

And they told her, "Get out! Take your children and get out!" Well, at that point, my grandfather and grandmother put their Winter coats on and walked out of the house. They knew that otherwise they would be physically thrown out of the house. They walked out into the courtyard and stood there in the snow.

And my mother told them, "I will not leave this house! I will not leave! I won't! I won't! How can I?! I'm with all these children. No one will take us in! Where can I possibly go?! At least, let us spend the Winter here. Until the Spring. Then I'll be able to see my way to some solution. Then I can find some hovel somewhere, and you can take this house."

But they just yelled, "Get out! Get out!" And then—I don't recall exactly what happened—either my mother walked out herself or else they carried her out.

Then mother started to cry, and as soon as she did, the children started wailing! Seven children. It was sheer hell. My mother was crying outside, while we children were crying inside. And then she yelled to us, "Children, don't leave the house!"

You know, in those days, we didn't have chairs such as these, but rather long benches with backplates that were built integrally into the walls. So, we all sat down on the benches, grabbed hold of them firmly and began yelling, "We're not going anywhere!" Then they took us one by one to the door and threw us out! They continued until they succeeded in throwing six of us out. But the youngest seventh child was still an infant. And at that moment she was in an old-fashioned wooden cradle which was suspended from the ceiling by a hook and supported by a cross-stitched canvas. It hung down quite low. We would rock the cradle whenever the infant began crying. So the infant, who was in the cradle just then, began to cry, and we all began to wail. They threw us all out and slammed the door. My mother began to yell, "The baby! Where's the baby?" She looked at us and said, "Where in the world is the baby?" One of the activists went and took the cradle off the hook, took it outside and placed it on the snow. Then he took a piece of rough canvas that we used to wipe our feet when entering the house, walked across the snow, and covered the baby with it. I remember this moment. It cut itself so deeply in my memory that I will never forget it.

I recall another time, before they threw us out of the house, when they came to confiscate our things. They confiscated everything from our house, all our clothes, and threw the doors open. My grandfather told my mother, "Put your sheepskin coat on and take the baby in your arms." He said this because he thought that if she covered the baby with the coat they wouldn't take it away. So, my mother wrapped both the baby and herself in the sheepskin coat. When they had completely emptied the house, they turned to her and said, "Take off that sheepskin coat!" And she said to them, "I will NOT take it off!" So he grabbed her by the collar, gave it a yank, and pulled the coat off her back! And we were left with only the clothes on our backs. This is what I remember!

So, after they had already taken everything away, they left us homeless in the snow. Who would take us in? No one, for he would then risk being thrown out himself. Well, there was a fairly poor man who lived rather far from us, but who

used to visit us often. He heard what had happened, came over to us and said, "Well, you're obviously not going to spend the night standing in the snow! Come over to our house." He took us into his small house. There was a kitchen and one other room of some kind, and we, of course, made a full house and ended up spending the night in an upright position. The next day he went to see one of his relatives who took him in, and he moved there, leaving us his house. And that's when the Famine began.

My grandmother was the first to die. She died in the Spring of 1930 or 1931. Then in the Fall my grandfather died, also from hunger. In 1933, my sister died from hunger, and then my brother, the younger one, the infant they had carried out in the snow. After him came my brother, who also starved to death. These moments have cut deeply into my memory. By this time we had already moved to another house; I don't recall which house exactly. We had to leave the other house, because they had already begun taking the thatched roof apart in the house where we were living. You see, there was nothing left to make a fire with, so people used to pull straw from the bundles of thatch, from the roofs and use it as kindling. They came at night to pull it out, eventually rendering the house we lived in completely uninhabitable. There was a vacant house that had belonged to a family that had been sent to Siberia, and we found ourselves living in their house. My mother got work at the state farm and we children were left on our own. By this time, we had absolutely nothing left to eat, and we ate whatever people managed to give us, making sure that no activists were spying on us. And we would get something here and there. Someone would come by with great stealth and bring us food. Or else one of the children would go. The adults would not go anywhere, not even to the houses. Only the children went. They would go and come back with a little flour or something, which would then be baked, cooked and eaten. On one particular occasion one of the children—it could have been the older brother or sister—brought in some beets and potatoes to make *borshch* with. By this time, we had nothing but a kettle, which some people had given us. We prepared the *borshch* and hadn't even gotten around to eating yet, when the activists came in. The activists would come almost every day to inspect the houses to make certain that not even a crumb remained! They always asked, "How are you getting your nourishment to remain alive?" Every member of the family eagerly awaited the *borshch* that had been made. Finally, there would be something to eat! Suddenly, the activists showed up and started creating havoc in the house. They began throwing things about in their eternal quest for foodstuffs to confiscate. One of them looked around and said, "I can smell *borshch*." He located the *borshch*, carried it outside and poured it into the garbage can. He even took our kettle! My mother was not home at the time, but my grandfather, who was sitting there, said to the man, "May your intestines turn inside out!" That's how the episode ended.

Another time we managed to bring some flour home one night and were baking bread. We kneaded some bread dough and placed it in the oven. As my mother pulled the bread out of the oven, saying "Let's eat one loaf now, and the other one will be for tomorrow morning and evening," the activists came and took the bread. You can't imagine how we screamed and screamed. Who knows how they knew enough to come at that instant. In short, they were deliberately starving us to death.



### *Appendix I*

It's not that they were simply taking bread away. They were taking bread away from people who were literally dying. But we still managed to get food, for there were a lot of people who helped us. There were even some who helped us although they were afraid. Sometimes they would ask us not to come to their house anymore, saying, "Listen, go along this street, cross the street and you will see some bushes. I'll leave some food there, and you can pick it up." They were afraid of the activists, you see. But, nevertheless, we managed to get by, with the help of some, if not others.

Then, grandmother and grandfather died, and mother was not home anymore—she was working somewhere. We children were left entirely on our own. Older people would actually direct us to people who had food. They would say, "Go ask the one who dekulakized you. If he refuses to give you food, say to him, 'Give us something for Christ's sake.'" And we would follow their advice. In cases when the husband wasn't home, the wife would put potatoes or whatever food she had on the table, saying, "Take what's on the table. I'm not here; you didn't see me." She would then depart, leaving us quickly to snatch whatever food there was on the table. The bigger boys went begging, and those who could spare some food shared it with them. But smaller children, who stayed at home, rarely got any food and were the first to die of hunger.

At the time when my little sister died in 1933, my mother would come home either once every week or even once every two weeks. My sister died at the beginning of the week. But we kept her body in the house until the time mother should come home and bury her. Every day the wagon drove up to our house to ask if there were any dead bodies to be collected. They would bang on our door so loudly that it would shake. Someone would yell through the door, "Any dead in your house?" We would answer, "No, there are no dead. Everyone's still alive." And that's how we managed to keep my little sister's body in our house in the other room for a whole week. When my mother finally came home, we buried her. We gave her a simple burial. There was no casket. My mother wrapped her in a strip of a rough canvas... It was early Spring. I know this, because sleighs would go around the village, and there were puddles all around—water from the melting snow already covered the roads. We placed my little sister's body on one of the sleighs. And so we buried her wrapped up in the rough canvas in a pit that served as a mass grave. The pit in the cemetery was quite large. Some people brought their dead in caskets. My mother asked that two caskets be moved apart to make room for the baby. Another casket was then placed on top. This is the way we buried her.

When my brother died, we also hid his body for a week. We boarded up the windows. Once again, they came knocking and asking, "Is everyone still alive?" And we answered, "Everyone is still alive!" I think his body lay at home for three or four days until my mother came. Someone in the village—probably an activist—told her that she should go to the village soviet to see if a coffin could be made for him. They were apparently making coffins at the collective farm. She went there, told them that a little boy such-and-such an age had died. Later they drove up with the coffin. But, it turned out that the coffin was too short for the body, for my brother was a tall boy. Well, they tried to put his body in it, but it wouldn't fit. So, they knocked out the panel, two little boards, at the foot of the coffin. They put

him into the coffin with his two feet sticking out. They drove off with him and buried him in the pit.

All sorts of things were going on at the time. A corpse would lie in weeds along the street for months until someone happened to see it and take it away. They would pick up the skeleton, throw it on top of a cart, and off they'd go. Just before the Summer of 1933 we started to swell. Our legs swelled to the size of logs, and it became very difficult to move around. By this time, there was no real incentive to move around much. A terrible fear held the village in its grip. There was once a family we used to visit us on a occasion. How welcome they used to make us feel! But then things changed completely. Once we visited their house to discover that the wife had gone mad. She started to give us a beet, saying, "Take this! Take this! Eat it! Eat it! It's a plump little thing." Her husband said, "You know, she's gone insane. Take the beet she's giving you, and just go." Before we left he added, "Children, when you go around the village visiting people, don't go in all together." You see, we used to go around in a group of three or four. He told us that only one child should go in, while the rest should wait for him outside, because terrible things were happening. He told us a number of stories of how people had eaten other people. And at that point we quickly left that village and visited other villages. And we began mixing with other people. Spring arrived. Gardens began to come up, and you could work here and there helping people with their gardens.

**Q:** Were the people who took away your grain and threw you out of your house neighbors, or outsiders?

**A:** They were both. People came from the district. But usually, the people that came from the district joined the local representatives of the village soviet, people we knew. The locals were comprised of people from the *komnezam*, the Committee of Non-Wealthy Peasants. Some of the people who went around confiscating food later died of hunger themselves. We learned this later, after we had already left the village. We heard that this or that one had died of hunger. These were the same people who had come to our house and took everything away. And this wasn't just confiscation from the storehouses, but confiscation of the smallest bag of barley you'd hide somewhere under the bed. The *komnezam* members turned everything inside out, hauled it off, and left.

**Q:** Was there any prior hostility between you and these people?

**A:** How could there not be hostility? How could there not be when they come into your house and take away the very last things you have?! What other feelings could there possibly be?

**Q:** No, I mean before that.

**A:** Oh, before that there was no hostility. It started with the grain confiscation by *komnezam* members and activists. There were women's brigades, men's brigades, and still other kinds of brigades. And then there would be the usual kind of behavior. So, why the hostility? Because they came into your house, like some sort of bandits, or God knows what. You know, it was impossible to tell what they would do to you. We'd just stand there scared out of our wits. That's how it was.

**Q:** Were they armed?

**A:** I don't know whether they were armed or not. But, you know, they'd come when there was nobody home but children and old people. And then they'd slam the doors, bash and knock things over, kicking and smashing this and that! They'd just open the doors and walk right in. And I still recall how some of them would

## Appendix I

walk around in their heavy boots and riding britches, and they'd make sharp cracking noises against their boots with their bullwhips or riding crops. They'd strut back and forth through the house, absolutely terrorizing us. What could children do? If you have nothing to defend or protect yourself with—no mother or father to turn to—then anyone can frighten you. There was no one, no one to even tell what had happened! That's being really defenseless.

**Q:** Were you already going to school then or not?

**A:** I think that I had already started school. Yes, I was already in the first or second grade, because I can recall that by then I had already learned the multiplication table. We had to know the multiplication table from 1-10, and I had it down quite well by then. But later—in 1932 and 1933—there was no school any more and I no longer went. They sent us to some kind of shelter or kindergarten, whatever they called it. And there they'd feed us once a day. They'd give us some soup and a type of bread made from hominy. And that was it. The teachers taught us games and songs. Some of the children there were so weak that they were barely able to drag themselves along. They were happy just to get a piece of crust to eat, after which they would just collapse and continue lying on the ground. But there they were required to sing. They used to drum into our heads all about our Uncle Lenin. "Uncle Lenin we dearly love and never will we forget him." That's what they taught us. And it was certainly impossible to ever forget this!

**Q:** Was this perhaps called a patronage school?

**A:** I really don't know. It was just something in our village. Later, they called them boarding schools, I think. They rounded up the homeless, neglected children and put them in the boarding schools, or they may have been kindergartens or nursery schools. Well, in a word, both the older and the younger children went there together. Whoever was able to, came. Either they were driven there, or they would walk. Almost every day, someone would die at the boarding school, and every time this happened we would think our turn was approaching. And, then we made up our minds that while our feet could still carry us, we would flee the village and find some way of getting sustenance. People would come by from Hryshena, from Lozova, from the larger towns. And they told us that in town it was possible to survive. In town you could get some kind of work and you could live somehow. Well, then we set out to seek our fate.

**Q:** And you wound up in town?

**A:** Yes. Then we found ourselves in town. And once there we managed to get by.

**Q:** When you were in school back in the village, did anyone mention the fact that your father had been a *kulak*?

**A:** I don't recall anyone mentioning anything like that ever coming up in school. I was a good pupil. I did well in school and got along very well with all of my schoolmates. We were always good to one another. I wouldn't say that there ever was any hostility among the children because of class origins.

**Q:** Even the teachers didn't persecute you?

**A:** I don't recall anything of the sort. You know, as a child, you immediately sense if someone has it in for you. No, there simply wasn't anything like that.

**Q:** Do you recall if there was a church in your village?

**A:** Oh, yes, there was. We had quite a beautiful church. I recall going to church during my childhood. One particular incident that has remained in my memory was

on Palm Sunday, when we went to church to get pussy willows. There was an air of festivity in our home. The house had to be spotless. All the children, regardless of age had to pitch in with the work. Each child was given a task to do during house-cleaning. Finally, in the evening my mother gave us the very best kerchiefs and clothes to wear, and we set off to church for pussy willows. And the church was big and very beautiful. And I recall when they took down the church bells. We lived not very far from the church, that is, the church square. I remember the night when I saw my grandmother standing outside the church, crying and praying, while we children ran around and played. I saw that something was wrong, and walking up to her, asked, "Granny, why are you crying?" And she said, "Oh, my precious little children, these people don't know what they're doing." But, "What ARE they doing?" I asked. And she said, "Can't you hear what's going on?" Then we saw that there was quite a crowd in the square. From where we were, we had a clear view of the church. And so we quickly ran down to see for ourselves. They were pulling the church bells down. A crowd of people had gathered; some were pulling on the bells. Some people were in a frenzy, while others just stood there without moving, like stone statues. And the fear that was in the air! The church had once been very beautiful in our village, but then they destroyed it; they made a club out of it. Everyone in the village would go there.

**Q:** After you had left the village, did you ever go back again for a visit?

**A:** Yes, we did. You always want to return to the village of your birth. But we used to return undetected. We would arrive late in the evening, go straight to our friends' house ... we still had some close friends there, you know. We used to go to their houses at night and leave early in the morning, so as not to be seen.

**Q:** Did your older brothers or sisters ever have trouble because of their social origins?

**A:** Oh, you mean later, in the school? Oh, yes. They certainly did. They would not accept us into the schools after the Famine was over. I had already missed so many years. We moved to the town, where at first they would not accept us at the school. Later, however, they did. In the beginning, they just told us, "We don't have any room for you. We don't have any more desks." But my mother told them, "We'll make our own desks and take them to school ourselves. Just please let the children attend school." So they finally gave us permission.

**Q:** If I may return to something you had said earlier. What was the reaction of these activists, when you asked them for food "in the name of Christ"? Do you remember their answer?

**A:** Oh, yes, I do. We used to go to one particular woman whose husband was a terribly dedicated activist. Once her husband was taking his sheepskin coat off and we saw that his own wife was positively terrified of him. And we ourselves really feared this man! We'd never go there when he was there. His wife couldn't refuse us. But she couldn't just give us something outright. She put something on the table, and walked out of the house. And she told us, "Take it and go! Say that you didn't see me!" We did as she told us. We walked into the empty kitchen, grabbed the food and took off.

**Q:** How long did your mother work at the state farm?

**A:** Oh, she worked there until we left the village for town. And there were some episodes involving my mother when she worked there. She used to get something like 200 or 300 grams of bread a day. She would eat some of this bread,

perhaps half. Each time she got the bread, she would save some of it, which she would then pass on to us whenever she could get back home. On the way home, she used to stop off at the homes of some acquaintances of hers and help them out in some way. In return they'd give her a little something, and she would add this to the food parcel she was bringing home. But, the big problem always was in eating this food before it was taken away from us. That, indeed, was the biggest problem!

Once she was awarded a special prize for her good work: A pretty, really pretty dress. Well, she came home and showed us her new dress and we made a joke that she should put it on before they came and took it away from her. But she said, "No, children. Tomorrow morning I'll go to the market and sell this dress. I'll buy some grain or flour, and we'll have enough food to last us a whole week." Well, that's what she did. Next morning, she got up and set out for the market, but the activists met her on the way because she was carrying a wrapped package under her arm that looked suspicious. "What are you carrying? What do you have there?" And she said, "I got this award at the state farm. I want to sell it, because..." They immediately accused her of speculating and took the dress away from her. She came home in tears.

**Q:** So, it was clear to you that the activists wanted you to die?

**A:** And how! That was as clear as the very light of God's own day! They would simply come and literally shake everything they could find out of our household. And then they would ask, "How is it that you are still alive? What are you living on?" One time my brother managed to get some early corn. Well, you couldn't just eat the kernels like that; you had to run home and cook them. And, of course, before you could even cook them, you had to grind them up. People ground the kernels with mortars. We didn't have a mortar in the house. Well, a man in the neighboring village made a very light one that worked with the help of an oak peg and tin metal which he beat into the mortar. Grain could not be poured into it, pounded, and processed. So, my brother was carrying the mortar back home from the neighboring village. An activist, who must have been keeping track of our movements, met him on the road and demanded to know what my brother was carrying. And my brother already knew that if the activist had been lying in wait for him, he would take the mortar away. So he started to run from him. And the activist took off after him. And my brother could see that the activist was clearly gaining on him, and that if he caught him, he would lose the mortar. My brother saw that they were coming to a bridge that crossed a stream. So he jumped on the bridge, threw the mortar into the water, and said, "The mortar's on the bottom. If I can't have it, you can't have it either!" So you can see how they tortured us with starvation. They clearly wanted even more people to die.

**Q:** Did they behave this way just toward the dekulakized or everyone?

**A:** Well, more toward the dekulakized to bring them to their knees. You see, a well-to-do peasant family would be sent to Siberia directly. Entire families were deported. Our family didn't belong to the category of those being deported. Moreover, we had too many children in our family. One person had to work at the collective farm so the other seven could eat. That was impossible. It was pure suicide for the family, to go to the collective farm. Evidently that's why they set out to starve us to death.

**Q:** How long did it take you to recover from the Famine?

*Case History LH46*

**A:** How long? Well, we could feel the effects for a long time, a very long time. I recall that we were already quite weak in 1934, when we were accepted at the school after saying we'd make our own desks. First of all, we had been through the Famine, and second of all, even though the Famine had already passed, we still lacked what you might call normal nutrition. The only thing that changed was that we could earn our bread with the money we made. And how much can underage children possibly earn? Not much. So, this state of undernourishment persisted for a very long time.

**Q:** Were people afraid that there would be another famine?

**A:** I don't recall that they did. People lived one day at a time. If you happened to have something to eat today, then you thanked God. You just thanked God, and that was it. You really didn't give much thought to long-term survival.

**Q:** Were you able to establish a normal life under the Soviet regime?

**A:** Oh, yes. But this was long after we had left [the village], moved to town and gotten work. Then it was possible to lead a more-or-less normal life. We were able to attend school regularly, for example. But eventually we had to leave.

**Q:** May I ask you where your family finally settled? In which republic?

**A:** We left for the Northern Caucasus. And that's where we stayed and that's how the story ended.

**Q:** Do you wish to add anything.

**A:** No. I really can't recall anything else right now.

**Q:** Thank you.

*Appendix I*

## CASE HISTORY LH52

*Translated from Ukrainian by Darian Diachok*

**Question:** The witness testifies anonymously. Please state your year of birth.

**Answer:** I was born October 5, 1902.

**Q:** Approximately, in what area where you born?

**A:** At the moment, it's known as *Sumy Oblast'*, but was formerly known as *Chernihiv Oblast'*.

**Q:** Do you come from a village or from a city?

**A:** From a village.

**Q:** What sort of a life did your parents lead up to the time of the Revolution?

**A:** Well, my family were farmers, grain farmers.

**Q:** Was there enough land?

**A:** I beg your pardon?

**Q:** Was there enough land? Did you have enough land?

**A:** Oh, yes. The land was our own property. We were a landed household.

**Q:** Do you recall anything about the Revolution itself in the area where you lived?

**A:** About the Revolution? Yes, in fact I do remember when the Revolution began after the First World War in 1917; I was then just beginning the *gymnasium*, having just completed grammar school. And I can recall that on the way to school, to high school, I mean, you could see people who had been affected by it—you know, people like priests, and then later the landed peasants. The high school was located in town, the town of Konotop. And these kinds of people could already be seen there performing manual labor, on the roads, clearing snow. And at first it wasn't the simpler peasants that were affected but rather the more landed ones—they were levied with these forced contributions—10,000, 5,000—payable in cash. And then they even had their land confiscated and were left with no more than one hectare per head, so that if a family was made up of five members and had say some 20 hectares, then they would be left with only five hectares; the rest they took away, leaving but one hectare per person. Well, it was either a hectare or a *desiatyna*. Well, and then they began levying the grain tax from each *desiatyna*, a portion of the harvest meant for the government; and it finally got to the point that whatever a person had left, a single *pood* for one small plot of land, for example, they would take even that.

**Q:** You are talking about the times still before collectivization; is that right?

**A:** No, no. Collectivization had not begun yet. All of this was still during my father's time. My father died in 1919, and we children were left alone with just our mother. But the confiscation of land was already well under way. They would arrive and verify how much you had and they would leave one *pood* per person and just take all the rest. And then collectivization got under way in 1924. I recall when the first commune was set up in a village—it wasn't our village, but a neighboring village; and then in 1929 all of the so-called *kulaks*, that is, the landed peasants, were deported to Siberia, and then collectivization began in earnest.

**Q:** Those people that were responsible for collecting the grain from you in the villages—were these people locals or outsiders?



*Appendix I*

**A:** Well, this was the work of the village soviets—it was they who would conduct the inspections, summon you before the village soviet and ask you how many hectares of land you had; and then, of course, they would leave you with one hectare per person in the family.

**Q:** Were the people in your area supportive of the Bolsheviks in the beginning?

**A:** Well, our village was more of a working class village, I would say. There weren't that many landowners in our village, which was itself not far from Konotop. And there in the town of Konotop there was a train repair facility for the repair of railroad engines, and the work force at this facility consisted almost entirely of peasants from the surrounding area. And you know, these people had an attitude that, well... There were active brigades there, and the *komnezams* were established, and it was after all mainly the poor that were the beneficiaries of the land redistribution, that is, of the land taken from the landed peasants. And, you know, those that had had little land before now had land in proportion to the sizes of their families, and these families could be quite large. Well, after all of this worked itself out, collectivization got under way.

**Q:** Up to the time of collectivization, that is, still during the NEP era, was it possible to lead a relatively normal life?

**A:** NEP? Yes, the peasantry did very well indeed during the NEP era. In fact, the peasants were literally beginning to put their houses in order, which had fallen into a considerable state of disrepair up to that time.

**Q:** How long did the Church continue to exist in your village?

**A:** I beg your pardon?

**Q:** How long did the Church exist?

**A:** The Church existed up to 1918; but from 1923 onward we had the Autocephalous Church; and there was a priest. At first the people were very wary, but later when they heard the kinds of sermons he was giving, they no longer worried about the fate of the Church.

Yes, the priest was a wonderful orator. He was arrested in 1928, and the church was shut down, and we no longer saw him after that. I was no longer in my village from 1928 onward—I had already left my village and settled in another village. Well, then they dismantled the church and converted the building into a school.

**Q:** Did the local Party and the village government consist of local people or non-locals? Were they outsiders for the most part?

**A:** Well, it was mainly locals, but the actual source of all of the directives that were given—well, that was Moscow.

**Q:** Could you describe something of the way in which dekulakization was being conducted, the general features of the process?

**A:** How dekulakization was conducted? Yes. They would herd together all the landowners, and if a landowner happened to have grown sons—and it would happen that they would take the whole family, husband and wife, and deport them—they would leave behind the old folks; they wouldn't deport them. They generally deported the middle-aged people and the youth.

**Q:** Were there instances of people returning from Siberia?

**A:** There were instances of people escaping during the [dekulakization] process, and also of people escaping from the trains. I know of one particular case where the man escaped, even though he didn't have to; he didn't return to his mother's because the father and two sons had been deported, and only the mother remained,

and she was ill and had two little daughters to care for. So he did not return to his mother's, but instead established himself somewhere else and got work. But I don't know what his fate was after that.

**Q:** Were there a lot of households, a lot of people, who were dekulakized in your village?

**A:** Hm... I don't even know if I can say how many people actually remained. There were so many who were deported. So many from my own family, some also from my more distant family, and my cousins were all deported; and even my own brother was deported.

**Q:** And what was done with their property?

**A:** Their property was given to the poor, who supposedly were in need of their property and of their house. For example, in the case of my own parents, my father was deported along with two sons, and only his wife and mother remained—they were both older people—but they were thrown out of their house, and the house was given over to others. And the same thing was happening to others—those that were left behind were thrown out of their houses, and then they had to find a place to stay somewhere else; and there were also people who were thrown out but couldn't find anyone at all to accept them. And of course during the Famine, all of these were among the first to die.

**Q:** Did the dekulakized in your area flee to the Donbas?

**A:** Well, up to the time of the deportations, there were some individual instances of people going out to the Donbas, but these were not dekulakized people but rather simply peasants who wanted to move somewhere else of their own accord.

**Q:** When collectivization began, you were already living in another village, is that correct?

**A:** Yes, already in another village.

**Q:** Could you describe how [collectivization] was being carried out?

**A:** Well, an authorized person would arrive from District Headquarters, would call a meeting. It was usually the women who attended the meetings. The men stayed at home, while the women ... well, you know...

**Q:** Did you ever attend such meetings?

**A:** Well, I was present because the meetings were generally held in the village, in the school; and so I just happened to be there and to see and hear what was going on.

**Q:** Could you relate something of the way that these authorized agitators behaved, what they said to the villagers?

**A:** Well, they said that communal working of the land, that is, the collective working of the land, would be better for the peasants, that the peasants would have a better life—because this would be a mechanized system of farming—there would be no plows nor horses, but machinery instead, and the peasants would be better off. But the women protested, stamped their feet, and so on. And the meetings would end there. In general, they talked about the better life that awaited them.

**Q:** So they tried to get people motivated?

**A:** Well, yes. They said that things would be better, that the peasants would no longer have to work behind a plough, that from then on, that tractors would do all the plowing, that there would be better harvests—and all of this through collective working of the land and collective labor.

**Q:** And when did they actually begin to threaten people?

**A:** I beg your pardon.

**Q:** When did they resort to threatening the people?

**A:** Oh, you mean to frightening people? Well, yes, they began arresting and deporting and throwing those people out of their houses—those that wouldn't voluntarily join the collective farms.

**Q:** Did anyone you know voluntarily join the collective farms?

**A:** Well, who would have!?! Whoever did join voluntarily, so to speak, certainly did not work with any great willingness, but those that joined were from what you might call the middle landed peasantry—the ones that were not thrown out of their houses or dekulakized; but most of the middle peasants would not join the collective farms, and life was quite difficult for them: First they had to pay enormous taxes, and once they would fulfill the requirements of one tax, they would be hit with a second tax, and by that time, they would have nothing left with which to pay the third one. And once that happened, the brigades would come, and the brigades were organized out of the landless peasants (*komnezamy*), and they would take absolutely everything, even whatever little bit of grain might have been hidden away in a glove somewhere.

**Q:** Could you describe, say, the first grain collection?

**A:** Well, I really can't tell you how many hectares we had. I remember that by this time my father had already passed away, and that the brigade came to our house on Christmas Day itself, and took all of our remaining grain reserves, which by no means were very great at all; the brigade had said that these reserves were excess and that they were confiscating it.

**Q:** So you had nothing left after this?

**A:** They told us that they were taking [no more than the quota], and leaving us with the surplus; but there was no so-called surplus.

**Q:** Was all of this done by local people?

**A:** Yes, these were local people; and this was going on during 1929, 1928, at the beginning of collectivization—right up to 1933.

**Q:** Was there any resistance to collectivization in your area?

**A:** I beg your pardon.

**Q:** Was there any resistance? One often hears that in other localities, people, especially women, would break up the collective farms, and that there were actual uprisings in other areas. How was it in your area?

**A:** What kind of information are you looking for?

**Q:** Well, during collectivization, was there any resistance, any active resistance? Is it true that there was absolutely no one who wanted to join the collective farms willingly? Did the peasants openly struggle against collectivization?

**A:** Well, those people, those independent farmers, that refused at all costs to join the collective farms, were hit with enormous grain levies, and were taxed beyond their means, and taxed again, and when these people were no longer able to pay the taxes, they would be tried and deported.

**Q:** But in what ways, with what means, did the people attempt to resist collectivization? Were there insurrections? Were there...

**A:** Well, yes. I'm telling you that when the collective farms were being organized, and in general during this period, it was the wife who would go out—and it was the husband who would tell her, "You go and speak up. Protest. I'll remain silent." But the people who did this would be found out and arrested.

**Q:** But I recall that in the other village, the neighboring village, there were instances that the Army would be called in to fight the so-called bandits.

**A:** Oh, yes. This happened in the third village, which we had occasion to travel through. There was a so-called group of bandits there, except that these were not bandits at all, but landed peasants who hid in the forest and organized themselves, and they would come back into the village during the night and go straight to the activists in the village soviets, and they would not beat up the activists, nor kill them, nor shoot them—all they would do would be to take their own grain back and redistribute it among the poor and among themselves. And in turn, the village activists organized their own groups themselves to stand guard at nights, and to patrol the streets of the village, and wait for the so-called bandits to come robbing again so that they could beat them back, but nothing ever came of this, so they finally called out military units who surrounded the village or the forest where they were hiding; but you see, the other peasants themselves supplied them with food in the forest and helped them to stay in the forest. Well, then the military finally surrounded them, apprehended them, had them arrested, and broke up the whole movement. And what happened to these peasants after that I really can't say.

**Q:** Did this movement have anything to do with the struggle against the Bolsheviks? Were these the same people who, say, after the Revolution, took part in the Ukrainian movement?

**A:** Well, I know that the head of our village soviet was a Petliura follower, but I don't believe that I can generalize about other villages, because from that time on, I went from village to village and simply didn't know the people well enough to say.

**Q:** And those peasants who took to the forest—did they act more in the role of persecuted landed peasants, or more in the role of Ukrainian activists?

**A:** Well, they didn't really have their own political slogans. They would just simply come into the village in the middle of the night—and I don't know how exactly they did this—and they would look up the head of the village soviet, and then the Party secretary, and then the Committee of Landless Peasants, and other such organizers, and they would take the food supplies, because these activists had them in their keeping, and they would then redistribute the food to the poor. And these peasants did not arrest the activists, nor beat them, nor harm them in any way.

**Q:** So this was more of an unorganized protest, more of a spontaneous action?

**A:** Yes, this was not an organized movement, as they say. This was a case of the peasants who had lost all of their belongings and were seeking some sort of redress. The main point is that they had lost their farms, and they were taking the grain they felt was due to them.

**Q:** They took the grain back and returned it to those from whom it had been confiscated?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Approximately, how long was this going on?

**A:** This went on for one Summer of one year. By the time that Winter came, it was all over. Let's see... This occurred in the Summer of 1930—yes, just before the beginning of the Famine.

**Q:** When did the Famine begin in your area?

**A:** In general, the Famine began, according to my recollections, in the Spring of 1933. In 1932 there had been a good harvest as well as extensive acreage under cultivation for the next harvest in 1933; but by Spring, the Famine set in.

**Q:** Spring of 1933?

**A:** Yes, of 1933.

**Q:** And what were the reasons for the Famine in your area?

**A:** Those peasants that were not members of the collective farms—they had everything taken from them—they were the first to die in the Famine; and then the next to die were the members of the collective farms, that is, those whose families supplied no more than just the husband or wife as workers in the collective farms, and who also had children to feed. There was no ration of food for children; rations were limited to those who actually worked. In fact, that was the political slogan: 'He who works, so shall he eat.' That meant that whoever worked in the collective farm, got a ration for his workday; and after that, they started to send in the plenipotentiaries from Russia, authorized from Moscow; and these would organize the special brigades from among the members of the Committees of Non-Wealthy Peasants; these brigades then descended upon the farms whose owners had not yet joined the collective farms and took everything they owned; they didn't bother to levy some unpayable taxes, but straightaway threw them right out of their own houses. And these dispossessed people—well, with time, their bodies swelled up and they starved to death, and then it became the turn of the collective farm workers to die, that is, those who didn't earn much of a ration at the collective farm, even though they were paid for their so-called workdays. And after this, the plenipotentiaries began enforcing these enormous quotas on the collective farms and carting the grain away; and this is why the collective farm workers themselves began dying of hunger.

**Q:** Are you saying that the plenipotentiaries were not locals, but sent by Moscow, and that they were enforcing the grain quotas on the collective farms?

**A:** The plenipotentiaries would arrive at the village council, call a meeting and would demand that the grain quota be met and shipped out. I don't know what the actual norms were, what the actual required amounts were, but whatever they were, there was no food left over to pay the collective farm workers for their workdays, and whatever they happened to have of their own, they ate, and so they began to swell up from hunger. People generally tried to find a way out of the predicament; but a lot of people simply did not have the means to survive in this situation.

**Q:** When the plenipotentiary arrived in the village and demanded such quantities of grain, were you aware of anyone of the collective farm board of directors actually protesting that the quota was impossible, that it was excessive, or did they simply go along with the decree?

**A:** Well, that I really cannot tell you. I just know that he came and demanded the quota and that was the end of that.

**Q:** How did people manage to survive this period at all?

**A:** Well, the way that people survived was to take advantage of things like the appearance of buds on the trees in the Spring; people would climb the trees and get the buds and eat them; they would also eat the bark; they would find the nettles underneath the hedges—I had described this to you earlier—they would pick these as soon as they appeared; in fact, just about anything that would grow would be plucked up and eaten; but despite this, people continued swelling up and dying. But there were also instances, with which I am not too familiar, of collective farm workers having access to cows and who were able to take advantage of that; but those collective farm workers who did not have access to anything like that, or who

could not work very hard, or who had a large family to support, well these usually died out; at first, they would swell up—it was mainly the old folks, and children of preschool age who were the first to go.

**Q:** Were there cases of the activists themselves dying of hunger?

**A:** I don't recall.

**Q:** Did the villagers try to escape to the towns? Did they try to barter their belongings for bread?

**A:** They did try to make their way to the towns in search of food, but the queues were horrendous, and in addition to that, there were guards posted all around the village at all the exit points, and these guards prevented the villagers from leaving. But despite this measure, many villagers got through anyway. Two of my husband's brothers died en route to a town in this fashion—one was on his way to a town hoping to find something for himself there, and the other one took off for another town; both of them died on the road.

**Q:** Do you remember how long the guards surrounding the village were stationed there?

**A:** The guards were posted at the time of the harvest; the guards also watched to make sure that no one cut any wheat-ears; and they also watched over the rye that was just beginning to come out; whoever tried to cut a stalk, would be apprehended and sentenced—this was generally women—for a period of five years in prison.

But then during the grain harvest, the authorities had difficulties because the local people were so weak from hunger that they couldn't do the job adequately, and they had to call in townsfolk, that is, special brigades from the towns, to help with the harvest.

**Q:** So these guards stood and watched so that no one would take the wheat-ears?

**A:** Yes, there were guards whose duty it was to drive about the fields wherever rye had been planted.

**Q:** And these guards also watched that no one leave the village?

**A:** Well, not the very same people did both jobs. I said that one group watched over the rye fields beyond the village; in the village itself there was no guard set up; the other group of guards also worked beyond the village and would give signals whenever they saw someone walking along a field, whenever they saw someone trying to get at the wheat-ears. The [first group] would then arrest these people and have them sentenced.

**Q:** You look rather tired. Maybe you're too tired to keep on talking. Do you want to stop now?

**A:** What?

**Q:** Do you still want to keep on talking?

**A:** Well, maybe I've said enough.

**Q:** Yes, you've told me quite a bit; I think you've covered all the major points.

**A:** Well, if you like... At this point in the story, I began to see people dying all over the place, and I saw them in agony; and at this time, I recall once going to check on a pupil of mine who was absent from school, and when I got there, I saw her mother who was already a widow, and two little children were lying down next to her. They were already beyond any capacity to speak, all swollen up; and in a few days all three of them died. These had died together all at once. But in other households people would die one at a time, and, at first, such families would piece

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together a coffin to bury their dead, but later, they stopped making coffins altogether, and just hoisted their dead onto carts, drove them over to the cemetery; at first, they buried their dead in separate graves, but later common graves would do. I saw how the wagons would carry the dead, and I saw the dying sitting alongside the ditches in their final agonies. That's all I can tell you now.

**Q:** Thank you.

## CASE HISTORY LH57

*Translated from Russian by Darian Diachok*

**Answer:** In 1931 and 1932 I was...

**Question:** Excuse me, be kind enough to state your name.

**A:** Mikhail Frenkin.

**Q:** Your year of birth?

**A:** Nineteen hundred and ten.

**Q:** Your place of birth?

**A:** The city of Baku in the Caucasus.

**Q:** Where did you live at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s?

**A:** I already told you where I lived at the beginning of the 1930s. In the 1920s I was still a student in Moscow, and then in Leningrad. And in the 1930s, well, I already told you where I was living. In 1931 I completed my university studies and was sent to work in what was then called the Baraniv's'kyi District in Zhytomyr Region. Earlier, it was known as Dovbysh. I taught at the worker's high school there. I witnessed the terrible famine that took place there in 1932. I was also a witness to the mass deportations of thousands of people from the villages during *dekulakization*. They would surround a village, then force the women, children, old folks, everyone, to walk on foot to the railway station. These people were piled into heated boxcars and taken North. The Famine began shortly thereafter. I can recall, for example, the majority of the houses in the village being boarded up. But we'd go in. We teachers were given several poods of raw oats to distribute as aid to those who hadn't died yet. Well, we'd enter the peasant huts. Sometimes it was impossible to go inside because of the stench from decomposing bodies. Children and adults, whose bodies were swollen from hunger, would come out. Of course, the raw oats were of no use to these people. They died anyway. This was in the villages. I know a great deal about this period. This was going on in Polish and Ukrainian villages. Nearby in a German district was the town of Pulin. The Germans had colonized these lands earlier. The town of Pulin in Zhytomyr Region. In the district where Pulin was located the same thing was going on. The Germans were more prosperous. *Dekulakization* in this district took the form of an indiscriminate deportation somewhere to the North. So, that's what was going on in the Zhytomyr region. In 1932, I literally ran away from there. The director of a certain institute in Kiev gave me a job in the city. I fled to Kiev because in the course of two weeks, I hadn't seen so much as a single scrap of bread. We weren't receiving any rations because there were none. Can you imagine how hungry I was?! People were eating goosefoot plants, so I fled to Kiev. As the senior assistant at the institute, I began receiving rations! This was in Kiev, but horrible things were happening here also. Starving, swollen villagers were fleeing to Kiev. They were collapsing in the streets from exhaustion. Vehicles were constantly picking up dead and dying people. I lived on one of the city streets. This was in the area of the Haymarket and the Jewish Market, where corpses by the dozen lay on top of one another on the streets. Starving people either lay on the ground or stood in lines in front of the *torgsins*. Have you ever heard of *torgsins*?

**Q:** No, I haven't.

**A:** People sold the crosses that they wore around their necks, and the Jews sold the silver menorahs used in their rituals. In exchange for gold and silver people



## Appendix I

would get a bit of rotten flour and other foodstuffs. The lines in front of the *torgsins* were enormous. The name, "*torgsin*," was an acronym for "trade with foreigners." But there were no foreigners, just Ukrainian peasants and the local populace, who were giving up their wedding bands and crosses. Do you understand the principle behind the *torgsin* better now? It was just another form of exploitation. They gave next to nothing and took away everything.

In addition, arrests were going on. They arrested dentists, dental hygienists, merchants, monks, priests, rabbis, and any other groups that had had money at one time or other. At one time or other!! The Revolution had already been over for how many years by this time?! But these people were arrested and imprisoned. They were given salty food and nothing to drink to force them to reveal where they had hidden their valuables. I was arrested myself in Kiev. I saw how they were pumping those people dry ... at the same time. And then an interesting thing happened. I was transferred to the special section of Lukyanov Prison, the famous prison in Kiev. They put people in there who had violated the Law of August 7, 1932, commonly referred to as "The Law of the Ear of Wheat," since it referred to people gleaning remnants of unharvested grain from collective farm fields. They were brought to trial on the charge of theft. Pilfering. They were imprisoned and sentenced to ten years in one of the large labor camps. Sometimes they would be sentenced to be shot. I saw and heard all this going on in the special section of the prison. An incredible number of Ukrainian peasants were imprisoned under this law.

The Famine was terrible. I myself went hungry, and if it hadn't been for my relatives, I, too, would have died of hunger. We were given only soup made of sorrel and goosefoot plants to eat. And this was but once a day. That was it!

The Famine was horrible in Ukraine. I saw it all myself. A lot can be written on this topic. Educational institutions were affected. The students went without food. They abandoned Kiev, scattering in all directions. Large numbers of peasants began pouring into the railway stations. They rode on buffers and on tops of trains. They tried to pick them off along the way as the trains headed northwards. In Russia and Byelorussia there was no famine on this scale. Only in Ukraine, in the Kuban, along the Don. Well, it's hard to tell everything in condensed form. There's so much to tell...

**Q:** So you knew at the time that Russia didn't have a famine, like the one raging in Ukraine?

**A:** It didn't. I'll tell you why. The reason was that the central Russian regions, like Vladimir and Orël, generally had a poor agricultural yield. The peasants there never had enough grain to last them through the entire year. So the peasants in these regions were forced to look for work in towns as knife-grinders, construction workers, barbers. They returned with money they earned to buy bread. And there wasn't that much bread to be had anyway. Peasants from these areas were also robbed. But there was nothing approaching the Famine in Ukraine or Kuban. Why was there such a terrible Famine in Ukraine? Because that was the republic that raised the most grain. That's why they imposed such enormous grain quotas. They were obliged to fulfill the plan. And in addition to that, they did not want to join the collective farms. So, in response, Stalin's government instituted a policy of liquidation of the *kulak* class, as they called it. But, in reality, there was no such thing as a *kulak* class. The policy was actually geared to the liquidation of the

middle peasants. At the time, 65-70% of the peasantry were middle peasants. The rest were poor peasants. The so-called rich peasants, constituted only five percent of the peasantry. They didn't use hired labor. The actual workers in these households were mainly family members... They had large families. That's why the term *kulak* was a political and not an economic one.

There was oppression in Ukraine, along the Don, and in Kuban—because these were the largest bread baskets of the Soviet Union. These areas were swept clean. They took everything away by force, including the seed grain. Furthermore, it was the cow that was a main source of food for the large peasant families. So what did they do? During collectivization, there was a shortage of horses, because the forage had been forcibly taken. So they instituted a policy in the village to harness the cows. And the cows began plowing the fields. The peasants protested. There were women's revolts. A cow could not do one tenth of what a horse could in the fields, and the cow would lose its milk after a day of work in the harness. Official records exist verifying the fact that there were revolts. The People's Commissar of Agriculture at the time, Iakovlev, wrote, "You're protests are needless. The cow can spend some time working; then she'll come back and give you milk." Special documents issued during the convention of collective farm shock workers corroborate what I've been telling you. These are the kinds of things that were going on in Ukraine. Thanks to this policy, the population of Ukraine was reduced by about 7-8,000,000 working people, not to mention children and old people. All this has found its expression in literature. You've probably already read Vassily Grossman's novel *Forever Flowing?* There you have all this portrayed. There were even cases of cannibalism. In the special section where I was imprisoned there was even cannibalistic sects.

Q: You were in a separate section?

A: Separate section. Separate cells. They were all shot. In reality, given the extenuating circumstances, they really shouldn't have been shot. But they were officially shot for having violated the Law of August 7, 1932, which made the plundering of collective farm property an offense against socialism. There were large numbers of such offenders.

Frankly, everything came down to the fact that the liquidation of such people had to occur without witnesses. They denied everything. There was a writer who has described all this. *Darkness at Noon*. By Koestler.<sup>‡</sup> Yes? If you've read it, then you know he traveled to Kharkiv. You remember? Read it again. Read what he wrote about the children, who roamed the city streets during the Famine. Koestler didn't fabricate his material out of thin air—he captured the atmosphere of the times. All the documentation on this period exists in Soviet archives, but the Soviet Government won't grant anyone access to it. I myself spend a great deal of time there, but they won't give me access to that documentation, which is all top secret documents. No one is given access to the documentation, so the entire period fades into oblivion. But it did not turn out that way. It was not right to kill and deport millions of people, and then to expect all that to fade in people's memories. You see? Even here you find people who recall those events. This was a mass phenomenon.

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<sup>†</sup> *Vse techet.*

<sup>‡</sup> Arthur Koestler resided in Kharkiv during the Famine.

Q: I have a few questions.

A: Yes, go on.

Q: You've described how the village where you worked was dekulakized.

A: Well, I haven't really described it. I began writing some historical pieces. Dekulakization will be part of my memoirs. But I was indeed a witness.

Q: But 1935 is relatively late.

A: No, there indeed was dekulakization in that year. No, please listen. For example, in 1929 extremely heavy quotas were levied on the peasantry—taxes of 350-400 *poods*. For example, Muzychko, Sidorenko, Petrenko, Ivanov, and Sidorov had to comply with these quotas. That was an extraordinarily difficult assignment. But given the production capability of the farms and the manpower available, it was obvious that the quotas were impossible to meet. And no one could meet them. So the peasants that couldn't were dekulakized. All their goods were confiscated, even the personal belongings. Horses and cows were banished to the north. That was dekulakization for you. And dekulakize they did! According to the theory put forth by the Soviet Government, the *kulak* was a disrupter of peace, who exploited the labor of others. In the Kuban, along the Don, and in Ukraine many peasants had extended families—three or four sons and several daughters. These peasants had prosperous farms, which means they would have had perhaps two horses and three cows.

You understand what I'm saying? They worked. These were the types of peasants that were accused of being *kulaks*. Generally, these peasants had no need of hired labor. Nevertheless, they were still considered *kulaks*, and they had to be dekulakized. And in this way, the term, *kulak*, took on political meaning. The middle peasants and poor peasants, who would not join the collective farm, were labeled *subkulaks*. They might have had perhaps a cow, but certainly no horse, and they refused to join the collective farm. *Subkulaks!* What kind of term is that? Is it a political term or an economic term? What's your opinion?

Q: A political term.

A: Of course it was a political term. They needed manpower. Peasant labor made industrial development possible on a large scale. The peasantry contributed everything to the cause. And in return, they were sent to forced labor camps, and new construction sites in the North, the Urals, Siberia, and the Komi ASSR. There, the peasants were exploited far worse by the government than they would ever have been by any landowner. The terminology was such that if they spoke of a *kulak*, you knew that the person really wasn't one. If they spoke of a *subkulak*, they were really talking about a middle peasant or a poor peasant.

Q: What can you tell me about the composition of the Party and the local government of the village where you worked? What kind of people joined the Party and played an active role in the government?

A: Very often they were not local people.

Q: And where were they from?

A: The non-locals? Very often these people were outsiders who were not Ukrainian by nationality. Many were Russian. And, on the other hand, non-Russians, Bulgarians and Tatars, were sent into Russians areas. You understand? The entire Party apparatus was involved. But that Party apparatus and the government itself was in the process of continual change during the 1930s. Arrests were constantly taking place here, also. The Ukrainian Party apparatus was struck

down several times. The political terror was in full swing. Here's what was going on. Many people didn't agree with what was going on, but they were arrested and liquidated, unless they fled. Many were nothing more than civil servants by profession. And for the food rations they got, they were ready to do anything and did it. Who was it that forced all of those people into boxcars? Who surrounded the villages? So-called Mobile NKVD Units were responsible. They consisted not only of Russians and Tatars, but also of Ukrainians. Ukrainians who took part in these units went on rampages in Russia, whereas the Russians did the same in Ukraine. This was the aim of official policy. And they went ahead and did these things. Many of these people were themselves imprisoned or sent to forced labor camps. Generally, they were charged with sabotage, that is, not confiscating the grain with sufficient zeal. These, too, were arrested. I sat in prison with such people and, in fact, saw very many of them: Managers, heads of district land units, veterinarians, and agronomists. And there were also members of the intelligentsia, especially teachers who raised objections to what was going on. They were arrested in large numbers. Agents of the NKVD were fed quite well, at the expense of the populace at large, of course. This is what was going on. What else is of interest to you?

Q: I have a lot of questions. What did you, as a young man, think of the head of the People's Commissariat of Education, Skrypnyk?

A: Well, what could I think? He wasn't trusted and he went and shot himself. There was no way out for him. You know that he was a Bolshevik and had been part of the Bolshevik movement for many years. He had a pre-Revolutionary record of service. At first he was blind to what was going on ... he, Shums'kyi, and many others. Well, all of them were charged with not carrying out the grain requisition with sufficient zeal and not following Stalin's line. These men were either arrested, or else they committed suicide. Skrypnyk shot himself. Shums'kyi and Zatons'kyi were arrested. Kossior was arrested. Vlas Chubar was arrested. But, in the beginning, they also took part in that very same policy. Later, all of them were accused of not serving the Party adequately and were in their turn arrested. This issue is intertwined with the issue of the terror, Stalin's entire policy of dealing with the Party apparatus.

Q: Was there an armed insurrection against collectivization in the village where you were working?

A: Yes, it was labeled "banditism."

Q: In the actual locality where you were working?

A: Yes, of course. Shots would be fired at night. In general, they used to fire at the village soviet. Occasionally someone would be killed, like the plenipotentiaries who came after the grain. That most certainly happened everywhere. There were also peasant uprisings. There were also Women's Insurrections, as I mentioned earlier? There were also peasant insurrections. But all were put down. Why? Because peasant movements are of a particular nature. They're limited to a specific district, village, or province. They don't venture beyond these boundaries. The peasant uprisings were broken up before they fully got underway. That, for example, was the tragedy of the Tambov Uprising. That was the story, the tragedy of the peasant uprisings. It's been written about quite factually. But another problem was that the SRs<sup>†</sup> split into two parties. The Bolsheviks at first aided the

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<sup>†</sup>Social Revolutionaries.

left wing of the SRs, then had it liquidated. The peasantry was left fragmented and without any political leadership. As you well know, they were cut down, one section at a time as their turns came up.

Q: What's your opinion of Makhno?

A: Makhno! He represented a typical peasant movement of the Southern Ukraine encompassing Zaporizhzhia, Oleksandrivsk, Huliai Pole, Katerynoslav and Dnipropetrovsk. It was a typical peasant movement. But what sort of an ideological position did they take? You may recall that they aligned themselves with the anarchists. They considered themselves anarchists, and, of course, had famous anarchists advising them, like one Volin-Eichenbaum, as well as a long list of other followers. They were anarchists. Peasant movements generally reflect a lot of anarchistic features. It was a mass movement expressing the dissatisfaction of the peasantry. But now the Soviets lie about it! The Soviet press claims the peasant insurgents were nothing more than bandits. Not true! The Soviet detachments were the real bandits. It was actually a peasant movement. And who were the victims? Take, for example, the case of the Soviet detachments occupying Ukraine. What a great number of casualties that caused! It's utterly untrue that the peasant movements were made up of *kulaks*. There were a few, of course, but not that many. Mostly it was middle and poor peasants. They were highly dissatisfied with the grain requisitions. All of the grain was taken away from them, and in exchange, they got nothing. What exactly did the peasant receive for his grain during the period known as War Communism, that is, the period beginning with 1918 and continuing through 1922? And what about later on? Did they ever receive anything? Nothing! It's true that no arrests were being made. Industry had been destroyed; there was no exchange of goods. I remember that the deal was supposed to have been an exchange of grain for a boxcar load of manufactured goods. Lenin had always claimed that we were borrowing from the peasants. Borrowing! That's what he wrote! I can even point the places out to you. And when the time comes, we'll repay them, he said. You know how the peasants were repaid under Stalin. Nothing was ever given back to them. Just whatever could be stolen. So, that was the reason for the mass peasant movement. What was the advantage had by the Bolsheviks, Communists, Leninists? They succeeded in establishing a central Party apparatus; they were able to move their units from place to place with great mobility; they moved straight to the district where they were having trouble and they were able to move their divisions quickly from one place to another. These are precisely the things the peasant movement lacked. Just imagine what would have happened if the Tambov uprising had spread to a wide area of Russia. Or take the Kronstadt uprising. That's where the whole tragedy lies. But the Bolsheviks were able to organize a centralized Party apparatus and centrally controlled units. Then privileged classes arose. The common people weren't fed. There was a famine. But the Soviet Army was fed, and people joined up.

Q: Can we turn now to another topic?

A: What other topic?

Q: Were you, teachers, forced to take an active role as agitators?

A: But, of course!

Q: Could you tell me something about that?

A: I cannot tell you anything about that. I personally did not take part in agitation for a whole series of reasons. It wasn't because I ... in fact I was afraid just

like everyone else. What else would you expect?! By this time they'd already introduced the public disgrace lists. You had to have been literate to read things like: "Disgrace to such-and-such a village or village soviet for not having met the quota; these are the losses resulting from the failure of such-and-such a village to meet its quota. Loafers! Freeloaders! *Kulaks!*" They carried hand placards with these pronouncements; articles appeared in newspapers reflecting the same. The Party apparatus was fully activated. Or, for example, teachers were taken into the villages as plenipotentiaries. These were teachers who were Party members, *Komsomol* members. I myself was neither a *Komsomol* nor Party member. So the teachers would be sent to help with grain requisitioning for a period of two or three weeks, a month or two months. One of my colleagues, a man by the name of Vakhnovskii, was a Communist. They would take him, and he would be absent from school for months at a time. He'd spend the whole of that time in the village seeing to the grain requisitions. They continually changed everyone around, so that the entire Party apparatus would take part to one degree or another, although they wouldn't be forced to shoot or kill anyone. They couldn't refuse to take part. I remember once all of the students and teachers who were *Komsomol* and Party members were ordered to surround one of the villages to prevent anyone from escaping while the Mobile Units of the NKVD drove the peasants out of the village to the heated box-cars of trains waiting at the station to deport them. All this was done in secret. The village would be surrounded during the night to avoid any noise and commotion. That's how it was done. And, the Party apparatus took part. Just let anyone raise their voice in protest and tomorrow that person would be arrested. All of it was part of the Terror ... it was frightful.

Q: Was there a church in the village where you worked?

A: How could there have been?! In the first place, they arrested and sentenced people for promulgating religious propaganda, or for praising the old regime. The churches were usually either boarded up or converted into granaries.

Q: Was all of this done before your actual arrival in the village?

A: No, all of this was done in the 1930s. The monasteries were all shut down; the monks and nuns were dispersed; their cells were converted to various business uses. If that wasn't enough, I once had the occasion to travel to Novocherkask. This was in 1935, as I recall. An immense cathedral stood there on Yermak Square in the center of Cossackia. But, the cathedral was not in use. Instructions in advanced cavalry maneuvers were being given in the cathedral, while just below a firing range was set up. This is well known fact. You can find out about it in literature. There was widespread persecution against religion. People belonging to so-called "cults" forfeited their food rations as non-working elements. They also forfeited their right to vote. Of course, that fact in and of itself was not as important to people as the fact that it was connected to food rations. People who professed religious beliefs went hungry. They scattered in all directions and were arrested and imprisoned. In prison I encountered an enormous number of persons of a religious background – Tatar mullahs, Russian priests, clergy of the Ukrainian Uniate Church, Jewish rabbis. All were in prison.

Q: How long were you imprisoned after your arrest in 1933?

A: The first time I was arrested in 1933 I was imprisoned for a year. Then they released me and dropped all charges. I was released along with an assistant professor of physics, Vynnyts'kyi, who was a Ukrainian. We were released, but the

others, hundreds and thousands of them were deported. In the beginning of 1939 I was arrested once again and sentenced to ten years in a forced labor camp, followed by six to seven years of exile. You can say they took away 17 years of my life.

Q: On what grounds were you arrested that first time?

A: The first arrest... There's an expression, I'm sure you've heard it, "to pin something on someone." Well, I had it pinned on me that I had been a member of UVO.<sup>†</sup> Yes, yes, yes! Then I was accused of joining POV.<sup>‡</sup> The only reason for the charges was that I had taught at a Ukrainian institute and there had been a Polish institute nearby. During the trial, they tried to get me to confess that I had indeed been a member of these organizations. Then they accused me of having been an officer. I pointed out that I couldn't have possibly been an officer, given my date of birth. I was a little boy at the time. They didn't want to hear any of that. So, I was sentenced without any grounds whatsoever, because they wanted it that way. After my arrest in 1939, they maintained that I should never have been released in the first place, for, in fact, I had been guilty as charged. So you see how many years I lost. And there was absolutely no reason for it. I was rehabilitated due to lack of evidence of criminal activity. And I wasn't the only one. There are many others, like me, who managed to survive. But the thousands who didn't are buried beneath the earth.

Q: Did prisoners also experience starvation in 1933?

A: They went terribly hungry! Whoever didn't receive rations, starved. Only the higher officials, the administrative apparatus of the Communist Party, the members of the NKVD and the military got rations. All the rest went hungry. I already told you how people used to stand in line in front of *torgsins* to try to sell their possessions. Whoever could, fled. The Famine was raging. And it reached the cities, especially the lower urban classes, who had no economic means.

Q: Let's return to the village?

A: Yes.

Q: You were forced to interrupt your activities. Well, not you personally, but everyone in general did. Were schools interrupted...

A: During dekulakization campaigns the schools would be idle for months at a time, because, as I told you, the teachers were either members of the *Komsomol* or Party members. They were mobilized. How they were mobilized for work in the grain requisitioning or for trade union work? You understand? They'd tell you, "You'll be responsible for writing reports and keeping records." And because of this, the schools and institutes of Ukraine no longer functioned. There was no way that they could continue to operate. Consider some of the facts included in an article of mine namely, that 740,000 Communists took part in agitation activities in the countryside. This is an enormous figure. And it represents an enormous army. So what can one expect? The schools and institutes ceased to function. That was that. The institute where I was working, for example, was totally shut down at one point for two months. The teachers and students had been mobilized to take part in all these projects. And then the arrests began. They arrested people like me; they arrested others. There you have it. And generally on the basis of some kind

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<sup>†</sup>Ukrainian Military Organization.

<sup>‡</sup>Polish Military Organization.

of nationalism. They especially went after Ukrainians, Germans, and Jews. Huge numbers of my acquaintances perished. Naturally, the Ukrainians, who comprised the largest single nationality suffered the most. But they got everyone! The Poles and Germans were all swept away. And these particular Germans were not followers of Hitler, but had in fact been born in the Soviet Union. In Volyn' there had once been quite a large number of German colonies. That's where the Women's Insurrection occurred, right in the Pulin District. Then came the uprising. Not a single German was left in that district after the uprising. And when the war began, there were no more Germans there.

**Q:** Can you describe the uprising?

**A:** Well, I wasn't present when it happened. Well, you want to know the kind of an uprising it was? What can I tell you? They killed the plenipotentiaries. They opened up the warehouses and confiscated potatoes and other foodstuffs. They broke down the locks, took out what was inside and distributed it among all the households. Rifle fire was heard at night. Partisan groups operated out of the forests. It was a typical peasant uprising. The village soviet was destroyed. Heads of the village soviet either fled or ran the risk of being killed.

**Q:** How did the militia in Kiev behave toward the starving peasants?

**A:** Well, when starving children tried to escape from the villages the militia would load them into vehicles and drive them out somewhere. I don't know where. They just drove them out. And then they would also pile up the corpses, and special vehicles would drive by and pick up the corpses and drive them to common graves. And that was about it. That's how they behaved. They simply obeyed orders. And in addition, it was forbidden for peasants to show up in the city. The passport system had already been in effect since 1932. Keep that fact in mind. The only people who were issued passports were urban dwellers; villagers were not entitled to passports. All that the villagers got were certificates from their collective farms. A villager could only show up in the city if he had this certificate. In the first place the certificates were not being given out. The peasants were not being permitted to leave their villages. And if the militia caught someone without a passport, that person would be immediately arrested and the case would be closed. Deportation followed. He would be sent to a labor camp. That's how they did it.

It was a frightening time, a period that has been inadequately studied up until now, because of a dearth of documents. The Soviets won't even allow you to talk about this period. The whole thing has been camouflaged. The Soviets wrote that this had been a period of the liquidation of the *kulaks* as a class. But what was actually happening was the liquidation of the peasantry. Do you understand? There is the difference. The *kulak* class comprised a small percentage of the population, if that. But what they were attacking was actually the poor peasants, the middle peasants, the working people. They were liquidating these people, turning them into day laborers at the collective and state farms, or else they sent these people to forced labor camps to help with new construction projects and designated them as special settlers.

**Q:** In your opinion, what role did the nationalities question play in all this?

**A:** What?

**Q:** Why do you think the Famine was localized in Ukraine and along the Don?

**A:** The Famine was at its fiercest in Ukraine, along the Don and in the Kuban—regions where the greatest amount of commercial wheat was being



produced. This land was especially fertile. The conditions were favorable; there were long-standing traditions; and there was a well established system of agriculture. And this is where the Famine was engineered.

Q: And the nationalities question?

A: Well, as to the nationalities question, there is an attempt being made today, especially among the Ukrainians, to prove that they had been singled out as a group. I am against this interpretation. The Famine was directed against the peasantry. And since the policy was directed specifically against the peasantry, this includes the Ukrainians, the Don Cossacks, the Kuban Cossacks. The oppression was just as severe in the central black-earth region of Tambov where the land was fertile and the harvests rich. And the same things were happening there. You understand? And what could one do in a place like Iaroslavsk Region, where all they had was dry land? The soil yielded very little grain and the local populace had to survive on vegetables, like potatoes. In the non-grain producing states, it was usual for people to manage for three or four months, and then to be on the lookout: How to buy some grain. And this is how it always was there. These are non-productive states and provinces. So what does the nationalities question have to do with this when you see the whole picture? The whole brunt of the policy fell on Ukraine for a whole series of reasons. The policy was to liquidate the peasantry as a free institution.

Q: Would you care to add anything to what you have just said?

A: No. This is an entire epic we're discussing. What can one add to this? You cannot diminish it, nor can you add to it, as Tvardovskii said.<sup>†</sup> Have you read Tvardovskii?

Q: I don't think so.

A: "You cannot add to this, nor can you diminish it." Wonderful verses. He was the editor of *Novyi Mir*.

Q: I don't know of him.

A: He died some time ago. He was a Soviet liberal, a member of the Party. But he wrote of all of these things, and he said that you cannot add to this, nor can you diminish it. What is there to add here? All of this that I am telling you, I am not telling you as an attempt at a whitewash. I'm quite sure that you know all of this even without my testimony. Those were terrible times. And it is now time to collect all of the testimony—this is a great and absolutely essential task—to get the testimony of those people who survived and who can give eyewitness testimony. You understand? Because one day we will finally gain access to those Soviet archives. Who can say?

Q: Well, okay, thank you. Thank you very much.

A: You're welcome.

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<sup>†</sup> *Ni ubavyt', ni prybavyt'.*

## CASE HISTORY SW1

*Translated from Ukrainian by Darian Diachok*

**Question:** Please state your name.

**Answer:** Varvara Dibert.

**Q:** Please state your year of birth.

**A:** I was actually born in the previous century.

**Q:** When?

**A:** Eighteen hundred and ninety-eight.

**Q:** And where?

**A:** In the Kiev area.

**Q:** In a village or in a town?

**A:** I was born in a village and then studied in Kiev. My father was the village priest.

**Q:** Really?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Was he Orthodox?

**A:** Yes, he was Orthodox. And are you yourself Catholic or Orthodox?

**Q:** I'm Orthodox.

**A:** My grandfather was also a priest, and my great grandfather, and so on—back 300 years.

**Q:** Really?

**A:** Do you need the exact date? It was the eighth of August. Or is this essential?

**Q:** Not very.

**A:** Well, they'll probably say, "It's obvious that she's already quite old." Well, that's how it is. The years that especially interest us are 1932 and 1933. Is that correct?

**Q:** Yes, can you also relate something of your childhood?

**A:** I beg your pardon.

**Q:** Can you say something about your childhood?

**A:** My childhood I spent in my father's house in the village. But when I turned nine years old, I moved to Kiev to study. My father sent me to Kiev. This was a special kind of diocesan school, as it was called. It was a middle school that permitted you to teach upon the completion of all course work successfully. There were eight grades. Pedagogical instruction was given in the sixth and seventh years, after which you had the right to be a teacher. Whoever wished could continue his studies at a university. Or he could enroll in some higher courses. There was also the eighth grade. I was awarded a diploma, with a satisfactory evaluation which also enabled me to go on to the university, if I chose to. In Ukraine the first revolution occurred in 1905.

**Q:** Do you remember anything about it?

**A:** Very little.

**A:** So I completed seven grades in this school. When the First World War broke out, I thought of enrolling in the Berlitz language courses. I was just finishing up then and had even submitted an application. We were expecting the Germans to occupy Kiev. I'm referring now to World War I, not World War II, and at this

time, all of the schools, high schools, and higher institutions of learning were being evacuated beyond the Dnieper River. My parents refused to let me go beyond the Dnieper River, saying, "God only knows what's going on there." So I had to stay behind. After finishing the seven grades, I couldn't continue with my studies, because the institute where these courses were taught had been evacuated beyond the Dnieper River.

**Q:** Were your parents still in the village?

**A:** Yes, they were.

**Q:** Do you remember what village this was?

**A:** It was actually several villages. For example, when I was still under ten years of age we used to live in Kyrylivka and Moryntsi. Do you know these villages?

**Q:** Moryntsi. Yes. Shevchenko.

**A:** Shevchenko. We lived right between those two villages. The name of our village was Pedynivka. It was located three kilometers from Kyrylivka and three kilometers on the other side from Moryntsi. Our kinfolk lived both in Kyrylivka and in Moryntsi. Our village was such that we didn't even have a doctor, but there was a large clinic in Kyrylivka. There was no post office either, even though it was a fairly large village of 5,000 inhabitants. Our village didn't even have a doctor's assistant. The only school there was, was a primary school where the first four grades were taught. I didn't attend this school; rather, my father taught me himself. He was preparing me for the first grade of the diocesan school, where I spent seven years. My Summers, Christmases and Easters, and in general, all of my vacations, I would spend in my village.

Not one person who studied in the seminary went on to become a priest. The seminary consisted of six grades. And if you completed four of those grades, you could go on to the university. The first four classes were actually a preparatory theological seminary, and then afterwards, there were six additional years of the actual seminary. My brothers all finished the first four years. My older brother completed the university, but the other one was not able to complete it because he began teaching at the beginning of the Revolution. When I was ten years old we all moved to a location closer to Kiev. The family made this move because three of us were already studying in Kiev, and from Kiev to Kyrylivka was a distance of some 250 kilometers. This was quite far—it was 25 kilometers to the railway station alone. So you can see that it was quite far. So my parents moved closer to Kiev.

**Q:** Was your father able to get a parish there?

**A:** He traded parishes with my grandfather, my mother's father. My mother's father came here, to this village, while my father then moved to the little town, which was closer to Kiev. The town was only 50 kilometers from Kiev—so that it was possible to get there with a team of horses, and a steamer, for the Dnieper River was close by. But we rarely traveled by steamer. So that's how it was. Well, it was that way. And when the Revolution came ... I really don't know whether this is of any interest to you.

**Q:** Oh, indeed. It's of very great interest.

**A:** When the Revolution came, my father again moved from the small town. Just seven kilometers from the small town there was a very beautiful village. And why do you suppose he moved? Because he felt that we children were beginning to fall under the bad influence of urban living. There were all sorts of influences. The Jews were getting organized there. There was an organization there that was

organizing the youth, especially the Orthodox youth. There was a Jewish woman. They had sent this small woman who began organizing groups. She had arrived with a machine that ostensibly wove stockings. And whether or not this machine actually wove stockings or not, I really can't say, but she most certainly was organizing our youth into groups. In order to prevent his children from falling under the bad influence of these elements, my father moved the family to another village. And that's where the Revolution found us. I was already teaching by this time. You see, by 1915, I had already completed seven grades. It was impossible to continue with my studies because all the institutions of higher learning had been transferred beyond the Dnieper River. Consequently, I had to stay at home because my father forbade me from going beyond the Dnieper River. When I turned 17, I submitted an application to become a teacher and was assigned to a school in the small town of Kaharlyk that was about 35 kilometers away. There was a large school there, situated in a three-storied building, which had been built before the First World War. There were ten, no 11 teachers there, if you count the director, who was a woman. It was an all girls school and the oldest teacher there was 25, while I was the youngest, just 17 years old. They assigned me to the first grade, which had 76 pupils. I came in after term had begun. The children had already completed the primer, but I managed. Seventy of my pupils passed to the second grade. Six failed, but that wasn't really my fault, because in the Spring, when the grasses began to turn green, the parents took their children out of school and had them tend the cows. Seventy pupils, however, did pass. And that's where I was when the Revolution came. I personally was not singled out in any way because, by this time, I was already at home there and was appreciated as a teacher. The parents and the school administration liked me.

**Q:** What were the changes that occurred in the school?

**A:** What changed in the school was that we lost contact with Kiev. We considered Kiev to be our center, and we were cut off from the center. The situation was this: It was a distance of 35 kilometers to the railway station; the Dnieper River was 18 kilometers away—but was only accessible in the Summer. In the Winter, the Dnieper River would freeze over, so that it was possible to reach Kiev only with a team of horses or by foot. This means that all contact with Kiev was lost. But I have to tell you that in the town of Kaharlyk, our school was a primary school, and the teaching staff consisted of 11 teachers and a twelfth woman in charge. In this small town the school was considered a village school. The school was located on the border between the small town and the village. And so the children that came to our school were both from the small town as well as from the village. Up to the Revolution we even had little Jewish children from the small town attending the school. But when the Revolution began, all the Jews fled the small town, and their children no longer attended school. My father remained in the village, and I went off to teach.

**Q:** And what was going on with the Church during the Revolution?

**A:** In the beginning the Church continued to function. At the beginning the liturgy was in Church Slavonic and answerable to the Patriarchate of Moscow. The services were not in Ukrainian but in Church Slavonic, and Ukrainian was not permitted until after the Revolution of 1905. Then the priest was permitted to read the Scriptures and deliver the sermon in Ukrainian. But he was only permitted to speak on the subject that he read in the Scriptures. That is, he was permitted to

translate the passages and explain their meaning in Ukrainian. But before 1905 even this was not allowed. The entire service had to be conducted in Church Slavonic. Well, my father stayed in the village. He was the parish priest there. Like everyone else, he conducted the services in Church Slavonic until 1921. No Ukrainian was used. But in 1921 the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Metropolitan, Vasyli' Lypkivskiy, brought back the Ukrainian Church.

The first Bolsheviks that came through our village robbed my father. They took everything from his house. They threw open the doors, opened all the windows. Everything that was in the closets, drawers, chests and boxes was thrown out into the street with the exhortation to the peasants to "steal what had been stolen!" They called the peasants together and told them to take everything. All the clothes, the dishes, everything was taken. My father had a farm; he had three cows, and three horses. They took it all. Well, my mother was taken in by the school teachers. She stayed in school, because the widespread looting that was going on frightened her. And my father went... Well, he just took his cane, and that's all, nothing else. He said he was glad that they hadn't shot him. And he went directly to the village where I was teaching. His religious superior lived there. Well, the religious superior reassigned my father to a different parish where the priest had died. My father was his replacement, while my mother remained at the school. The Bolsheviks left the village the day after they had plundered it. The unit was not local, but was passing through. From our village the unit continued on elsewhere. And at that point, the peasants began to come to my mother to return all the things that had been plundered. And I have to say that they brought back just about everything except the sewing machine. Earlier, when I had graduated, my father had given me a new sewing machine as a graduation gift. This one thing was not returned.

An interesting incident involving this sewing machine occurred a year or so later. I was en route from Kaharlyk to Kiev. We were boarding the dock in Kiev, and were to proceed to Trypillia. During the night a group of people boarded the steamer, which then continued on its way. People took their seats. A few people who happened to recognize me, came over to say hello. But one person, a young girl appeared to be hiding from me. And I clearly saw a young girl hiding from me. And then an old man sat down next to me and said, "You see? You see? That's Uliana over there. She's hiding from you." And I said, "Why would she be hiding from me?" And he said, "She's hiding from you because her father took your sewing machine, and now she's going to have an operation. She has a stomach ulcer." The old man said to me, "I think it's the needle from your sewing machine that's in her stomach." So, you see, the girl never came over to greet me and continued to hide from me.

Yes, this was what it was like before the Revolution. And then, later, my mother moved so that she could be with my father.

My father died in 1918. My older brother was with us by this time. He had fought in the First World War. He had been mobilized when he was a student. And then later, when the Ukrainian Revolution occurred, and the [Ukrainian] government was formed, the Bolshevik Army began advancing on Kiev. The president of the Ukrainian Central Rada, Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi had to flee. My brother and my first cousin drove Hrushevs'kyi out of Kiev to Zhmerynka. Their car overturned and my brother had two teeth knocked out. Nothing, however,

happened to Hrushevs'kyi. Oh, yes. Another cousin of mine was also with Hrushevs'kyi as a guard, and he was also injured in the accident. I believe he broke his arm. At any rate, they managed to get Hrushevs'kyi to his destination. When the Bolsheviks came to power, my brother was working as a teacher in the Poltava area, and my other brother was an insurgent for a time. My youngest brother, who was only 14 years old at the time, was a full-time student. He lived in my house in the small town and studied there because all of the religious schools had been shut down. He studied at home with me while I taught. My mother came to live with me after the death of my father in 1918.

**Q:** Was this in the 1920s?

**A:** Yes, this was in the 1920s. I was still teaching in that small town.

**Q:** You said that the middle brother had been...

**A:** An insurgent?

**Q:** What sort of an insurgent?

**A:** Well, he fought for the Greens. He, well, he couldn't make up his mind at first. Once he'd be for the Bolsheviks, another time, for Petliura. He vacillated. But then, finally, he decided to join Petliura. But neither he nor his older brother were ever officially charged with having been Petliurists. I don't know whether or not you realize it, when the Soviets came to power, they considered anyone who supported Petliura to be an enemy of the people. But really, both brothers were Petliurists. But my younger brother, who was only 14 at the time, was not accepted by any school. As long as the school where I taught was operating, he was able to continue his studies. He wanted to enroll in a technical institute to be trained for a career. But whatever institute he managed to get in, he would be thrown out within a month for being a priest's son. And he went to seven technical institutes before he was finally able to complete a technical institute for agronomy, and to get work as an agronomist. But soon thereafter he was arrested and charged with having been a non-commissioned officer in Petliura's Army. So he was jailed for a time. We didn't even know where he was. But he got out. And it was only through a lucky turn of events that he was able to survive. He got out of prison, after spending six months there. He had been arrested in the clothes he had worn to work that day, his army overcoat and his shirt. He didn't even have a jacket, just his army overcoat and shirt. They had been planting something out there in the fields, or ... I'm not sure what they were really doing, and he was working there as an agronomist. Well, they arrested him right there on the spot, and we had no idea where he was taken. No matter how hard we tried, we simply couldn't locate him.

But finally, after six months, they released him. His body and feet were swollen. In prison he was not permitted a change of clothing, no change of shirt, or underwear. He wasn't given anything at all while in prison. All he had was his army overcoat, the back of which rotted out from some sort of mold. All that was left of it were the side skirts. But he didn't throw it away when he got out. He took it with him. They released him. He didn't have any money or food, nothing. He walked out of the prison into the fields. It was already growing dark; the sun was setting. And he said to himself, "I'll die right here." So he spread out his army overcoat. And just then, a one-horse carriage came along. Agronomists generally used to get about in such carriages. They would hitch up just one horse and go. Two people can fit onto this carriage or perhaps three if they let their legs drop over to either side. So one of these carriages came along. The driver saw that it

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was already getting dark and that someone was lying in the fields. And he stopped to see whether the person was still alive. And what do you think? The driver was my brother's best friend. The two of them had gone to the agronomy institute together, and here he had been working not far from the prison from which my brother had just been released. They recognized each other. Well, he loaded him in his carriage and took him home, because he was on his way home from work anyway. It turned out that the man's wife was also an agronomist and that she had also studied at the same agronomy institute, taking the very same classes, in the very same school. And it even went further: Both of these men had been rivals for this same woman—this man and my brother. But this fellow won out and married her. And here, totally by chance, this fellow finds his best friend. So he took him in and both he and his wife set to nursing him back to health. His whole body, even his hands and feet, were already swollen. He was also filthy—so they bathed him. They kept him with them, fed him milk and other food, until he was able to stand on his feet. And it was only then that he wrote us in Kiev and told us that he had been released and that he was coming home. After spending a month at his friend's, he finally came home.

After World War II, he was arrested again, also on the charge of having been a member of Petliura's army. This time, he was imprisoned for a full eight years. This time he returned with his health completely broken. In a photograph he sent he looked as if he were 90 years old, whereas he was comparatively young, in fact, seven years younger than I. Well, now, you know, I am 87 years old. But I was young once. Well, I married a soldier of Petliura's army.

**Q:** When was this?

**A:** In 1922. But they began to hunt down Petliurists. Often those responsible for hunting down Petliurists had once been Petliurists themselves but had "turned red," as they say. So when the Soviet Government was established, it contained many of those very same people who at one time had been ardent Petliura supporters or had served in his army. Later the Soviets began the so-called Ukrainization program. Many young people supported them. And, you know, they pulled in many young people with their lies about introducing Ukrainization.

So we had to flee this small town. And we went to Zvenyhorod, where I taught. Well, that's where we eventually found something. At first, we went on foot, on a sort of a "honeymoon," as they call it here. We went 150 kilometers on foot until we reached Zvenyhorod. In each of the district towns on the way we filed applications. When my husband returned from Petliura's army, he went to live in Kiev. He left Kiev when Petliura's army took over the military factory. Half the workers went over to Petliura, while the other half sided with the Bolsheviks. Well, my husband was on Petliura's side. He retreated with Petliura's troops when the Bolsheviks came to power. During his time in the army, he was reassigned for further military instruction. But then he came down with typhus and was sick a long time. While convalescing, he went to Kiev and saw what the workers who had sided with the Bolsheviks were up to. He said he wanted to teach in one of the villages. And he was assigned to the village where I was teaching. As it turned out, we were both in the same village for a period of two years—from 1920 to 1922—and we were married in 1922.

**Q:** What did you teach?

A: Oh, I taught the beginning grades. Is that what you want to know?

Q: I'd like to know specifically what you taught during the 1920s.

A: Oh, I see. As soon as the Revolution began, we heard in Kaharlyk that a Ukrainian Government, the Central Rada, had been formed. You see we were relatively far away from Kiev, and there was no telephone, except one intended for local use. In addition to our school, there was also a higher preparatory school whose director, or perhaps inspector, was a man by the name of Palyvoda. Have you ever heard of him? We elected a school council right there on the spot and decided to Ukrainize the school. We did it without any official directives from Kiev.

At the time, we had no other textbooks except [Shevchenko's] *Kobzar* and perhaps a few other small books here and there. But we were determined to Ukrainize the primary school immediately. And we began to copy excerpts of the *Kobzar*.

It's true the sugar refinery helped us out a great deal. The sugar refinery took the whole matter in hand and organized a committee composed of local people. They had a great quantity of enormous sheets, which were used to wrap the sugar. They were producing granular sugar there. And afterward, they would convert it to refined sugar, not the little cubes they sell here, but rather large cones weighing up to five or ten pounds. The cones of sugar, which were expensive to buy, would be wrapped in this thick paper. One side of the paper was blue, the other, white. There was a great deal of this paper. And so, with the help of the inspector, whom we had elected to head the school council, we were able to acquire large quantities of this paper. And we would use it to copy passages from the *Kobzar* and light verses, which we would hang up in the classrooms.

And we managed also to continue writing, even though there was no ink left. We began to use coal, and even made our own ink. We made ink by using the berries from oak trees. The oak often has, well, call them little wild apples, growing on the leaves—they're parasitic. We would use these "apples" to make ink. We also used a certain kind of blackberry which was actually kind of blue. We tried to make ink. In the beginning, it didn't go so well; but later someone got the idea to add some ashes to the mix. And then, just imagine, if you will, we succeeded in making our very own ink, ink good enough to write with! You see, once the Revolution came, you could no longer get paper, pens, pencils. So, you see, we had to come up with something ourselves. And we immediately launched a program of Ukrainization in our school. In the other school, the higher preparatory school, we also introduced Ukrainization, but not in all subjects, because not all the teachers were prepared to make the necessary changes. We would give our teaching materials, posters, and tablets to other schools around Kaharlyk. The main thing was that we didn't have any textbooks. The only materials that we had were the ones we ourselves had fashioned. Well, a few of the children had copies of the *Kobzar*. And that's how it was. Well, what else can I tell you? All of this is still quite far from the Famine.

We transferred to another small town in Zvenyhorod. My husband got a position there as the director of the district school, even though he was not an educator by profession. He had actually completed a commercial institute. At that time, they had just opened up a cooperative technical institute, so he taught there. And I was very glad that my brother could continue his studies there.



At that time there was a student there, a Russian, whose sister had been working at the sugar refinery. I don't know how this particular family had got there. This man went and reported my husband, saying that he was fostering nationalistic politics in his lectures. My husband was arrested. The students appeared at a hearing with their notes to give testimony that there had not been any anti-government agitation going on in the classroom. But still they imprisoned him. But he wasn't held long, only a few months. But nevertheless, the fact remains that he was imprisoned. But they didn't bother me. I continued teaching. I was teaching at the sugar refinery, and there they paid me not with money, but with sugar—so that materially, at least, I was secure. My mother and brother lived with me.

The prison where they put my husband was 11 kilometers away. I used to bring him food during the day. And when I got there, I would have to get the permission of the interrogator, who was a Russian. He would say, "What do you want with that counterrevolutionary? Let's go for a boat ride together!" There was a river nearby—the Ros, a tributary of the Dnieper River. "Let's go for a boat ride!" he would say, "forget your relationship with that man!" But he did grant me permission to give my package to my husband. When this interrogator was transferred, he was replaced by a Ukrainian.

And my husband was released on bail through the efforts of a headmaster of some school. But they only released my husband on the condition that he wouldn't leave the area. So, the interrogator changed and the new interrogator was Ukrainian. This new man, by the way, had once been a Petliurist, and later went over to the Bolsheviks. And when he released my husband, he walked out into the corridor and said, "Let me tell you something; even though they told you that you do not have the right to leave this area, my advice to you is, leave the district this very day; and if you can, change your profession as well." And that's exactly what my husband did. He left the area that very day, and since he had completed the institute of commerce, he went to Bila Tserkva near Kiev and got a job in a cooperative. And that's where he worked. But they wouldn't allow me to join him because I was teaching a lower class (the second grade, I believe). And in addition, I was also teaching at an adult education<sup>†</sup> school. And in the evenings, I was taking part in a drama group and had to perform. It's not that I wanted or didn't want to take part in the production. All the teachers had to participate in cultural work. They would not release me. A week passed. A month passed, and still they wouldn't let me go. My husband had already found a job and had given me all the details.

One day a very tall man, an engineer, arrived at the sugar refinery for some sort of a technical review. This man was not a Party member, but rather a purely professional man, who happened to have considerable influence. An acquaintance of mine told me, "Why don't you go and see him. He's the type of man who'll arrange for your release."

I went to see him and explained that my husband had been arrested, that they weren't releasing me, and that I wanted to leave. He said, "Fine, I'll go have a talk; they'll release you. At night, I'll send you a messenger." I went home. At night a messenger came. I was summoned. At the meeting the school authorities settled accounts with me. I was supposed to be paid in sugar for teaching at the school, and with money for teaching at the *liknep* school. So they paid me the sugar and the money, and it was all settled. I left town the next day.

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<sup>†</sup>*Liknep*.

In 1925 we arrived in Kiev. My husband was still working in the cooperative. In 1929 mass collectivization started. All those, like my husband, who had occupied the highest positions in the cooperative, had been instructors, had traveled considerably, but were not Party members, were dismissed from their jobs. My husband was dismissed also. They dismissed 14 people. The only ones who stayed on were three instructors who were Party members. The other 14 people were replaced.

My husband had completed engineering school earlier and was an excellent draftsman. His own father had once worked at the military factory, and my husband would frequently get assignments from his father when he was still in high school such as making diagrams, or technical drawings. And so, he learned to draft quite well, and managed to find a job as a draftsman. But in the evenings, he studied to become an engineer. He worked and studied for three years. In the daytime, he worked eight hours as a draftsman, and in the evenings, he studied. And he made it. He became a mechanical engineer.

About half a year later the dean came. She was dean of the Library Science Department. She was a very staunch Party member. She came as an inspector from the State Commissariat of Education. And she approached me as her former student and sat down to chat. At the time I was in the process of making some notes. After an hour of conversation, I thought to myself, "Dear Lord, what next? What's there left to say?" At that time no matter who you happened to speak with, you were still afraid of saying something that might be used against you.

A book was lying on the table, the author of which happened to be a Jew, though the book itself was written in Ukrainian, and written very well indeed. The name of the author was Rybak. He wrote historical works, and he wrote exceptionally well. I knew all about him and his works.

It occurred to me that I'd better quickly come up with a topic for us to talk about, so I asked her, "Klara Iosifovna, do you happen to know Rybak's nationality?"

She looked at me in the eye and said, "What?! You're Jewish, and you don't know who Rybak is?!"

And I answered, "But, I'm not Jewish." And she said, "Then what nationality are you?"

And I said, "I'm Ukrainian." And she had recommended me for the job in the library on the basis of the fact that she had thought I was Jewish.

But then the year 1936 came along. I was already working in the library, having completed that institute. But the reason that I resumed my studies at that time was to avoid constantly having to fill out questionnaires about my origins. My documents needed to be altered because they stated that I had once attended a parochial school. The inference was that if I had attended parochial school, then obviously, I was somehow connected with the Church. And so, this was the real reason behind my decision to resume my studies at a different school.

I already had children by this time. I can recall coming home after my classes. It would already be past 11 o'clock by the time I got home. The children would already have gone to bed on their own. Next to my bed, I would find little notes, "Mama, my pants are torn." Or, "Mama, I tore my sock." Or, "Mama, the teacher wants something." And during that time, I could only communicate with my children through these little notes.

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One day, the following thing happened: The capital was transferred to Kiev. This meant that the entire Party apparatus was also being moved to Kiev. And housing was already very tight. It turned out that the situation with housing became even worse. So they instituted the passport system. They weren't really passports, as such, but certificates. This was a way of purging Kiev of undesirable elements. Whoever received a passport was able to remain in Kiev. Whoever was not issued a passport didn't have the right to remain in Kiev and couldn't settle within 300 kilometers of the city. Just imagine, if you will, the following predicament: My husband gets a passport, and I don't! I'm to leave Kiev within two weeks! Can you imagine? Both my husband and I work. My children all go to school. And here I'm ordered to leave Kiev within two weeks.

I was advised that my only hope was to see the director of the passport office. At that time you had to stand in line for three days and three nights. I didn't stand there by myself. There was a little old lady who kept my place in line. The line stood there day and night. I walked into his office and stood right in front of him.

He began to interrogate me. He asked about the beginning of my childhood. He looked at me and said, "Is it true that your father was a priest, and it's because of that that you did not receive a passport?" He asked me where I had lived and worked. Who my grandfather and grandmother was. He asked about the small town where my father had transferred to and where my grandfather had been. He told me that if ever I came across anyone who needed help I should help them. He added, "I'm glad to have helped you, because I've fulfilled my mother's wish." He picked up the telephone — this was on the first floor. He called to the secretary on the third floor and instructed her to make out a passport. Ten minutes later, she came down and handed me the passport.

And so we were able to continue living in Kiev right up to the Second World War. And in 1943 we left Kiev and went to Germany. To Przemyśl from Kiev, then on to Germany and, finally here. But they wouldn't let me leave for America for a long time on account of the spots on my lungs. My children were already grown by that time, so they went on ahead without me. My daughter and my son. That's how it was.

But in 1933 you couldn't really say that there was a famine in Kiev itself, like in the villages. But nevertheless, we did experience some food shortage. There were people, especially older people, and who didn't work. They were the people who often died. They swelled up and died. But not in the same number as you would find in the villages. In some of the villages not a single soul remained alive. Some died, and the younger and more active ones would flee the villages and manage one way or another to find work somewhere, usually in the Donbas.

**Q:** When did you first hear that people were dying of hunger?

**A:** People began to die in 1932. And it wasn't because the harvest was bad. That year there was a gorgeous harvest. The Famine was the result of the confiscation of everything that the peasants had. It all began in 1932 and 1933. There was a tremendous number of homeless children in Kiev. It was awful how many of them there were.

**Q:** How did they get to Kiev?

**A:** I beg your pardon?

**Q:** How did the homeless children get to Kiev?

**A:** To Kiev? Well, first of all, most of these were children of parents who had been arrested. And if the parents were taken the children would be placed in orphanages. But not all the children wanted to go to orphanages. And they would try to escape in all sorts of ways. They would hitch rides under railroad cars, and they would also manage to get on steamers. Or they would escape on foot. They were very clever. And there were those who traveled all over the whole USSR in boxcars. And they would also ride on top of the trains in the Summer—they couldn't in Winter, of course, ride on the tops of trains—or they would get in between the buffers. A lot of them were actually killed this way. But most of the homeless were children of dekulakized parents. This was going on continuously.

And the interesting thing was the system of ethics that prevailed among them. For example, my younger brother had just been released from prison, and managed to get himself another job and a passport. One day, he was on the streetcar, and his purse was lifted. It contained his passport and money. Well, the money was not as important as the passport, where it had already been marked down that he had been arrested. So they took his money, but returned the passport, through the mail slot in our door. As I was about to leave the house he walked in looking like a corpse. He said that they had taken his passport, and he would have to go through the NKVD to get another, and he had already been in prison. And the next day—what joy! As I was about to leave, I stepped into the corridor and looked down to see a soiled envelope containing the passport. They took the money as you would expect—we had already given up on the money. My husband and I were working, and so there was no real shortage of money.

When I was working in the library I would start work a little later in the day. And one day before work, I went to the market. A woman poured some milk for me, and handed it to me. I took off one glove and was holding it in the other hand. And as I held the glove, I pulled out some paper money—paper money just like dollars—three karbovantsi. An orphan came up behind me and snatched the money. The woman hadn't even finished pouring the milk for me. He grabbed the glove and the three karbovantsi. And I began to scream.

My basket was empty, and the sales lady said, "I can't give you anything without the money."

And I said, "Let it stand here for a moment. Maybe I'll see someone I know or a neighbor who will lend me some money, so that I can pay you."

I looked and saw a homeless boy—not the one who stole the money from me, but another one. He was just standing there and trying to pick his next victim. I walked up to him and said, "Listen, young man. Look, I've only one glove left. And your friend snatched my glove and three karbovantsi. And in half an hour I have to go to work. My children," I continued, "are at home, and they're hungry. I came here to buy milk and that was all the money that I had." And at that time, it was very difficult to get gloves—only those people who went to Moscow were able to buy gloves. In Kiev it was impossible to get them. I said to him, "What does he want with one glove? Let him return the glove to me."

And he looked at me, and said, "Let me see it."

So I showed him where I had left the bottle of milk. And I said, "Look. I wasn't able to buy a small thing like that."

And he said half in Ukrainian, half in Russian, "Auntie, are you telling the truth that that's all that you have?"

And I said, "Well, see for yourself." And I added, "You can look in my pocket if you want."

And a few moments later, he ran over to me and brought back the glove and the three karbovantsi. And he said, "Auntie, if it's as you say, then we don't need to hit on people like you. We'll find ourselves some rich ones."

When we were living in Kiev, right next to our house there was a building, which earlier had been a theater. In 1933 they converted it into a movie house, and it was adjacent to our courtyard. So that when I passed through the gates of our courtyard, I would walk right past it—I was living in an apartment just on the inside of the courtyard. Our house was number six, and this other building was number four. And as I walked out the gate I encountered the former theater on the right. This theater was converted into a collection point for homeless children. The police would go around catching the children. They had built plank beds there. Absolutely no one, no outsiders, was allowed to enter this place. The police stood guard. Once I managed to get a peek inside, but I didn't really see that much. I only saw that they had built up these plank beds, not proper beds as such, but plank beds. Three or four plank beds were stacked one on top of the other. And inside, you see, were all these homeless children milling about—ragged, dirty, and hungry. But I would very often see, as I would be leaving through the gates, how a large truck would arrive with children that had been caught. And then, I also saw how they would carry the dead children from the building. It was horrid. During the Winter—it was obviously quite cold there—they would carry them out wrapped in rags. It was awful to look at it; and some of the corpses would be completely naked. And they stacked them up in the truck as if they were stacking lumber. And when I reached the corner I could hear the radio loudly blaring from the corner about the happy life of children in the Soviet Union, and about the terrible events going on in Italy and in Spain. At work you would hear the same things from the radio in the corridor. It was horrible.

**Q:** Did your own children have enough to eat?

**A:** Well how can I best answer? We didn't really go hungry as such, but there wasn't enough to go around either. I was teaching in school then. And in 1933 I took care of two small children whose parents had been arrested. The mother had been a teacher in Proskuriv. And I went there and took her children back to my house. I managed to have them formally accepted as lodgers—at that time, you were forbidden to take anyone in; you didn't have the right to. But I managed to have them officially registered, and I even had them enrolled in school.

We had ration cards. With one child's ration card you got 100 grams of butter a week, and 200 grams of bread a day. Today you normally won't find a child who eats 200 grams of bread, because the child also has, oh, roast meat, and pudding, and porridge, and fruit, and anything you like.

Right now, I am living on a pension. I get \$384. I pay for Blue Cross, and I pay for my housing and all of that. I can eat whatever I like; I can even allow myself sweets, and so on.

My husband and I used to get a little more, so that we normally gave the children the bread. But as to whether the children were completely satisfied, and as to whether they had what they needed, the answer is no, they never had what they needed in those years. As my son once said, "Oh, Mommy, I think that if there

really were enough potatoes, then we wouldn't need this bread." That's what the child said. So I really can't say that we actually went hungry the way others did.

I remember once my husband, who worked as a mechanic, drove out to fix some machinery at a collective farm. He brought back ten or 20 pounds of green beans. And in each pod, in each single pod, there was a weevil. Can you imagine that? So I sat down and pulled out each weevil individually from each pod with a needle, threw it out and cooked the green beans.

Later, I got tuberculosis. And while at the tuberculosis sanatorium, I was given some dog fat. I didn't use the fat myself; I used it to prepare the potatoes. They didn't know that this was what I did. You see, my thinking was: I didn't know whether or not I would survive the tuberculosis, but at least my children would get nourishment. So I can't really say that we experienced the same kind of hunger as the peasants in the villages. But it's terrible to even think about it now: How I sat and pulled out those weevils.

One day an acquaintance of ours paid us a visit. He was an elderly man who was already quite swollen. And he told us that it was very bad with him, that there wasn't enough to eat. Well, what could I give him? I could give him a bowl of soup. He ate the soup. And I also gave him some of those green beans with the weevils. Two days later, they told us that he had died. He was already swollen. So what could we really have done for him?

The main concern were the four children; we had four children at the time: Our own two and two others, the children of our acquaintance. In the school where I used to work in the library, they used to give the school children a plate of porridge for a small amount of money. And all the people working there, including the teachers and I, were entitled to the same ration of porridge. I myself never took a single spoonful of that porridge. I would bring it home with me. I would bring it and divide it among the four children. I never made any distinction between my own children and the others as to what I gave them. The other two children I treated for all practical purposes as if they were my own, and we never discriminated between them.

They spent a whole year with us, until their mother returned to emotional health. The year 1933 was drawing to a close. And another tragedy befell them: The husband had finished serving his three-year term, but when they freed him, they denied him the right to work. Only later was he allowed to work in the Donbas.

And, on his way back from exile, he happened to stop over in Kiev. And he came to see us. His last remaining sister was still living in Kiev. He stayed the night at his sister's, then came to visit us. My husband wasn't there. I was the only one at home. And he explained how he only had a transit ticket, and that he was only entitled to stay in town until he caught the next train out. And he didn't have the right to stay in Kiev longer than that. He had to go and report straight to work. My husband was not home when he came that morning. I myself was already dressed to go to work. So, I only had time for a brief chat with him, and he made a promise and said, "I'll come tomorrow early in the morning so that I can catch your husband before he goes to work and have a talk with him." This was the father of those two children. The next day we waited for him, but he didn't come. In the evening, he still didn't show up. And in the evening, his sister came and said that Serhii had fallen ill and was taken to the hospital. He had caught typhus. And next morning we received the news that he had died. We were told that as he had been

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resting in the typhus ward of the hospital that the tonsils in his throat burst. Apparently, they had not noticed his tonsils.

**Q:** Did you see a great number of starving peasants?

**A:** I saw very many indeed. I saw them especially in the long breadlines, because in Kiev in 1933, the so-called "commercial bread" first appeared. You could get it without ration cards. But this bread was more expensive: It cost two and a half karbovantsi per kilo. But you could get in these lines and buy bread even without ration cards. But the lines were so incredibly long that average people couldn't get any bread that way. People used to spend the night waiting in these lines. And sometimes a gang would come along and break up the line, and get all the bread for itself, and those people that had been standing the whole night would have to leave empty handed. And when the peasants would come and try to stand in the lines, the militia would pull them out of line. They would not allow peasants to stand in the lines. And there were a lot of our own people, especially Jews, who would yell at the peasants, "So! You didn't want to work in a collective farm, and now you've come here looking for handouts!" There were people who behaved this way. The peasants, however, weren't always pulled out of line by force.

And sometimes as you would be walking on your way to work, you would come across these frightful specters propped up against the houses, and all they were capable of was extending their hands out in supplication. They weren't even able to utter a single word. And the entire time, from the morning on, these heavy trucks would just drive along and pick up those who were still living. They would pick them up and drive them off somewhere, many kilometers beyond Kiev. But they still kept inundating the city. So, yes. There were very many peasants.

And then there were the children. The trucks would also pick these children up, and just keep picking them up. Some people would try to take them in; others would take them to the orphanages. A lot of homeless children escaped; they didn't want to live there. I had some acquaintances in those homes, and they used to say that the conditions were not all that bad, that the children were treated well, that they received enough food, that they got clothes. But they kept escaping. They didn't want to stay. I myself once spent some time with one of these homeless children—this was in the hospital when my lungs were bad. It was a 17-year-old girl, who had been living in one of the orphanages. And when she came down with tuberculosis, they got her a place in this hospital. And she had a bed right alongside mine. Since she knew Ukrainian, I spoke in Ukrainian with her. The Jews, you know, generally would only speak Russian. So we struck up a sort of a friendship. And just imagine! Her friends, the children from the orphanage somehow got the idea that the cure for tuberculosis was to swallow raw eggs. I have no idea where these homeless children managed to get those eggs, but the entire month that I was there in the hospital with her, they would bring her baskets of eggs. They did this every week, every Saturday or Sunday—these homeless children. Where they got the eggs, whether they stole them directly, or whether they would buy the eggs with the money they stole on the street, I have no idea. But the fact is that the entire month that I was there she got her weekly basket of eggs from her friends. And it is interesting to note that it was never the same person who would bring the eggs, always someone different.

The people who were swollen? Yes, there were very many of them walking about. But they would be rounded up whenever possible and taken out of the city. They would be caught and driven out. Oh, here comes Mrs. X.

Mrs. X.: Isn't this the lady? Hello.

A: Perhaps you could add something of interest. I really don't know what it is that I myself could add...

Mrs. X.: Well, I think that you are very well informed. But I really don't think that you saw the horrors I witnessed.

A: In the villages?

Mrs. X.: Oh, that which the villages suffered through! There were also people dying in the cities, but not like this. In the villages, it was sheer horror.

A: But I saw many of the peasants who came to the city. I saw very many of them. As well as homeless children. Very many homeless children. And there is one thing of interest I would like to add: Something that the homeless children used to do. At the time there was a typhus epidemic; and the homeless children used to collect... Well, typhus spreads through lice; that was the principal means of transfer. So the homeless children used to collect these lice from people stricken with the disease, put them into envelopes, seal the envelopes and stick them under the doors of the wealthiest homes. Do you understand? It was to infect these people with typhus. The homeless children used to do this kind of thing. And you can't really condemn them for it. They were expressing their protest in this way.

Mrs. X.: This is because no one paid them very much attention. They were just being herded together; and they weren't being treated well, these homeless children. Well, I myself lived in a village. I was born and married in a farmstead. But when they started all of this business of throwing out the *kulaks*, I left the farm. When dekulakization was going on, I was already in Volyn'; and, by that time, dekulakization had spread throughout the entire country. In July of 1933, I returned to the village. This wasn't really my village; this was already, as they say, an adopted village. But when we returned, we came upon a scene of horror. Children were sitting outside their houses propped up against the walls. They were bent over. Their bodies had already become rigid.

A: These were dead children sitting like that?

Mrs. X.: Well, yes! They were no longer capable of walking. They would take a few steps, then sit down. And the houses were surrounded by weeds. It was Spring. And no one was capable of doing any work. Plant something? What could you possibly plant? Absolutely nothing. They left absolutely nothing behind. They took everything. People tried to hide a little millet meal in some bottles, or else some goats. But they found even that. And these confiscations were especially designed to leave nothing behind. Well, when we arrived, it was already late... The grain was already high in the fields—wheat, beautiful wheat-ears. These were good lands. Our black earth. This was in the area of Vinnytsia; Podillia.

Q: What village was this?

Mrs. X.: This village here? Well, here you had Turbkiv and Kuniushenko and Lukashova. In all of these village, everyone died out. This happened in each of these villages. After three years in the Volyn' area someone informed on us. My husband was arrested. He was imprisoned for two years. He was released and walked home a distance of 100 kilometers. We had been living right at the Polish border. This was in the well-known city of Slavuta, at the Shepetivka station. Well,



they moved us out of there because a lot of people had been escaping to Poland. Every morning, news came—three families just escaped; four families. But we ourselves were afraid. So they sent us away from there. There was famine there too in the city, but not as visible. Then they sent us to a state farm 100 kilometers away. The state farm was formed out of a large estate. There were other people there like us, except that our children were a little bit bigger and were already going to school. There were two other families there. One had three children; the other had four. And the oldest of them all was about five years old. And they had to take their little bags and come along. Their eyes had already become swollen; they couldn't see; they couldn't see where they were going. The parents had also become swollen. And so they would go on their way like that, on and on, until the children had literally wasted away. They finally expired not in the fields, nor state farms, but right at home.

But we ourselves managed to survive somehow. We went where they grew potatoes. The state farm had planted a lot of potatoes. We buried them so that something would remain for us. The potatoes had frozen, so that when we got them out and cleaned them, they were brilliantly white when you took the skins off. This is how I managed to help my children survive.

Then I received a letter from my parents asking us to come back and saying that the really bad persecutions were already over, and that things were getting back to normal. So we arrived in July. Somewhere in the middle of July. Well, at that time a horrible famine was raging there. It was already time for the harvest, but everything was going to waste in the fields. There was no one left to go out and work. Then they came to me and accused me of being a *kulak*. So there was nothing left to do but go out and work. I worked in the fields day and night, day and night. Well, we had grindstones. Well, they began to use them for grinding sugar cane, and they began cooking this sugar. So, I was able to help my children get by. There weren't more than—oh, I would say—50 people left in this village. Everyone else died off, just died off. And it was like this everywhere: You would walk into any village and—horror! It had all become a vast wasteland. There was just no one around. But here and there a few people were left; they managed to revive a little, and were beginning to shuffle about.

There was a house three doors down from us. We ourselves, incidentally, were also renting a house; we did not have our own house. And the villagers were saying about this family—which was named, Harbuzyk—"Oh, Mrs. Harbuzyk's daughter just died." The young girl had just died, and her mother didn't know how, or where to bury her. So, she buried her in her own cellar. She put her in the basement, but then a second child died. So she buried this one there as well. We went there one day to have a look at what was going on. Well, this woman had already butchered her children's bodies. She was the only one left alive—she and her eight-year-old boy. And then she herself died, and only the little boy was left alive. And when they started to question him as to what this was all about, he said, "Well, my mother couldn't hear their screams anymore; she couldn't hear that she was hurting them. She just butchered them, and cooked them, and we ate them." Everyone felt a loathing toward toward this little boy. Everyone ran away from him.

People reacted to corpses on the road as if they were dead dogs. They were completely apathetic! They would come by, have a look, make a wry face, and then move on. These corpses were just lying there, just lying there. What can I tell you

*Case History SW1*

about what I saw? Oh, there was so much. And when someone died, he wouldn't be buried individually. Corpses were thrown into common graves and trenches that people dug. But I personally did not witness any burials myself.

That's how it is with our poor country. However long it has existed, it has always been unfortunate, and that's it. I remember that when we passed the Statue of Liberty, I looked on with wonder, and cried. And the thought came: Aren't we people just like everyone else? Why can't we have that freedom? Why? The people around were rejoicing, singing—they felt they finally had it. Freedom itself was standing right there in front of them.

*Appendix I*

## CASE HISTORY SW34

*Translated from Ukrainian by Darian Diachok*

**Question:** Please state your year of birth.

**Answer:** Nineteen hundred and twenty-two.

**Q:** Where were you born?

**A:** In Stavyshe, in Kiev Province.

**Q:** In which district?

**A:** The Stavyshe District.

**Q:** Where did you live during the 1920s and the 1930s?

**A:** In Stavyshe.

**Q:** What were your parents' professions?

**A:** My father worked in a bank, and my mother worked as a saleslady in a store.

**Q:** I see. So they weren't peasants, is that correct?

**A:** No, they weren't.

**Q:** And you had said you were born in...

**A:** Nineteen hundred and twenty-two.

**Q:** Do you remember anything from the NEP period?

**A:** Well, I might have been, oh, about seven or eight years old at the time. People lived well then. But this was only for a few years. Then people were milked dry. Every single drop was wrung out of them.

**Q:** What can you recall about collectivization?

**A:** I only remember that they took away horses, farming implements, tools. Everything was taken from people against their will. And then they shoved you into a collective farm.

**Q:** And what social category were you given, given the fact that your family wasn't a peasant family, how were you designated?

**A:** Well, I come from the peasant class, but I'm not a peasant. It was a painful experience looking at all that was going on, seeing how the people were being uprooted and scattered about, how the dying were being brought in. At the time I lived close to the hospital. People were being driven in from villages near and far, as well as from Stavyshe, my native village. People were even bringing in their own children, who were already swollen. They would come to spend the night. And they would spend the night, and then they would be...

Close by, there was a park belonging to the hospital. It was quite a large park. There were yellow acacias planted in the center of the park and fenced off. Well, this is right where the cemetery was. Enormous open pits were dug and the doctors carried on stretchers the bodies of those who had died and tossed them into the pits. The process would be repeated the next day, and so on, until the open pit was filled and covered over with dirt shoveled over it. I know the earth over the pits has settled quite a bit since that time. But today you can still locate the exact burial spot, right by the cemetery. This was the hospital morgue where they took patients who had died. Later, they didn't bother with the morgue anymore, but took the corpses straight to the open pits on stretchers. Often nurses carried as many as ten children on stretchers and tossed them into the pit.

**Q:** When did people begin to die?

## Appendix I

**A:** The precise time? When Spring came. People were wandering about the gardens and hoping to come upon something left behind in the gardens; they would dig and dig, and examine every clump of earth. If they came upon a smelly old potato, they would clean it and take the starchy residue. They would also dry and grind acacia blossoms. Linden leaves would also be dried and made into *ersatz* pancakes. People dug up all sorts of roots. It was terrible, absolutely terrible. People scattered all over; they wandered here and there. Sometimes, they'd spot some small creature in the water, like a turtle and eat it as food. It was terrible. People were reduced to this state. I was right there. Some of the starving were in such a bad way that they had begun to stink already. Their feet would swell up; their wounds would open and fester. It was terrible. You would see them walking about, just walking and walking, and one would drop, and then another, and so on it went.

**Q:** How many were there in your family?

**A:** Well, there were four children, my mother, father, and grandmother, who was already quite old.

**Q:** And how did you survive?

**A:** How did I survive? I'll tell you how. We always had a supply of pickled cabbage, which we would prepare for the Winter, as well as a supply of onions and potatoes. And that's all we had. This was the common practice. In villages, there were various ways to prepare provisions. Some people had had all their provisions, all their potato crop, seized, and they themselves had been thrown out of their houses. That's all that I remember, because I was still small then. It all began in 1929, and at that time I was only seven years old. And I can recall how they would deport people, people who never returned. And where they exiled these people, I can't say. Everything that they had was destroyed.

**Q:** Was there a church in your village?

**A:** We had three churches, in fact. One of them was called the Rozkishna Church. It belonged to a rather large town of over 10,000 inhabitants. The town was located on the other side of a dam and could be reached by taking the bridge. But for some reason Rozkishna church was on our side. I recall going past it in 1931 when the cross was being taken down. But I was not an actual witness to the dismantling of the bells. Apparently, they needed the metal to make weapons. During the dismantling, a band of women assembled at the church to protest what was going on. The militia was called; the women were roughed up, hit over the head. The next day, activists arrived at night and quietly cut down the bells.

The church was converted into a grain storage building. They would bring grain from Zhazhiv, 18 miles away from our village, which was once part of Kiev Region, but which is now part of Cherkasy Region. And that's one of the places from where they were trucking the grain out. They had an enormous grain elevator there, and day and night they transported the grain from there, grain collected from the collective farms. Day and night!

This was all done at the MTS, the Machine Tractor Station. And everywhere there were placards with the inscriptions, MORE GRAIN!, and other similar exhortations. More grain for the government. They literally pumped the grain out of the countryside, and all for the use of the government. In the Spring the Party sent in Komsomol members, who walked about the villages with pikes to which small scoops were attached. The *Komsomol* members searched literally every-

where to find hidden grain. They looked especially in places like hay piles in barns. They dug everywhere. And if they happened to find some grain that someone had hidden away, well, that was pretty much the end of him. He would never see the light of day again. That's how it was.

**Q:** And who exactly were these *Komsomol* members? Whose children were they?

**A:** The *Komsomol* members? Well, there were some Ukrainians among them, that's true. But the vast majority were sent from Moscow. At one point, so-called Ten Thousanders had been sent; there were supposed to have been 10,000 of them sent. Later, the government realized that this number was not enough, so it brought in the so-called Twenty-Five Thousanders. And it was these groups that confiscated the grain all over the countryside. And if you happened to be a member of the *Komsomol*, you were forced to do these things, too. But the possibility was always open to you, that if you did find hidden grain, you could fail to report it, or you pretend you hadn't seen anything.

**Q:** Did the Committees of Non-Wealthy Peasants exist at this time?

**A:** Non-Wealthy Peasants? Yes, there were such committees, in fact, pretty much all over the countryside; but they were quickly suppressed. Even though I was quite young, I remember that during the SVU, they were branded as "enemies of the people." I myself was also considered "an enemy of the people." They took away my father in 1937.

**Q:** Why was he taken away?

**A:** Why? Well, he had been branded an "enemy of the people," and they took him away in 1937. And they also took away one of my father's brothers, and another brother, as well. And to this day, we don't know what happened to them. And when my mother went to inquire as to my father's whereabouts at the militia, they told her that he had been sentenced to ten years without the right of correspondence. It was common knowledge that this meant he had been shot. Most likely, his body is somewhere in Vinnytsia. So, the four of us were left. Yurii was the youngest, just six months old at the time. And that was how my mother was left to fend for herself. Many of the other women were sent off to Kazakhstan. It was common practice for wives of the men that had been sentenced to be sent for five years to Kazakhstan to pick cotton, or to perform similar tasks. Five years! My own Godmother was sent there and actually returned. But this was during the war. After the war, my mother came here for a visit, and told us that it became standard practice to tell the wives whose husbands had been sentenced without the right of correspondence, "Your husband was killed in 1945." This was the standard line they gave everyone during the Khrushchev era.

**Q:** Do you recall how many people died of hunger during the Famine? What was the percentage?

**A:** In our village, you mean?

**Q:** Yes. Would you say it was about a half of the villagers?

**A:** Well, there was a village not far away from us called Krasenivka, which had a population of about 10,000. It was a rather large village. They had to put up a black flag at one end of the village, and another one at the other end which indicated that absolutely no one had survived, not even a dog, or cat. The houses were all overgrown with goosefoot and other weeds. And our village? Well, what

can I tell you? About ten percent of our village died of hunger. It was terrifying. Utterly terrifying.

**Q:** Were you yourself repressed during collectivization?

**A:** Well, in the beginning, you know, we had our own house, which later became my uncle's house. They evicted us and told us that they needed our house as part of the new collective farm, and they made an office out of my uncle's house. And they also confiscated 90% of everything we had. They took the land together with the house and all our belongings. We had had this garden there—and we lost all of this.

**Q:** And they didn't tell you anything?

**A:** At that point, they took whatever they wanted to, since technically these things were no longer ours. They would walk all over our fields, probing the latter with the sharp pikes. The pike was jammed into the ground and pulled up. If any grains of wheat were picked up, the conclusion was that grain was being hidden from the state. The men with the pikes were everywhere.

**Q:** Were you going to school at the time? And if so, was it a Ukrainian school?

**A:** Yes, it was. In our school, whenever any of the children mentioned the Famine, they were corrected by the teachers. They were told that there was no famine, simply a year of difficulties. They confiscated all that we had and designated the year as one of difficulties!

There was a cemetery not far from us. There were many beautifully made crosses and memorials there. This was during the Famine. Every night there were two or three graves dug up. Wealthy people had been buried there, and, naturally, there were valuables in the coffins—a ring perhaps, a watch, or earring. The robbers were caught. A man by the name of Abramovich and his son. The father had forced the son into it. Well, they had been trying to break into a tomb—the rich people had all been buried in tombs. The valuables buried with them were just waiting to be taken. Nothing was done to prevent theft. The entire site was ruined and everything of value was taken.

Well, when someone like a priest was buried, a gold cross was often placed in his coffin. During the Famine hundreds of graves were unearthed. On one occasion, they caught the father who had been forcing his son to steal. They crawled into the tomb with a candle ... and they managed to get in carrying a candle, and the two were caught. The father was placed in custody ... the boy was crying; his classmates were asking him about it.

During the Famine they used to give us tea and a small piece of bread at school. The tea was made in the following fashion. It was simply overcooked sugar and some coloring. And that was our tea. A lot of children did not go to school; they were no longer able to, because they had already reached the stage where their bodies had swelled. A large number of children died.

A few of the villagers had planted potatoes in the Spring, but they had to do the plowing with shovels, because by this time, all the horses had died and no implements were left. They dug the earth with shovels and planted the potatoes. But the problem was that anyone could easily figure out where it was that you planted the potatoes, and the next day, usually at night, someone would come and dig up what you had planted. The field would again be barren. That's what went on. So, as a result, people would try to cover their tracks by raking over the newly sowed ground. We used to plant small potato cuttings which were little more

than peels. Well, we planted these in our garden, and the potatoes grew beautifully. Something so simple, it could only have come from God. It was just a potato peel with some eyes on it. We planted the peels and got perfectly good potatoes that way. That's how we did it.

The greatest number of deaths from starvation actually occurred when the wheat-ears had matured. People began to steal the wheat-ears. They were starving, you understand, and all at once the wheat-ears were available. And when the people began eating great quantities of wheat-ears, they died even more rapidly, because their intestines would rupture. That's when the greatest number of corpses began appearing.

**Q:** And what did they do with the corpses?

**A:** What indeed! Well, they went looking for them; they collected the corpses and dumped them into pits. And if the authorities happened to come across someone who was somehow managing to stay relatively healthy, well, they gave him the job of watching over the pit that they had dug out to make sure that it wasn't used by anyone else.

**Q:** Are you aware of any cases of cannibalism?

**A:** I heard of instances, but had never witnessed anything personally. But everyone talked about it. We had our own newspaper, *The Red Collectivist*. The newspaper mentioned that someone had been apprehended in connection with the discovery of barrels of salted meat. I can't recall the entire episode. Rumors were circulating involving the activists. There were Ukrainians among them, and there may have been others as well. They were the real activists, you know. They were involved in dekulakization, and they used to go drinking in the gardens. In fact, they didn't do much of anything else, except when it came time to dekulakize someone, they'd come and confiscate everything, throwing the children out, like unwanted puppies, into the courtyard. And this was in the dead of Winter. The head of the household would go the village soviet and request help for his seven children, and the activists would tell him something like, "Get out of here, and take those little mongrels with you!" That's how it was. And no one would help these people out. And so they would just die...

**Q:** Who was the head of the village soviet at the time?

**A:** The head of the village soviet? A man by the name of Makharyns'kyi. I've forgotten his first name. And later they took him away as well. I don't know what the cause of that was.

**Q:** And what sort of man was he? Can you describe him?

**A:** What kind of man?! Well, he did whatever they ordered him to do.

**Q:** I see, a bureaucrat!

**A:** Whatever the bureaucracy told him to do, he'd do. You know, he himself didn't actually participate in the dirty work of dekulakization; and whenever they told him to pump the grain out of a particular village, he would send in the activists, the so-called Ten Thousanders, and later the Twenty-Five Thousanders sent by Moscow. And these were all foreigners, outsiders.

The Famine existed only in Ukraine. There were a lot of people, a lot of people who wanted to go to Russia. People figured they could go there with the shirt on their backs and sell it for bread. On their way back everything they were carrying would be confiscated. And they would be arrested and sentenced. I myself know of several people who went there. You see, Russia was some



distance away from us. People who lived closer, did try to go, but the ones who made it, never returned with anything. Everything they managed to get was confiscated. By this time, the passport system had already been introduced. According to this system, you would be arrested and in great difficulties if you happened to be somewhere for nine days without reporting. So, whatever you did, you would invariably find yourself in hot water.

**Q:** Did you leave the village during the Famine?

**A:** My father was still around. I remember once we bought some coffee. The so-called coffee had actually been made out of barley. It was just oven-roasted barley. Well, since there was nothing to eat, we were told to mix some of this and some of that into this coffee. This mixture was awfully bitter! Yuck!

Yet, here in this country, they won't even allow the documentary to be shown on television. Showing it would be good propaganda for America. And I don't understand why it's this way. Are there Communists in America that won't allow the film to be seen? I simply don't understand it. The Ukrainian people are under fire for no reason at all. They had it in for Ukrainians back home, and now the same thing is starting up here in America.

**Q:** Do you remember how the Famine came to an end?

**A:** How the Famine ended? Well, they began to provide a little something for the people; people began to go to the collective farms for soup. But as far as to how the Famine actually ended? Well, it happened gradually, in stages. How can I explain? Well, the thing is that it never really completely ended. That's the way it is over there. People were no longer dying en masse, but in a sense the Famine still continued. In fact, it recurred in 1947. Once again there was a great famine in Ukraine. My mother recounted how there was a great migration to the cities. Life was a bit better in the cities. But even in the cities, people were dying of hunger.

**Q:** Did a lot of people try to get to Donbas during the Famine?

**A:** A lot of people fled to Donbas. They got jobs in the mines, but they weren't permitted to register as residents there. In our village there was a man by the name of Kruk. He had been involved in the Revolution and was supposed to have shot some Communists. In schools, this fellow was always mentioned as a "bandit." When the Germans came, he returned to the village from Donbas, where he had been the director of a mine there. And he had also been a Party member. And he also provided papers to people who needed them to enable them to get on with their lives. The older villagers immediately recognized Kruk upon his arrival. I didn't know him personally. They shouted that Kruk had arrived, but what happened to him after that, I can't say.

**Q:** What sort of people joined the Party in your village?

**A:** There were very few Party members in our village.

**Q:** Well, what sort of people were the Party members?

**A:** What sort of people? There was a man by the name of Pokotylo who shot himself during the Famine. I believe he was in the District Party Committee, but I don't know what his rank was. I just know that he was a Communist and that he shot himself. There was another man by the name of Nahornyi who also shot himself. This all happened during the Famine. These Communists had committed suicide during the Famine, as did Mykola Khvyly'ovyi, the writer, and Skrypnyk. Others committed suicide as well, because they saw what was actually going on. At one time they had embraced Lenin's slogans, slogans that Ukraine would be

allowed to separate from the Soviet Union if it chose to. These men believed the slogans, or at least I suppose they did. But later, when they understood the truth, they shot themselves. They had to. And that's how it was with our Party members.

And then came the Party purges. They were directed from Moscow. Party purges. And these were public spectacles. There was a building in our village that served as a club. And this is where the proclamations were made. When the Party purge began, they zeroed in on this fellow named Hryshenko. They started in on him, tagging him with all sorts of accusations—that he had pumped out insufficient quantities of grain, that there was too little of this and too little of that. Although there was already nothing at all left to pump out, and they were still accusing him of falling short. “Too little!” they shouted at him.

By 1934 they were already giving out 250 grams for one workday. This 250 grams is the equivalent of about half a pound of bread a day. But you really had to work to earn this ration. This was a very difficult life, but people began to manage. They planted potatoes and different varieties of pumpkins, beets, and other staples. But during the Famine, a group of soviet ruffians would come through the villages and would even pull out whatever people happened to be baking in the oven. In the markets, they would even confiscate and destroy such items as beans in jars. It was terrible. Well, this is what I myself know and saw.

**Q:** How did people rebuild their lives after the Famine?

**A:** Slowly. Before collectivization, there were still large barns around the countryside, but all these were burned as firewood. Whoever had fences for keeping in domestic livestock, these were burned also because people didn't have anything to keep themselves warm. The only housing that was left were so-called “houses on chicken legs.” Reconstruction was simply awful. It was repulsive just to look at these buildings. It's probably the same way today. They say that there have been some changes, some minor changes made, that some sidewalks have been added, that electrical lines have been added, and that sort of thing...

**Q:** Did people ever talk about the Famine after it was over?

**A:** They talked about it constantly. If I knew you well, then I would feel free to talk about it; but if I didn't know you well, I wouldn't feel comfortable talking. I would be afraid of your denouncing me to the NKVD. There were so-called Judases who were capable of turning you in. Whatever you would say, they would immediately report it, and you would be in for some real trouble.

**Q:** You were only 11 years old during the Famine?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** But did you hear the adults talking about the political affairs of the day? Were you aware at the time who Skrypyk was? Did you know who Kaganovich was? What was being said about these political figures?

**A:** We all knew! Kaganovich, Molotov. Except that at that time no one could speak openly about these matters. We couldn't speak openly. Let me tell you about this little song that we had from that period. I can still remember this song from my school days.

During the Famine, they sent this fellow, Postyshev, as Secretary to the Ukraine. And then there was this other fellow, Kossior, who was Polish. He was in the Politburo. So you can see for yourself what lovely songs we had to sing as we starved.

*Appendix I*

Hey, our harvest knows no limits or measures.  
It grows, ripens, and even spills over onto the earth,  
Boundless over the fields; while the patrolling pioneers  
Come out to guard the ripening wheat-ears of grain.

And now here's the refrain:

We've hardened our song in the kiln's fires  
And carry it aloft like a banner, offering it to you;  
And in this way, Comrade Postyshev, we are submitting  
Our report of the work we've done.

I remember the song as if it were yesterday. We had a very beautiful park in our village, with a stream flowing by. A gorgeous park. And in all the parks, there were loudspeakers placed, as part of this radio network, which was itself linked to the post office. And in these parks, you could always hear songs in Russian being sung, one song in particular:

Swiftly as birds, one after another,  
Fly over our Soviet homeland  
The joyous refrains of town and country:  
Our burdens have lightened—  
Our lives have gladdened.

They broadcast this song while people were dying in the Famine. "Our lives have gladdened." I can recall this song from my school years, when they were teaching the children to sing *The Patrolling Pioneer*. What kind of a country is this in which grain is kept from the people for the sake of a "better life?" They themselves sang, "The joyous refrains of town and country." And this song would play every day, ten times a day, and as you were listening to the song, everywhere all around you people are screaming, and starving to death, while the song played on: "*Our burdens have lightened.*"

**Q:** And what were you thinking?

**A:** What could I think?! All I could think of was where could I get some food. I didn't think about anything else. They let the Ukrainians have it because they had wanted to separate from Russia. That's what I think. The Ukrainian nation is still paying for that even up to this very day.

**Q:** Would you like to add anything to what you've said?

**A:** What is there that I could add? As long as you have Communism there, you will have this endless agony there. They can always institute another policy similar to NEP; they can always try something like that again. From what I hear, they want to give the people a greater share, a greater share of land as well—the primary reason being that the private plots of land yield more crops per acre than the collective farms. But people aren't going to fall for this. First of all, they don't have the implements with which to farm private land; and, secondly, let's say, if a man does work his field, and he seeds it and plants something—potatoes, for example—then they'll tell him to pay his taxes. And regardless whether or not something grows or doesn't grow in your garden, you have to come up with the payment. People don't want this system and aren't going to be taken in by it. And as long as this system continues to exist over there, then that's how it will be over there.

*Case History SW34*

**Q:** Thank you very much indeed for this most interesting testimony.

**A:** I was quite young, but I saw a great deal. In fact, I can recall the events of those times better than I can recall what I did yesterday.

**Q:** Oh, yes.

**A:** It was all so horrible.

*Appendix I*

## Appendix II

### ITALIAN DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR DISPATCHES

The following documents are verbatim translations of diplomatic reports from the Italian State Archives in Rome: *Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri d'Italia, Affari Politici—URSS, Busta 8 (1933)* and deal with the Ukrainian Famine. The documents were obtained by the Ukrainian Famine Research Committee in Toronto and by Ivan Hvat' of Munich, who was temporarily assigned to the Commission on the Ukraine Famine by Radio Liberty. Both the UFRC and Mr. Hvat' were assisted by clerics of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Rome.

While the observations of the Italian Consul in Kharkiv, Sergio Gradenigo, constitute important testimony concerning the Ukrainian Famine, it should be kept constantly in mind that the observer was a dedicated Fascist and that his prejudices come through in his reports. This is especially so with his references to the Jews in Ref. No. 474/106 for May 31, 1933, *The Famine and the Ukrainian Question*, where the views expressed are not only anti-Semitic but also historically false, since the members of Jewish agricultural settlements in the Ukrainian steppe perished in substantial numbers during the Famine. Moreover, his estimate for the mortality which the Famine caused seems exaggerated.

Despite these and other shortcomings which might be found in his reports, Gradenigo was obviously an acute observer both of the political situation and of everyday life in Ukraine's cities. For this reason, publication of the following dispatches make an important contribution to our understanding of the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933 and its context.

Translation of the documents was done by Neil L. Inglis except for those marked with a "o" after the heading of each dispatch. The latter diplomatic papers were translated by the Ukrainian Famine Research Committee and edited by Mr. Inglis.

# Vice-Consulate of Italy

## KHARKIV

May 19, 1932 - X

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref. No...

Embassy of His Majesty, the King of Italy, MOSCOW  
Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome

RE: *The food situation and the rise in the cost of living; armed bands in the countryside.*

We now know that for every hen the peasants keep, they still have to pay either R. 3.50 a month in duties to the Government, or else 30 eggs. I have asked how it is that a hen can be expected to lay an egg unfailingly each day, and what profit margin is left for the peasant if he is required to hand over the entire proceeds to the State. I have been told that for every hen that is reported, you must logically suppose that there are a further two hens that are not being reported.

For over a month now, the Kharkiv restaurants have not been serving bread along with their set-price dinners. You have to pay separately for each slice or roll (R. 1.60).

No bread of any kind is being sold on the open market any more, not even the crusts of bread (scraps from private table and the like) which you used to be able to pick and choose out of baskets at 15 kopecks a piece, or even the slices of black bread at 50 kopecks each.

One doctor, having lost his bread book, sent out his maid-servant off to market with 20 rubles to look for some bread, and she came back empty-handed.

Bread made out of corn-meal or other grains, flavored with egg-yolk, is on sale at the Poltava station buffet at 12 rubles for a 250 gr. piece.

The lines of people waiting for bread distribution have grown INTERMINABLE: you can see people standing for 300/400 meters all along the sidewalk of a road, and you find the store (where the bread is being distributed) around the block of a parallel street; there are people with chairs and books to read. The other evening, distribution began at 1800 hours, and I had seen the line, half the length of Pushkin Street, as early as 9 o'clock in the morning. In Moscow Street, I have seen bread being distributed at a photographic equipment store: they say that this is due to the fact that the military ovens are being repaired, and that the citizens in question must accordingly supply bread to the garrison first and to the general public second. It still has yet to be explained by stores that sell everything but bread are being used for bread sale purposes.

Beggars in the streets aren't interested in money any more, as they can't get bread with money, and it's bread they really want.

Market prices are roughly as follows: a pood of unsifted flour is 200/220 R., and it has even reached 300 R.; potatoes at R. 3 per kg.; a savoy cabbage, R. 12; powdered sugar, mixed up with all sorts of muck (it's bottom-of-the-sack stuff), at R. 10/12 per kg. They say that meat is being sold in scraps and is being carried

*Appendix II*

around the market by hand, although it frequently comes from animals that have died of hunger or disease, when it isn't cat meat or dog meat. Some months ago, the director of a hospital bought some smoked pork on the market, and after eating it without having cooked it, he contracted trichina and is still in serious condition; he escaped death by pure chance, as the trichina didn't invade his heart.

Simultaneous reports are arriving from the countryside around Kiev and Vinnytsia that peasants, who have already taken refuge in the forests, are banding together and are attacking the GPU's depots and detachments. Actual skirmishes have occurred in several locations. This phenomenon is being compared with brigandage, already flourishing in Ukraine by 1920 and after the Civil War with the Whites.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL VICE-CONSUL



YEAR V—NO. 56  
FAMINE IN THE SOVIET UKRAINE

ROME: JUNE 9, 1932—X

The correspondent for the *Vossische Zeitung* (Berlin, 8), a newspaper which supports the German-Soviet alliance, has wired an alarming dispatch from the Soviet Ukraine, in which he declares that "this ancient bread-basket of Europe is standing on the brink of a famine, which it seems could be even more horrible than the notorious famine of 1921." The journalist goes on to say that if the Ukrainian people are starving to death, then it's not invasions of locusts, droughts or crop failures that are responsible, but rather the indecent haste of land collectivization.

After referring to this disastrous economic policy, which will assuredly bring ruin upon this nation that is so richly endowed with natural resources, the correspondent describes "the long lines of peasants, both young and old, men, women and children, who are trooping into the cities from all over Ukraine in search of a crust of bread. Weary and miserable, they trudge alongside the walls and try to sell off bits of embroidery work their womenfolk have made over the Winter, at ridiculously low prices and to customers that are few and far between. Those who manage to sell some handicraft products are envied by those who have nothing to offer the passers-by, other than their boots or the clothes off their backs, because today the people are pinning their hopes on the mildness of Summer temperatures. In return, they get a loaf of bread weighing between two to four kilos, which will help to keep them alive for a few days more.

"These peasants, who are invading the cities (according to this German reporter), are neither the '*kulaks*' (rich peasants), completely dispossessed by Communist law, nor are they the '*tysheni*' (former bourgeois, now stripped of all rights on the grounds of their non-proletarian origin); rather, they are mostly former members of '*kolkhoz*' (State agricultural communities), i.e., people belonging to the rural Ukrainian population."

The Ofinor Agency reports that it is interesting to note how no political pressure has been successfully brought to bear to muzzle this journalist, in the face of the unmitigated economic catastrophe that has befallen this benighted country.

We have the following details on the political situation in Kiev, supplied by a number of fugitives who have managed to cross the border in secret. In Kiev there hasn't just been a military rebellion, but also a strike by workers who haven't received any wages for five weeks. The employees at the arsenal, who used to be a bulwark of Communism in Kiev, barricaded themselves in the factory after having beaten up and thrown out all the Communists. Faced with the menacing posture of the workers who had hunkered down inside the Arsenal, the GPU troops declined to attack. Their leader, the (...)ekist Menadzé, was shot to death and his troops withdrew. It was only after thorough and intensive bombardment, lasting for half an hour, that the rebels surrendered on condition they be allowed to leave the arsenal in freedom. Yet once caught, they were immediately shot, and around 400 were thrown in jail, where they await the judgment of the GPU Supreme Court (Ofinor).

L'ECO DELLA STAMPA—Milan, Via Giovanni Jaurés, 60—This is an international press clippings office.

*Appendix II*

Moscow: July 25, 1932—X

Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome

RE: *Ideas, admissions and deliberations of the III Conference of the All-Ukrainian Communist Party in Kharkiv.*

The III Conference of the All-Ukrainian Communist Party has taken on special importance inasmuch as its three main speakers, Kossior (Secretary of the A-UCP) on the one hand, and Molotov and Kaganovich (both hailing from Moscow) on the other, all dealt in particular with the subject of the agricultural situation in Ukraine.

The description outlined below by the texts of the speeches, of course, applies only to Ukraine, but as Ukraine forms an appreciable portion of the Russian (*sic*) agricultural economy, it must weigh heavily upon any assessment of the general situation.

The key admissions and facts may be described as follows:

- 1) The Party organizations haven't bothered to develop an effective rural economy in any practical sense, being wrapped up instead in the theoretical applications of Party directives, and clinging tenaciously to harmful and destructive (rather than constructive) practices, as they have had no desire to attune these directives to the needs of the situation.
- 2) A spirit of co-operation on the part of the peasants has not been forthcoming. This needs to be encouraged before anything else, by providing the peasants with what they are entitled to expect from industry, i.e. articles of everyday use, clothes, etc.
- 3) The organizations must all strictly comply with orders from the Party and the Government, and they must no longer indulge in independent (and sometimes downright conflicting) interpretations and initiatives, as these have severely damaged the entire agricultural economy in Ukraine. In particular, they must take care not to violate the required uniformity in treatment of the working class and the general public, by complying with the Government's decisions on Soviet trade, production quotas, etc.
- 4) The quantity of rural products whose delivery is required by the Government has been reduced to such proportions that, so long as order and common sense prevail at the time of production quotas, the Plan may be implemented 100%.

I should like to pluck the following items from Kossior's speech (the heaviest on specifics), which should help to shed some light on the situation.

Collectivization has covered 70% of the entire land in Ukraine, while 11% is occupied by the *sovkhozes*. Ukraine can claim 447 Machine Tractor Stations, with 18,000 tractors. All told, there are 3,000 tractors in Ukraine with 400,000 horse power. This power has quadrupled in comparison with 1929.

The sowing conditions this year have been unfavorable. 4.5% less has been sowed than the last year. These problems, whether they be weather-related or

caused by poor organization or sabotage by the *kulaks*, have been surmounted thanks to assistance from the Central Committee of the Union's Communist Party and from the Council of the Commissars of the People, which have sent foodstuffs, seeds, and tractors.

The unsuccessful production quotas and the problems of the Spring sowing were further attributable to the inefficiency of the Party's organizations and the collectives' organizations, to the inflexibility of the programs, which have failed to take account of the conditions and opportunities in the various districts, and by the theoretical implementation of Party directives.

These mistakes, which have led to DISASTROUS results in the last harvest and production quotas, must never be allowed to happen again.

The management centers have been misinformed both about the plans and about the feasibility of implementing them. The blame lies in part with the management centers and in part with the Districts, which have been reporting untruthfully. The districts themselves, 400 of them, have in turn been incorrectly informed about actual conditions on the collectives, to the point that they have imposed larger plans on small collectives and smaller plans on other large collectives, as a result of which some districts have yielded 100% and others 60%. Wheat losses at harvest-time were enormous, and today you can observe unworked fields with wheat grown from the unharvested grain left during the preceding harvest. It has to be admitted that the sowing has been poorly executed.

In districts where efficient organization and a struggle for collectivization were imperative, the Party organizations have proved second-rate and quite unequal to their tasks. Incidents have occurred in these districts which could well be described as counterrevolutionary.

The Central Government has set a quota of 356 million poods of agricultural products for Ukraine. This figure may well be reached, as it is 79 million poods fewer than the figure for last year and 39 million poods fewer than what was actually achieved the other year.

We might add that 120 to 150 million poods of products were lost last year in Ukraine. The greater part of the losses occurred in the southern part of the steppe, where there was a plentiful harvest. The class struggle manifested itself right at the time of the harvest and grain requisitions. Care must be taken this year to ensure that this does not have to happen again.

Even Molotov's speech contained a number of interesting points:

"Ukraine has spared no effort or endeavor to create a formidable industrial complex. Efforts in this direction have prevented Ukraine from attending to agricultural problems just as successfully. *We have failed to realize that without agricultural development, it will not be possible for us to achieve industrial development.*

"Nineteen hundred and thirty-one has been a hard year for the entire Soviet Union. Many districts have been stricken with drought. The upper and middle Volga, the southern region of the Urals, western Siberia and Kazakhstan have all been in trouble. The Government has had to intervene, and has given 107 million poods of wheat so that the populations can survive and the sowing can be carried out. This has meant that the State's reserves have been whittled away in no small measure."

Noteworthy in Kaganovich's speech was his emphasis on the mechanization of agriculture. He claimed that the Union possessed 29,000 tractors and 1,800 automobiles as at the 1st of January 1929. No mower-threshers were available.

By the 1st of July there were 146,000 tractors, 10,000 automobiles and 10,500 mower-threshers. In Ukraine alone the tractors had gone up from 9,200 to 31,000, and mower-threshers currently stand at 1,800. Since 1928, the surface area under cultivation has increased from 113 million hectares to 136 million hectares.

The Conference concluded its business with a resolution which stated that:

The poor economic management of the collectives and the extraordinary losses during the harvest are the result of the managerial cadres' lack of experience and inefficient management, as well as of the bad influence of the remaining *kulaks*.

Dividing Ukraine up into provinces will improve and simplify management in the districts and collective farms, and over the next two or three years their harvests will accordingly be at least one and a half times greater than the harvest for their best years.

The setting-up of giant collective farms should be dispensed with, since these have proved unmanageable, as must the establishment of collectives through coercion. In future, these should arise solely out of the free initiative of the peasants, against whom only the weapon of propaganda need be used.

The heavy losses of horses and of livestock in general, particularly during last Autumn and last Winter (and partly during the Spring), were not simply attributable to the deficiency and poor quality of the animal feed, but also to the mistreatment and neglect of the horses following the switch to harvest mechanization. Even in the sowing season this year the final results have been due to the horses, and so it will be with the harvest, despite the continuous increase in machines and tractors. (We might infer from this passage that at some point the tractors were almost all out of action due to breakdowns, and that the surviving horses proved invaluable at that particular crisis point).

In spite of the difficulties which it has been experiencing, Ukraine may yet produce its assigned 356 million poods.

Out in the countryside, an agreement needs to be reached that if a collective has been so well managed that it has succeeded in obtaining a higher-than-estimated harvest, then it should be entitled to keep the surplus for itself. At the next harvest, threshing should only be carried out from dawn till dusk. Individual enterprises should not be made the subject of administrative measures governing the harvest in any case. Only peasants fixed to the collectives should be taken to court. The land for the Autumn sowings should be distributed to 'these latter' probably refers to 'individual economies' by the 15th of July.

These arrangements mark the return of the system used in the prewar MIR, while the collective farm is increasingly acquiring the status of a cooperative, which receives a plot of land from the State on long lease, for which it pays a given quota in kind, and the *sovkhos* is increasingly taking on the status of a large landed estate exploited directly by the State.

(signature illegible)

**EMBASSY OF ITALY**  
in the U.S.S.R.

Moscow: November 10, 1932—Year XI

TELEX No. 5573/2258

ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

RE: *Food crisis in Ukraine*

The food crisis in Ukraine is becoming increasingly critical. Supplies to the city of Kharkiv are taking place only with difficulty: meat and fats are in short supply. The hopes placed in the annual market, which is held in Kharkiv at the end of October, have all come to nothing: few were the peasants who attended the market with their products, and those who did attend sold them at exceedingly high prices. For instance, one cabbage was being sold at the price of 2 to 2.50 rubles, ten carrots at 5 rubles, one glassful of white beans at from 2 to 2.50 rubles, one apple at 1 ruble, and one duck at 16 rubles. Lard was nowhere to be found, and sugar (sold in limited quantities) was going for 8 rubles.

This information was published in the Soviet press itself.

(signature illegible)

**Royal Consulate of Italy**  
**KHARKIV**  
**U.S.S.R.**

Kharkiv, December 6, 1932 — XI

Ref. No. 586/136

ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW  
ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME

RE: THE CONSEQUENCES OF COLLECTIVIZATION IN THE VILLAGE  
OF LUSTDORF, NEAR ODESSA.

I have sufficient figures at my disposal to illustrate the situation in the village of Lustdorf, near Odessa, before and after collectivization of the countryside.

Lustdorf is a village five kilometers away from Odessa, located by the seaside, and inhabited by Germans, natives of Baden and Württemberg. Up till 1930 it had been pretty much left in peace, apart from tax assessments and the more or less gross acts of tyranny which have marked the various stages of the crisis in the USSR.

In 1930, at the time when compulsory collectivization and deportation of *kulaks* were decreed, Lustdorf had 75 well-kept houses, with some 800 inhabitants, almost all of them comfortably off, but very few wealthy. It was then that one of the Communist Party's many "brigades" of "activists" arrived from Odessa, comprised of Odessa Jews and some Russians, and the "Committees of Have-Nots" were formed.

The committee ordered the confiscation of property belonging to the richest peasants, and particularly of those who had land on lease and were cultivating it with the assistance of farmhands. The deportation of the families thus affected soon followed. Men, women, children, whole families, all had to leave for the North.

With just three cows and three horses, one farm-house and 25 *desiatynas* of land, in Lustdorf you already belonged to the *kulak* class, particularly if you held land on lease.

A total of just nine families left Lustdorf in two rounds (March and Autumn 1930), because a larger number of wealthy people could not be found, in spite of the urgent requests that were coming from Odessa.

They were transported by the cartload 40 *verst*s to the north of Odessa and loaded onto a train out in open country. They were kept locked up in the cars as they passed through the stations in Ukraine, under orders not to sing religious hymns, or anything else for that matter, and not to make themselves heard in any way. Only out in open country did the train stop twice a day to air out the cars. Many died in transit, children mostly, and some newborn infants. They arrived in Archangel after eight days. Already there were 85,000 deportees from all over the USSR, jammed into monasteries, churches, and abandoned factories. All social classes were present, students, clergymen, semi-brigands from the Caucasus. From Archangel, part were sorted into the forests to the right and left of the Dvina; and

part onto the Solovky Islands, in the old monastery. My informant spent a month in Archangel under a large roof, formerly a furniture factory, previously burned down, the roof of which had been remade in wood. There were five beds on superimposed bunks. Four thousand and five hundred people were there at first, children included, but owing to the lack of heating (at 40° below zero), the lack of ventilation, the horrible food (a watery soup which 'tasted' of fish) and the infected parasites, there was terrible mortality from classic epidemic typhus and 'hunger typhus'.

After one month he was sent out into the forests to cut down trees amid snow which came up to chest-height. There were deaths caused by accidents at work (huge trees which, once cut down, fell down before the greenhorns underneath could get out of the way, owing to the exceptionally deep snow) as well as by a revolt that was brutally crushed by the GPU, who came on dog-sleds, bearing machine-guns.

At Archangel it was possible to sell clothes and blankets in exchange for bread. Everybody was speaking at that time of an imminent armed intervention by the Pope (a crusade) whose army would have to be the Italian army. The local people took pity on the deportees.

After two months, my informant was able to obtain a document from the Lustdorf community secretary (a friend of his) on which he was declared to be an 'average peasant'. He was accordingly able to purchase a rail ticket and make a return journey. But needless to say, he didn't go back to his own country, as otherwise he too would have come to a bad end, and anyway, who would have helped him to escape from that hellhole?

When collectivization occurred, the village possessed 300 cows and 120 horses all told. But the peasants, forced to turn everything over to the *kolkhoz*, hastened to sell off or slaughter the livestock and exhaust their supplies.

Two years afterwards, the situation stands as follows:

The Lustdorf *Kolkhoz*, comprising all the inhabitants, and roughly the same number of people as there were two years ago, now has just 75 cows and 20 horses, and no pigs.

Its livestock resources have accordingly fallen by 75% in terms of cows, 83% in terms of horses, and 100% in terms of pigs.

The decree enabling the collectivists to start raising livestock again on their own has met with scant success, inasmuch as for every cow there has been a required contribution to the State of five liters of milk per day against compensation of 20 kopecks per liter. Since a cow produces an average of ten liters a day, the owner has been able to get one ruble in earnings for the first five liters and a further 12/15 for the other five. However, since one has had to keep a couple of liters for oneself, the beast's yield has been ten rubles a day at most. You can no longer feed a cow today on ten rubles a day, because the feed costs more. Furthermore, invested capital may be wiped out overnight by the death of livestock or some fresh wave of requisitions. All these considerations have meant that only a few people (and only where special circumstances have allowed) have had the courage to start afresh. In Lustdorf, there are now only seven privately-owned cows.

It has been easier to raise one or two pigs privately per family, because with pigs, at the time they are slaughtered, the State requires only one *pood* of contribution of slaughtered meat.

## Appendix II

Needless to say, no-one has been raising any horses, as these have no place in the family life of the collectivized person. Only the independent peasants in their few remaining holdouts still have any interest in keeping horses to work on their land.

The Lustdorf *Kolkhoz* inherited 150 pigs from its original constituent peasants. Yet already by 1931, mistreatment and feed shortages (it seems that those in charge of looking after the animals sold off their assigned fodder by themselves) or contagious diseases had finished off every single one of them, and according to my informant they were simply buried, and it never occurred to anybody that they might at least have been given to a soap factory.

As for the horses: of the 120 originally inherited, only 20 are still alive. The others died of starvation or mistreatment. The fodder and hay have all gone, and the harnesses have vanished as well. As my informant says, one fine morning there wasn't so much as a single girth left to be found. They no longer knew what to do with them.

My informant goes on to ask what possible interest can anybody take in an animal which doesn't belong to him. The beast is taken away in the morning; it is led back to the stable and plunked down there after ten hours of work. Then do they feed it? Do they water it? Curry-comb it? Take off its trappings? Who knows? That's no concern of ours. If the beast is famished and filthy tomorrow, what right does anybody have to protest? Or to whom? And why should they? The answer would only be: So you think the horse belongs to you? Your job is to till the soil, not to worry about the horses. And that is why today there are only 20 horses left, according to my informant, who was repeating what he had been told by his collectivized relatives who had stayed behind in Lustdorf.

And this example could well be typical. With minor variations, it's the same story throughout Ukraine.

The peasants have lost interest in everything. Their own houses (where they live and which once belonged to them) have run to rack and ruin. My informant says that the bare minimum needed for protection from the rain is repaired for as long as possible, but that's it. And anyway, what materials are we talking about? And who's going to pay for the repairs?

In this way, a comparatively affluent community which had been giving its natural share of agricultural products to the Ukrainian economy, has been turned into a bunch of slackers living in tumbledown houses, on the brink of starvation, and producing only around 25% of what they were producing previously.

The *kolkhozes'* managers, required in the first two years after their inception to supply meat and agricultural products to the various cooperatives in the cities at the ridiculously low prices at which they were then to be distributed to factory workers, were soon brought to the verge of bankruptcy, and not only that, but the collectivized peasants were asking to leave the *kolkhoz*, seeing as they were being remunerated with such meager supplies (everything was going off to the cooperatives and for grain requisitions by the State) and with just 60 kopecks a day (approximately one ruble was being deducted from each collectivist's daily personal share for various contributions: loans, propaganda, printed matter, contributions to the *Osiovachim*, etc.). This movement attained such a level of unrest (dangerous because of the repercussions which this might have on the Red Army) and caused each project to be sabotaged in such an alarming fashion, that the famous recent decree was issued whereby the *kolkhozes* could sell their products on the open



market, at normal prices proportional to the purchase value of the ruble. Today a collectivist receives around five rubles a day as his personal share, and even if he is unable to purchase everything he needs, and which the factories aren't managing to produce on schedule, or else are producing at too high a price, then he can at least save up and place his hopes in the future. But the workers cooperatives in the cities are naturally empty by the same token, because even the small amount that has been left at the *kolkhoz* and which has not been requisitioned by the State is going onto the market, and now it is the workers who are suffering from hunger and poverty.

I know of one communist worker (and Party member) who lives in a courtyard beside the Consulate, who is selling off his furniture, having already sold his clothes, in order to be able to buy something on the market with which to satisfy his hunger.

The peasants (needless to say, only the "*kulaks*" are ever mentioned) are now being accused at Communist party meetings of hoarding money, and hence of rarefying the currency, and as has been said for quite some time, all of this could perhaps foreshadow the abolition of the ruble (which will clobber the *kulaks*, who keep rubles salted away) while the introduction of a new currency will give workers back the chance (currently denied them) of purchasing provisions on the market.

But running with the hare and hunting with the hounds won't help the Soviet economy to get any better, for its shortcomings primarily reside in the design of its programs, which have spoiled and reduced the productivity of the land.

Hence Lustdorf's crops, which had previously been varied in accordance with land and manpower resources, were replaced exclusively with tomatoes under a grandiose scheme in 1931, and these tomatoes were left lying on the ground for lack of farmhands.

They were still plowing as of the 5th of December this year, and the peasants have been wondering what will become of the seed cast onto muddy clods, plowed up into compact packs, like enormous water- and snow-drenched serpents. Besides, the annual (and continually renewed) allocation of land to independent peasants means that these devote no activity to it which might serve, if not to improve the land, then at least to maintain the land's yield. Instead they exploit it to the hilt, knowing full well that next year it will be somebody else's concern.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

# Royal Consulate of Italy

## KHARKIV

January 6, 1933

Ref. No. 17/9

**EMBASSY OF ITALY**  
and for the information of the **FOREIGN MINISTRY**

**RE: BANDITRY IN KHARKIV**

Misery has generated real forms of banditry in Kharkiv and the surrounding area.

Already some weeks ago the Polish Consul in Kiev discovered in the pages of village newspapers reports of seven cases of infanticide resulting from the famine. It appears that we are undoubtedly dealing here with cannibalism; at least this is how the Consul presented the case.

In Kharkiv, at the present time, it is dangerous to frequent outlying neighborhoods of the city at night. Cases of people being robbed of all their clothes are the order of the day. Just such a naked adventure also happened to the old physician at the German consulate, Dr. Rose. Cases of individuals who scurry semi-nude during the night to the police stations appear to take place rather frequently. Yet these episodes belong to an order more comic than tragic, except for the cold weather that often produces serious consequences. But these cases constitute the minority. Most times the outlaws are not satisfied with denuding their victims but murder them as well. It is not uncommon in the morning to find at the marketplace the nude corpses of those murdered during the night. Some are exposed for many days along Kharkiv's frozen river bed.

More savage still is the way in which these outlaws treat children. More than 300 children have disappeared in Kharkiv during the last six weeks. This number has been confirmed by numerous sources, and there is no doubt about its validity. This tragic form of delinquency has diffused throughout Ukraine.

I have learned from a person in Odessa that close to the theater there a young child had been seized and stripped at 4 p.m. on a crowded street by two women, who then walked away before the eyes of bystanders who showed no interest at all.

I know of a case where seven little boys and girls were found dead in Pushkin and Liebnicht streets. I know this personally. In the courtyard next to the consulate, a child from a nearby family was found dead two weeks ago, nude and strangled. In Vinnytsia, a Party boss's child (the children of Party and GPU officials are more obvious targets because they are better dressed) was kidnapped and later found dead one morning in front of his home. His eyes had been torn out and a little sign on his chest read: "This is for what you make us suffer." A little girl, the daughter of a high official in Rostov, suffered the same fate and wore the same sign, except that she was found alive but without eyes. Yet, in general political revenge seems remote from these crimes. The issue is always, or almost always, robbery, to which it is said that one should also connect the growing commerce in human meat. The little ones are turned into sausage meat and the big ones become animal meat for butchering. Thus far two such cases have been

officially investigated. In Odessa a physician and friend of Dr. Rose, suspicious of the meat which his relatives had bought at the market, called a veterinarian who excluded the possibility that this meat had come from any animal, and through him it was easy to conclude that the meat in question was of human origin. Here in Kharkiv, the cook at an electrical instruments factory was arrested after it was discovered and verified that he was serving human meat. The cook's excuse was that he had purchased the meat at the market, but so far he remains in prison.

It appears that a gang has been arrested. By means of a girl, they would lure the well-dressed who were on their way to Kharkiv to stay at a certain house. As a professor was preparing to retire of the evening, he discovered a corpse beneath his bed.

He tried to get out, but the door was locked from the outside, and he had to climb through the window. Because it was late at night he did escape, although the gang chased him. After this incident the band of outlaws disappeared. It seems that its members were apprehended a few days later. In the basement of that house seven corpses were found.

There is talk of a trial to be held *in camera* of a group of female veterinarians and several of their assistants who are guilty of trafficking in human meat. But up to now I have had nothing but a vague indication of the outcome. Anyway, this trial is taking place behind closed doors at the Shevchenko Theater in the afternoons.

In the schools it has become mandatory for parents to come to pick up their children, and they are advised to accompany them as well.

Sincerely yours,

The Royal Consul  
Gradenigo

# Royal Consulate of Italy

KHARKIV

U.S.S.R.

Kharkiv: January 6, 1933—XI

Confidential  
Ref. No. 21/110

ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW  
ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME

RE: THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT'S RECENT DECREES AND THE OUT-LOOK FOR THE NEAR FUTURE

In recent decrees the Soviet Government has adopted a number of decisions which are worth coordinating on the basis of any further information, in order to gain some idea of the outlook for the near future.

These decisions are as follows:

The suspension of the start-up of the second Five-Year Plan—in this connection, in Kharkiv any further construction under the program has been discontinued.

The abolition of many (all?) intermediate offices between producers and consumers, as well as of the parasitical offices—at Kharkiv: the Main Ukrainian Credit Office for Ukrainian *Kolkhozes*; the *Soyuzmoloko*, a collection center for dairy products. Many of these offices (which are disappearing day by day) had grown to colossal proportions during the Five-Year Plan, thanks to that mania for inspection and counter-inspection, centralization and sub-centralization, etc., that is so characteristic of the Soviet economy, which feels the need to ceaselessly proclaim itself the most virtuous economy in the whole world.

The closure of factories which have had a exorbitant production cost—instrumental in these closures has been the shortage of raw materials, due to the widespread slump and recession in Ukraine. The sole Locomotives Factory will continue to work at full capacity, perhaps because a full half of it is made up of workers who have been sentenced to forced labor, who are thus only as expensive as the cost of their soup, which they receive twice a day.

Cutting back on those workmen who have produced the most disastrous results (the Sickle and Hammer Agricultural Machinery Factory had 30% of its workers fired at the end of December).

The reduction of bureaucratic and bank officials—the local State Bank has dismissed 28% of its employees.

Compulsory collectivization (see my report of the 16th of last December, No. 612/233 and 613/145).

Requisition of flour—a total of 320 sacks of flour have been requisitioned from the Armenian bakers in Kharkiv, who had been buying flour at the *torgsin* premises for making gray rolls which they would sell on the streets, and they were paid at a rate of 30 paper kopecks, while the flour had cost them 30 gold kopecks. It has been forbidden to sell flour on the market. They are saying that after January 15th, (Stalin's decree) the flour trade will be unrestricted, but by that time the State will

have requisitioned everything. In Odessa they have even been requisitioning flour in private houses, room by room. Out in the countryside they have requisitioned all the flour they could find, both from free peasants and from collective farm workers, even to the point of taking away their half-baked bread from out of their household ovens.

The impetus given to the *torgsin*, by opening new stores; accepting first gold, then silver, while the acceptance even of precious stones is said to be imminent.

The requirement imposed on all citizens of a passport for the interior—partly to attach workers to their factory, land, or mine—and partly to evacuate the cities. They are saying that Odessa will lose 50,000 inhabitants, and Kharkiv 250,000. These planned deportations are to repopulate the Donbas mines and the Murmansk territory, where large-scale projects are at the planning stage.

The recall of four classes of reserve soldiers for night exercises.

Changes in the structure of Party and Government for Ukraine, which have been talked about in Ukraine for two months.

All of these measures and decisions indicate:

A swing to the left (purging of the Party and a sudden clampdown on new memberships) that has been both formidable and decisive, especially out in the countryside (compulsory collectivization) and in what is known as the “domestic trade” (persecution of “speculators”, i.e., small traders—the Holodna Prison in Kharkiv is crammed with detainees, and standing in front of the building from dawn to dusk for the past couple of weeks have been thousands of people, some carrying a meager packet of provisions in the hope of being able to deliver this to a relative, and others simply in the hope of finally being able to find out whether a relative who has been missing for days, and whose whereabouts no police station knows or cares to tell, might actually be inside).

A hitch in the process of industrialization, caused by the economic and administrative insolvency whose warning signs I have had the honor of reporting on as far back as the 22nd of last May in my report No. 277/11 and [illeg.: “278/8”?], which has resulted in the abolition of intermediate deadwood offices between Moscow and the factories and *kolkhozes*—the closure of exorbitantly loss-making, costly, and unproductive factories, and employee cutbacks in others.

A higher degree of managerial centralization between Moscow and producers, and freer and more direct contact between producers and consumers.

Evacuation of the cities (decree governing passports) (where the population had been increasing geometrically) because all efforts had failed to ease the housing problem, while delinquency had been increasing alarmingly, even to the point of showing signs of organized brigandage.

The purging of the general public, after the purging of the Party, as it seems that the first people intended for deportation have been the *ci-devants*; in addition, measures aimed at preventing the dangers of sudden unemployment (exacerbated by the loss of the bread books) and hence also a recall of four classes under arms, at night, for “exercises” after which it has been announced that they are to receive dinner.

Lastly, a probable attempt at stabilizing the ruble (as I have been given to understand by Brodovsky, the local representative of *Narkomdel*) both by means of the precious metal withdrawn from circulation in recent months through the *torgsin* and

*Appendix II*

the Bank, and by dumping agricultural products on the market at increasingly low prices, something which ought to increase the ruble's purchasing power.

Last but not least, Ukraine, which still remains the region that has by far most openly sabotaged its collectivization and even industrialization (stagnation and recession in production in the Donets, in the metallurgical and mechanical industries), and by common consent, shortly to pass into the iron grip of members of the GPU.

(Ukrainians in leading positions in industry and management said of Stalin on New Year's Eve: the fanatic has lost his mind.)

The keystone of the barricade thrown up around this edifice, to keep it from collapsing, is agricultural production. The ruble may well be stabilized (if it's true that they are planning to stabilize it and it is not going to be progressively devalued instead, in which case the new currency would then find cover in the supply of coins collected over recent months) if they have products to dump on the market. However, agricultural production will increase only if the worker has what he needs to keep his strength up, but the peasant will do his duty only if they find some way to satisfy him; otherwise, the progressive emaciation will once again begin to claim its countless victims, right up till the disappearance of the current population pressure, far too vast in comparison with Ukraine's slack, depressed and minimal industrial and agricultural production.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

# Royal Consulate of Italy

KHARKIV

U.S.S.R.

Kharkiv: February 24, 1933 — XI

Confidential

Ref. No. 135/49

Royal Embassy of Italy, Moscow  
copy for the ROYAL MINISTRY

## RE: UKRAINIAN POLITICAL SITUATION

Reports had already emerged in the past to the effect that these same leaders of the Ukrainian Government, loyal to Moscow and in favor with Moscow, had still raised voices of protest against the Friendship Pact concluded between the USSR and Poland, and against the negotiations for a similar pact under way with Romania. These protests had irredentist undertones, and even had they not been made, or not made in the widespread manner of the reports that had arrived, they served to hint at the current of opinion in certain brackets of the population. Quite recently, local newspapers have published anecdotes concerning the slavery in which the Ukrainians in Poland have been kept, anecdotes which even in Kharkiv have elicited protest from the General Polish Consulate, at the *Narkomindel* premises.

Now these same rumors of a confrontation between Kharkiv and Moscow are making their presence felt once again, and this time they are not being fueled on Pan-Ukrainian/irredentist grounds, but rather by purely national reasons of self-preservation and perhaps even self-determination *per se*.

I have brought up the subject of the Pan-Ukrainian irredentism, because it is part and parcel of the raising of Ukrainian consciousness, a reawakening brought about the appalling injustice that Moscow is doing to Ukraine. First the coal, then the wheat, and everything that's left after the wheat has gone, potatoes, barley, meat, etc., as well as the citizens' gold, are being squeezed out of them through the *torgsin* (it seems that 4.9 million rubles have been obtained just from the silver brought to the *torgsin*) and more through the GPU.

The wretched state of the Ukrainian people, a plight which cries out for vengeance to the heavens and which has even caused some of supposedly the most fanatical communists to desert this battleground of unrelenting requisition, communists who have paid with their lives for this humane change of heart, and even seems to have ended up by stirring more or less violent feelings of rebellion among the local government leaders. The fact of the matter is that people are once again insistently discussing the disgrace of Petrovsky and Chubar. They are saying that a secret clarification session was held yesterday evening, and that this sessions was chaired by Voroshilov, who had come specifically for that purpose; the fact that he has been here was confirmed to me again this morning.

The disgrace of the Party General Secretary Kossior is by every indication already finally complete. Postyshev was sent to Kharkov as Secretary of the Communist Party's Executive Committee for the Kharkov *Oblast'*, but he was also entrusted with the office of secretary of the Pan-Ukrainian Party's Executive Commit-

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tee, directly under Kossior. However, it is Postyshev who has been taking the chair at the latest Communist Party meetings, and not Kossior.

It is likely that the change that has been heralded for months within the Ukrainian government, and on which I have reported in coded telegrams, as early as last November, has elicited a response from the victims in question, a response which has now reached crisis point.

It should also be noted that the head of the Ukrainian GPU REDENS has been liquidated and replaced by Balitsky, who has already been in the same post for two years. This replacement, which may have had something to do with the fact that Redens's wife is the sister of Stalin's dead wife (Hallelujah!), could also however have been for another reason, namely that Redens had not proved sufficiently energetic and that Balitsky promises to be more energetic, and the latter may no longer be quite so welcome with the Ukrainians, even with those who work in local government.

It's a crisis situation, then, and one which should be monitored with the greatest possible care, not just because of the likelihood of immediate developments, but also because of the possible emergence of intermediate stages of surpassing importance, attendant upon the activities of Ukrainian refugees/political exiles in both America and Europe.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL



# **ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY**

**in the U.S.S.R.**

February 27, 1933 – Year XI

TELEX No. 979/427

Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROME

I am enclosing for Your Excellency a number of reports sent by the Royal Consul in Kharkiv to our Royal Embassy, which have to do with conditions in Ukraine. By comparing his news with the news gathered one year ago (and forwarded at that time to your Royal Ministry), we can see how the moral and living conditions of the Ukrainian people have been progressively deteriorating both on account of the widespread economic crisis sweeping through the Soviet Union, and of the oppression which the Central Government has been inflicting upon the federate republics.

We should not forget that the oppression in Ukraine has not taken on as violent dimensions as elsewhere, for example in the Northern Caucasus, because the Little Russian people would not tolerate overt acts of tyranny. Instead, the oppression is being brought to bear by siphoning off this exceptionally prosperous region's entire economic resources to benefit the Urals and Moscow. All the same, Ukraine is in a dreadful predicament just now: this is borne out by Knight Gradenigo's reports, which dovetail with the accounts of foreign representatives in Kharkiv and Kiev, not to mention those of travelers and skilled workers returning to Moscow from Ukraine.

(signatures illegible)

# ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY

in the U.S.S.R.

Moscow: April 7, 1933 – Year XI

TELEX No. ["1649/766"?)

Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome

RE: *Riots in front of bakeries*

Riots recently occurred in Kharkiv in front of bakeries, where people gather for hours and hours on end to buy bread. In one of the suburbs, 3500 people attacked the policemen who were trying to disperse them: in another suburb, two bakeries were attacked, flour was taken and the premises destroyed before police could intervene.

To prevent recurrence of such incidents, the police have resorted to the practice of mass arrests. One morning at around four o'clock, the police suddenly blocked off the side-street exits and surrounded a mass of 1500 people gathered in front of a bakery waiting for it to open, truncheoned them into one of the courtyards at the nearby police station, whence they were sent off to the station, loaded onto trains and driven back out towards the countryside.

Something similar occurred on the 25th of last month in the vicinity of the Kharkiv Consulate. Using the same system, 300 people were arrested, gathered up in the courtyards at the nearby police station, and then taken away from the city on trucks.

It is not uncommon for passengers who have died of starvation to be unloaded from their trains at the stations. With the thaw, unburied bodies (heretofore snow-covered) have been found out in the countryside. In the villages, whole families have withdrawn into their homes and are dying there of inanition.

Rumors are circulating of numerous cases of cannibalism, although it is difficult to verify their accuracy. However, the Polish Consul General in Kharkiv claims to have learned of an episode of this nature, which led to the arrest of the guilty party in question.

The situation in Ukraine is a tragic one, and this is borne out by the report originally given by the Royal Vice-Consul in Batumi about an influx there of swarms of Ukrainian Soviets, driven there by hunger and by the hope of finding better living conditions in Transcaucasia.

(signature illegible)

**Vice-Consulate of Italy**  
NOVOROSHIISK  
(U.S.S.R.)

April 8, 1933 — Year XI

Ref. No. 223/24

REFERENCE: Telex No. 549/11 of February 1, 1932/X.

ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW  
and copy to the Royal Consulate of Italy, TBILISI (224/44)

RE: *Developments in the agricultural season*

Dear Ambassador:

I should like to refer once again to the situation in the Northern Caucasus, and in thinking over all the things I have already discussed in earlier reports, I cannot help feeling a certain hesitancy for fear that I may ultimately be repeating myself. To paraphrase the title of a well-known opera, we might well describe the present state of affairs as follows: "as before, only worse." We cannot point to any improvement in the harrowing agricultural conditions (nor any, by extension, in urban conditions); indeed, people are whispering to each other in horror that things are still going downhill.

The battle-lines remain the same: rural masses who are resisting passively yet effectively; party and government more determined than ever to get on top of things. The appointment in the Northern Caucasus of a special committee invested with unlimited powers to resolve the situation by force and at whatever cost, shows just how serious things have become.

The main measures adopted by the committee may be summarized as follows:

the peasants have been prohibited from leaving their farms or villages (serfdom!). In practical terms, this fastening to the land is obtained by suspending sales of rail tickets (tickets can only be obtained by submitting a special permit from the political authorities, who of course systematically refuse to give these to the peasants); by not admitting peasants at offices and factories, etc., and by expelling them from the cities; by seizing the products which the peasants have been trying to bring onto the markets, and keeping them out of the markets themselves;

the registration of entire villages or collective farms on the "blackboard", followed by severe penalties; for example: suspension of any laying in of stock; the withdrawal of goods, however few, already available at the co-operatives; an absolute ban on leaving the boundaries of one's village or farm; searches and seizures of products; expulsion *en masse* from the territory of the Northern Caucasus of all or part of the population, unless they show an immediate change of heart;

the holding of summary trials in three days flat, with no chance of appeal, and sentencing to maximum penalties, which may be increased at the court's discretion.

These three groups themselves bear eloquent testimony to the desperate struggle to which the once fertile lands of the Northern Caucasus are now playing host; these go hand-in-hand with a multiplicity of minor regulations, all entailing the

heaviest penalties. Note also that no distinction is made between collectivized and non-collectivized peasants; membership of the latter group does however constitute an aggravating circumstance.

But the persistence, indeed the exacerbation of the difficulties point up the futility of all effort. The peasants' revolt (it cannot be described otherwise) is too widespread to be stifled, suppressed or kept within bounds, and it has overwhelmed the collective organizations. Even so, all the power lies on one side: the only opposition on the other side comes from an amorphous mass showing the most manifest signs of powerlessness; the peasants are famished and dispossessed, and not one organization, certainly not the beleaguered church, has taken it upon itself to keep the as yet unquenchable spirit of resistance alive in them. They haven't confronted the one army, resolute and armed to the teeth, with any army of their own, not even in the form of the armed bands and brigandage that usually go hand-in-hand with serfs' uprisings. Perhaps this is where the peasants' real power lies, or shall we say, the reason for their adversaries' lack of success. The exceptionally powerful and well-armed Soviet apparatus is quite at a loss to find any solution or victory in one or more open battles: the enemy doesn't congregate, it's widely dispersed, and battles sought and provoked to no avail, all have to run their course in an interminable series of tiny, even trivial operations; an unhoed field here, some hidden quintals of grain there; more than one tractor that doesn't work, another one maliciously damaged, a third is taken for a spin instead of doing its job. Otherwise there are *kolkhozes* and villages that do not sow, or others which have eaten their seeds or smuggled them out for sale, or slaughtered or crippled their draft animals; and then to observe that a warehouse has been burglarized, that the books for both small and large accounts have been poorly and untruthfully kept, and farm managers who through malice or fear are untruthful in their statements, reporting things they don't possess or concealing all or part of their supplies. And so on *ad infinitum* over and over again all over this vast territory! Not even when, in lowering their sights, the authorities crack down on one particular region—as was the case in the Northern Caucasus last Summer through Kuban—do they have any better luck or manage to find a close-knit enemy they can rout in one masterly, momentous and resounding strike. Even then the enemy has to be hunted down from house to house, village by village. It's quite a way to carry water to the laundry-tub! And still to find (saddest of all to relate) how soon the 'Communist leader' comes a cropper the moment he's taken away from all his facile doctrinal, theoretical, and oratorical flourishes and is compelled to solve any problem practically and personally: hence all the punishments and expulsions which lead to serious moral and material infirmity in the party structure.

Each one of these small-scale operations, in which only the most passive and concealed resistance is ever found, requires the deployment of the full brunt of the apparatus of repression with all its tremendous punishments, which accordingly lose their effectiveness. Hearing himself being sentenced *a priori* to the maximum penalty, the peasant awaits his turn fatalistically, aided in this by the soft and passive Slav mentality. He cannot be jolted out of his complacency by fair means or foul. Entire village populations have been banished: exemplary punishment has been to no avail; the Government's promises, new regulations to govern taxes in kind, are no more effective. The peasant trusts nothing, works as little and as poorly as possible, he steals, hides or destroys his own product whenever he can,

rather than giving them up spontaneously. It's a fierce struggle for grain and all other fruits of the earth, and the adversaries are quite literally living from hand to mouth, and have been driven to this above all else by hunger in the literal sense of the word.

It would be no exaggeration to describe the situation as chaotic. The above-mentioned special committee for the Northern Caucasus issues one order after another, delivers directives to govern the tiniest and most mundane of the countryside's requirements, and stiffens the penalties every two weeks: And things are only getting worse. The committee has even had to contradict itself, to the great detriment of its authority. This came about over the seeds: After having proclaimed in the most categorical fashion that the Government would not advance "a single seed" and that rumors circulating to the contrary were "*kulak* chicanery," considerable government assistance came along anyway, because notwithstanding all the committee's measures, the Northern Caucasus had failed to collect with its own resources the quantity required by the imminent Spring season. (Now grain has to be given, with threats of the usual harsh and superharsh measures, so as to make that the "sacred seeds" aren't filched, eaten or otherwise frittered away!)

However, even though the situation may remain unchanged in its general outlines and downhill pattern, the sequence of events may nonetheless in some respects have helped to make matters a little clearer. If there were ever any doubts, gone for good is the myth—deliberately and for obvious reasons fostered by the Communist Party—that two warring factions were and are confronting each other out in the countryside: On the one hand, the clear majority of poor, proletarian, communist (or *quasi*-communist peasants, enthusiastic supporters of collectivization; and on the other hand, the rich peasant, bourgeois, capitalist, anti-soviet, namely the "*kulak*." Once these *kulaks* had been rather easily liquidated in their turn with the destruction (for practical reasons it couldn't be an expropriation) of their riches, the antagonism vanished (it had not further *raison d'être*), and Moscow found itself up against a single hostile peasant mass, of like mind and leveled to a single standard of misery. The construction of "*kolkhozes*" and the "*sovkhozes*," which was to crown the Communist enterprise, and which cost so much blood, sweat, and tears, has been built on stony ground. It is more than ever a civil war out in the countryside today, even if (as it so happens) the firearms and cutting weapons are all on one side; and the grim upshot of it all is that the industrial proletariat is paying with unprecedented privations for the blunders of the agricultural policy.

This emergence of a single peasant front, which moreover reaches far beyond the bounds of the Northern Caucasus (see for example the statements made by the people's commissar for agriculture, Yakovlev, to the Moscow Central Committee) and which the Soviets have never cared to acknowledge, in common with foreign commentators on Soviet affairs who have all too often thrilled at the spectacle of Communist "enthusiasm" out in the countryside, is unquestionably of the utmost importance.

Still noteworthy are Soviet attempts to see in the conditions in the Northern Caucasus (Kuban) the signs of special chicanery by the Cossacks and their old '*otamans*'. With the information heretofore available (the usual ranting and raving by the press, and assorted rumors) we cannot go any further than the simple recording of a trend; it would however not be surprising if it were indeed the

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Cossacks, whether due to their more 'Southern' blood, or because of the tradition of the privileges they enjoyed in other times, the memories of which die very hard, were to be able to some extent today to stand at the forefront, if not of an opposition movement (which would be unsuitable term), then at least of the expression of unrest, and who more than the others are posing a threat in their use of the weapons of sabotage and passive resistance.

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The inadequate agricultural production in the Northern Caucasus has had tragic repercussions on urban centers, confirming and exceeding all forecasts for the poor 1932 harvest that were made at the time. It is a recurrence of the terrible famine of 1921, according to the latter's survivors, and it is accompanied by the inevitable concomitant disasters. Deaths from starvation are an everyday occurrence; 40 people were buried on just one day in Novorossiisk back in February: the figure for this one episode cannot be verified but, since the onset of Winter the starvation death toll has been a story that won't go away, it just goes on and on—so many people yesterday, so many people today. It's the same story at Novorossiisk, at Rostov, at Krasnodar, all over the Northern Caucasus. The reports coming from some villages are just horrifying; you pray that people are making some of these things up.

Beggary, in its repulsive Russian version, fostered by persecution, rendered more insistent by inurement, and with no prospect of assistance from the public at large, is assuming serious proportions. It is not unusual to see wretches rolling in the mud or the snow down at the market or on the public highway—with that touch of histrionics in their appeals to their brothers passing by which seems such a hallmark of the Slav beggar—pleading for food with much weeping and wailing. However, it is not uncommon to see those who don't even have the strength to beg. Everyday observation and incoming reports suggest a resurgence of the phenomenon of abandoned children (the '*bezprizorni*').

There is no shortage of rumors—numerous and insistent rumors—of cases of cannibalism. Even as I write, going the rounds in the city of Novorossiisk is the report of the arrest of a person who, while buying vodka at a city store, was found to be in possession of cooked human flesh (recognized by the limbs). However, while we may hope that these cases, if true, are but isolated follies or aberrations, the level of brutalization to which hunger has reduced these people may be illustrated by some straightforward observations. We see for example the longshoremen assigned to stow vessels—these are workers, hence of a 'privileged' class—eating during breaks *raw* barley, wheat, and corn which they've stolen from the cargo. I am told that many serious gastric conditions are being treated at the hospital for that very reason. Oilcakes are almost a luxury ... easier to chew and digest (these are the cakes of oilseeds—flax, sunflower, the castor-oil plant—that remain after the oils have been extracted and which, once pressed into briquettes, are exported as cattlefeed); one piece of these oilcakes weighing two or three hundred grams is now on sale on the market for one ruble, and demand is high. Resupply is only given by however much the stevedores manage to conceal in their pockets (they gorge on them while they work) and smuggle away at their own risk and peril beyond the harbor gates.

At a garbage dump which stands by way of an embankment beside the public road which links the port to the city, a number of quintals of rotten potatoes originating from military warehouses were recently thrown away. Hundreds of people pounced on the spot like crows, most of them port workers as this was their place of transit, and they hastened to fill up their baskets which they always carry with them (this business of the inseparable basket has now become quite a hallmark of the "Soviet man", at least in these parts). Whether for reasons of sanitation, or (more likely, I fear) to hide this sorry spectacle from the hordes of foreign sailors who are constantly passing through this unavoidable thoroughway, this monstrosity was broken up by force, and then the remnants of the coveted rotten potatoes were destroyed with quicklime and by other means.

Furthermore, when on board ship the longshoremen pounce on anything the cook throws away (refuse may not be thrown into the sea while in port) and many is the time that I have been told of how somebody, believing himself to be unnoticed, has gone off to fight with the ship's cat or dog over a bowl of soup.

Evidence of this nature speaks for itself, and takes on special importance inasmuch as it refers to workers. If we were then to go and seek out this evidence at the marketplace or in the station foyers, where Soviet Russia's vagrant poverty is at its worst, we would then behold scenes that were even more tragic and disgusting.

And while every day goes by, we the eyewitnesses behold this litany of horrors and afflictions, the very description of which requires us to overcome our deep inner misgivings, foreseeing disbelief and fearing the accusation of overstatement—had our reports not been addressed to your Excellency, who knows only too well the true state of affairs in this benighted country. Almost as if in defiance of the brutalization to which millions of people have been reduced, we read that the Soviets have inaugurated the most powerful radio broadcast station in the world, which is intended—by drowning out any other voices on the airwaves—to broadcast Moscow's holy writ to the oppressed peoples of Europe and Asia and to acquaint them with the 'incredible conquests' made by the 'Bolshevik miracle'! Or else we read that the workers of Novorossiisk give back 1% of their meager wages to help fight the fascist terror (with paper rubles!). And so it goes, the customary revolutionary fervor which manifests itself in the writings in the transparencies, in the newspaper headlines, in the stale and mindless jargon of articles and speeches, yet it doesn't strike any chords. Standing with patience, apathy, and indifference before these bureaucratic outpourings against capitalism, fascism and the *kulaks*, and no less bureaucratic paeans to the successes of Bolshevism, lies the great mass (or herd) of this hapless people who listen without hearing and watch without seeing, in whose minds, now more sluggish than ever, nothing more than an association of ideas has taken root: The small piece of poorly baked black bread, a mixture of the most incredible multiplicity of ingredients, to which they are still entitled; and the duty to share this out among their large families, old and ailing relatives—not to mention those who cannot even claim *that* entitlement; or sorrow and bitter anguish because Moscow is carrying away the fruits of the Earth which the peasant fancies belong to him.

Sincerely yours,  
THE ROYAL VICE-CONSUL (L. Sircana)

# ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY

in the U.S.S.R.

Moscow: May 16, 1933 – Year XI

TELEX No. 2212/1103

Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome

RE: *Miscellaneous news*

Medical conditions—Petechial typhus is gaining ground in Ukraine, and in Kharkiv in particular, despite the fact that the health authorities are trying to fight it, with the use of disinfectants, even with disinfectants imported from abroad.

The shortage of soap, of changes of clothes and linen and of hygienic housing, all help to spread the epidemic, which has increased with the influx of peasants from the countryside into the cities in search of bread, who congregate in long lines in front of the stores. The disease appears without any special symptoms: The victim returns home feeling very weak indeed, takes to his bed and dies some hours later. People suffering from the epidemic are not being taken to the hospitals, because the hospitals are overcrowded, and the lack of proper treatment, food and medicine means certain death for the patients concerned. The death toll is even larger out in the countryside. No less than one thousand people out of its 7,000 inhabitants have died over the last two months in the village of Berestosenka, in the vicinity of Poltava. Animals are also being attacked by lice, and the death rate among horses is frequently attributable to the enormous number of parasites with which they are covered. Health conditions are even worse in the region of the Donets: People are talking about cases of black variola, and even of plague in certain places. Similar reports are coming in from Kuban and Kakhetia.

Food conditions: Numerous deaths from starvation in Kuban. The people are deserting the fields to emigrate towards the Northern Caucasus, where conditions are slightly better: Measures adopted by the authorities are not serving to prevent these migrations of hungry people. Along the railroad which leads to Kharkiv, one traveler observed lines of peasants on their way to the city in search of bread. The numbers of abandoned children are increasing, including very young children. Twenty babies, who had been abandoned by their starving mothers, were found inside Kharkiv station just a few days ago. The children were gathered up on trucks and carried to the premises of an old monastery near Kharkiv and unloaded onto straw: The same vehicle which had driven the living, was carrying away the dead. Groups of women dragging their children behind them can be seen on the streets even in Moscow, outside the center. They beg alms, and when charity is offered to them, they try to kiss their benefactor's hands, or failing that, they place a kiss on the hems of their overcoat. The husbands are missing, because if not deported, they have left for the farthest recesses of the country in search of work. One doctor has claimed that only women and children are left in certain villages in Kuban: The men have all vanished.

The hunger hasn't even spared the horses. One German engineer has said that in the galleries down the Donbas coal mines, the horses are kept raised up from the



ground by means of suitable belts. If they were to lie down, they would never get up again, so enfeebled are they by lack of food. The livestock population is decreasing rapidly. Beasts are slaughtered when just a few days old as it's impossible to feed them, or else through fear of seeing them carried off when they have just barely grown.

People coming in from the provinces are still claiming that conditions in Moscow are better than those in other cities. The farther away you get from city centers, the more visible seem the signs of squalor and epidemics.

(signature illegible)

# Royal Consulate of Italy<sup>o</sup>

## KHARKIV

May 31, 1933

Ref. No. 474/106

Embassy of Italy, Moscow

### RE: THE FAMINE AND THE UKRAINIAN QUESTION

The famine continues to wreak havoc among the people, and one simply cannot fathom how the world can remain so indifferent to such a catastrophe and how the international press, which is so quick to bring international condemnation upon Germany for its so-called 'atrocious persecution of the Jews', can stand quietly by in the presence of this massacre organized by the Soviet government, in which the Jews play such a major role, albeit not the leading one.

For there is no doubt: 1) that this famine is primarily caused by a contrived scarcity designed 'to teach the peasants a lesson', and 2) that there is not one Jew among the famine victims; on the contrary, they are fat and well fed under the fraternal wing of the GPU.

The 'ethnographic material' must be changed, cynically stated one Jew who is a high ranking official in the local GPU. One can already foresee the final fate of this 'ethnographic material', which is destined for replacement.

However monstrous and incredible such a plan might appear, it should nevertheless be regarded as authentic and well under way.

Through barbaric requisitions (on which I have repeatedly reported), the Moscow government has effectively engineered not so much a scarcity (which would be putting it far too mildly) but rather a complete absence of every means of subsistence throughout the Ukrainian countryside, Kuban, and the Middle Volga.

Three considerations motives can be taken into account as having dictated such a policy:

- 1) the peasantry's passive resistance to collectivized agriculture;
- 2) the conviction that the 'ethnographic material' can never be reduced to an integral communist prototype;
- 3) the necessity or expediency, more or less openly acknowledged, of denationalizing those regions in which Ukrainian or German consciousness have reawakened, threatening possible political difficulties in the future, and where, for the sake of the unity of the empire, it is better that a preponderantly Russian population reside.

The first consideration must have led to the initial 'lesson' which, as confirmed by many Party members, has undoubtedly been decided by the government.

The second consideration has at least contributed to the government's semi-complete lack of interest in the tragic consequences of the 'lesson'.

The third consideration is certainly destined to dispose of the Ukrainian problem within a few months at a cost of 10-15 million souls. Nor does this number appear exaggerated. In my opinion this number will be surpassed and may have already been reached.

This calamity, which is claiming millions of lives, is destroying the infancy of an entire nation and is really affecting only Ukraine, Kuban, and the Central Volga. Elsewhere it is felt much less or not at all.

Renowned professionals of every persuasion, who hold the tsarist regime in such low esteem and who have been persuaded to look favorably upon the current regime, and who have had occasion to travel through other parts of the Soviet Union, all confirm that the catastrophe is strictly confined to Ukraine, Kuban, and the Central Volga.

"The devastation starts past Kursk," said the writer Andreyev, who arrived several days ago from Moscow, adding, "that the Ukrainian villager will never again return to the soil. Those who survive wander far from their homeland, and no one will ever be able to revive in him any trust for the current regime. The collective farms also suffer terrible starvation. They are being dissolved by the high mortality and the flight of those survivors to the cities. Everyone is escaping to the major centers. But even if their strength enables them to reach the city, death by starvation awaits them there as well, for they have no money and there is no one to help them. My daughter has just turned 15, but she has not even had the opportunity to see our country as it used to be, prosperous and happy. Perhaps 'salvation' will come by means of the villagers' total annihilation. The government will supplant him with a new element, who will till the soil like a worker in the factory. But experience teaches that in the hands of the present regime the factories will also produce nothing. And so shall it be with the earth, and once it is organized into state farms the regime will eventually collapse. I have returned from visiting several inhabitants of the area near Leningrad. They complain that 50 to 60% of their cattle have perished. And these are gentlemen who eat bread every day. They have nothing to complain of! They have it easy and should come here to see what is happening!" This conversation took place at the home of mutual acquaintances.

These general comments have been prompted by the course of events that led up to the current diaster.

I think it advisable to share another episode which illustrates the situation:

One Comrade Frenkel, a member of the GPU collegium, once confided to someone of our acquaintance that 250 corpses of famine victims are gathered nightly in the streets of Kharkiv. For my part, I can testify to having seen trucks with 10-15 bodies drive by the consulate after midnight. Three large apartment buildings are being built not far from the consulate, and the trucks stopped at the fence, while two supervisors went in with hay pitchforks to look for the dead. I saw them pick up seven bodies from the site with these pitchforks: Two men, one woman, and four children. Other people woke up and disappeared like shadows. One of the two doing this work said to me, "You don't have this where you come from, do you?"

On the morning of the 21st at the marketplace the dead were gathered like piles of rags, in mud and human manure, along the barrier which bounds the square near the river. There were about 30 of them. On the morning of the 23rd they numbered 51. An infant was sucking the breast of a dead mother whose face was gray in color. The people said, "These are the buds of the socialist Spring."

One afternoon I was going down Pushkin Street toward the center of the city. It was raining. Three *bezprizornye* passed in front of me, pretending to scuffle. One was pushed and fell into a woman who was carrying a pot of *borshch* covered with a kerchief. The pot was knocked to the ground and broke. The culprit ran away, but

the other two gathered the soup in the mud with their hands and swallowed it. They then put some of it in a cap for the third one.

On this same Pushkin Street, 20 or 30 meters from the consulate, a peasant woman spent the whole day with her two children curled up on the corner sidewalk, like many mothers all along the street. She held the customary tin can, an old box of saved items without a cover and from time to time someone would throw a kopeck into it. That evening with a single gesture she pushed her children away, rose to her feet, and threw herself into the path of a street car coming at full speed. Half an hour later I saw a street sweeper scraping up the unfortunate woman's guts. The children had been standing there watching all the time.

Only a week ago a service was organized for rounding up the abandoned children. In addition to the peasants who pour into the city because they no longer have any hope of survival in the countryside, there are also many children that are brought here and abandoned by parents who then return to the village to die. They hope that someone in the city would care for their child. Until last week the children were left crying on doorsteps, sidewalks, and everywhere. You could see ten-year-olds playing mother to three- and four-year-olds. As night approached they would cover the little ones with their own coat or kerchief and sleep on the ground with a tin can at their sides for a possible coin.

For a week already the municipal workers have been mobilized to go around the city in white jackets, round up the children, and take them to the nearest police station, often amid scenes of desperation, cries, and tears. There is a police station in front of the consulate, and every moment you can hear cries of desperation, "I don't want to go to the death shanties; leave me to die in peace."

Around midnight they begin to take the children in trucks to the North Donets station to be loaded on freight trains. This is where they also bring children gathered from the villages, or found on trains, along with peasant families and the solitary older people rounded up in the city during the day. The 'sorting' is performed by sanitation workers (according to one physician these are the real heroes of the day; so far 40% of them have died from typhus contracted in the course of their work). Those who are not yet swollen and show some chance of recovery are sent to the Holodna Hora camps. There about 8,000, mainly children, lie in agony on hay inside large barns. A doctor assigned there has told me that they are given milk and soup but that these supplies are obviously scarce and sporadic. They make do 'any way they can'. From 80 to 100 die each day. "A Russian doctor can no longer have a sensitive heart," he said, "but I have lived through one heart-breaking crisis after another."

The swollen people are taken by freight train into the countryside, about 50 to 60 kilometers from the city so that no one will see them die. The cars are filled up and then barred shut. It often happens that the train is full after just a couple of days, because the cars are all closed up. A few days ago a worker assigned to the train was passing by one of the cars when he heard someone call out. As he came closer he heard a wretched man inside begging him to be let out because the stench of the corpses had become unbearable. Opening the car, the worker found this man alone still alive. He was then taken to another car to die, one in which those locked in were still alive.

Upon arrival at their unloading point, large pits are dug and the dead are removed from the cars. I was told that no one is terribly fussy and that often one of

those thrown in the pit reawakens and moves in a final flash of life. But the grave diggers' work is not interrupted and the unloading continues.

I have received these particulars from the sanitation workers and can vouch for their authenticity:

In the Holodna Hora prison an average of 30 people die each day.

The village of Grakhovo about 50 kilometers from Kharkiv had 1300 inhabitants and today has only 200 left.

The district of Poltava seems the most severely stricken and is even worse than Kharkiv. In the city of Poltava even the doctors are beginning to swell up from lack of nourishment.

A Communist Youth League member from Sumy wrote to a girl in Kharkiv, saying that families were killing the youngest children and eating them.

I enclose a sample of a powder made from roots used to make a woody porridge in the Belgorod region.

In front of Mr. Ballovich's house a distinguished-looking elderly man suddenly bent down over a pile of wood shavings and swallowed a handful.

I enclose a photograph of a young child who was brought here from the Middle Volga by a family of German origin for repatriation through the German Consulate General. The resemblance to a decrepit old man is one frequently encountered even here in Kharkiv.

I would finally like to mention the suicide of GPU General Brodsky. On the 18th of this month, having returned from an inspection of the countryside and following a terrible row with Balytsky during which he repeatedly cried that this was not communism but 'an abomination', that he had had enough of such inspections, and that never again would he go anywhere to carry out 'orders' (it seems that he was supposed to carry out some act of repression), he shot himself in the head with a pistol.

Similar reasons were involved in the case of Khvylovy and Hirnyak. These latter two, given their particularly interesting political repercussions, are dealt with in a separate report.

Finally, a high ranking official in the local government and Party member whose name I have been unable to determine, has gone insane after inspecting the countryside. They had to put him in a strait jacket. He was also in a frenzy and was crying out, "This isn't communism; it's murder."

In conclusion: The current disaster will bring about a preponderantly Russian colonization of Ukraine. It will transform its ethnographic character. In a future time, perhaps very soon, one will no longer be able to speak of a Ukraine, or a Ukrainian people, and thus not even of a Ukrainian problem, because Ukraine will become a *de facto* Russian region.

Sincerely yours,

The Royal Consul, Gradenigo

# Royal Consulate of Italy<sup>o</sup>

## KHARKIV

May 31, 1933

Ref. No. 478/106

### ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY

#### RE: THE SUICIDE OF MYKOLA KHVYLOVY AND THE UKRAINIAN SITUATION.

On the evening of May 13th, the Ukrainian writer and poet Mykola Khvylovy committed suicide with a shot to the head.

In order to convey the impression that such a suicide has made in Kharkiv and generally throughout the entire Ukraine, as well as in government circles, and in order to portray the protagonist's background of the protagonists and the consequences resulting therefrom, it is appropriate to spend a couple of words illustrating this incident.

The February 1 number of *Nuova Antologia* (New Anthology) carries an article, *Ukraine vs. Moscow, the Scythian*, in which Khvylovy is discussed with a profound knowledge of the circumstances, in which I believe I recognize my predecessor in Kharkiv, Royal Consul Maurilio Coppini. Hence, concerning Khvylovy's ideas and his activity on the Ukrainian literary and political scene, I can only refer to what was said in this article.

I can also add that while he was working in Donets, Khvylovy was accused of heresy (the Yefremov case), because he championed the notion that Ukraine should deal directly with Europe, since Ukrainians are essentially a European people, that it should distance itself from Muscovite ideas, which are essentially Asian, and that it should not have to go through Moscow in order to have dealings with Europe. Since he suffered tuberculosis at that time, Khvylovy was spared and sent out of the country for a cure. This was about five years ago.

Upon his return, it is well known that he took to drink. Before his return, he disclaimed responsibility for having written a novel, *Valdshnepy* (*The Woodsnipes*), of which only the first part had been published. After returning, Khvylovy incorporated into his writings the ideas which the Party imposed upon him, but being unable to resign himself to having his ideas adulterated, he burned everything.

His Ukrainian nationalism was intransigent, yet his name was so popular that he was left in peace.

## ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY

Moscow: June 6, 1933 – XI

Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROME

**RE: *Scarcity and famine in Ukraine and the USSR***

The food situation in Ukraine, in all its horror, is similar to the situation in the Northern Caucasus as reported by our Royal Embassy (see our telex of the 27th of last May, No. 2433/1242).

Reports supplied by the Royal Consul in Kharkiv, which refer to confidences made by a gentlemen by the name of Frenkel, a member of the Executive Committee of the GPU, indicate that approximately 250 people who have starved to death are picked up on the streets of Kharkiv every night. Knight Gradenigo has seen a truck pass by his house, loaded with some 15 corpses, and other people have seen corpses piled up at the bazaar. One woman flung herself underneath a tram right in the center of town, after abandoning her two children. The Royal Consul in Kharkiv found an abandoned 11-year old girl right in front of his own office building, and took her inside the house. Under questioning, she explained that her parents had died and that she had come to the city together with her sister: At some point, her sister had told her to wait for a minute, saying that she'd be right back. Seeing nothing more of her, the girl started to wander by herself, and that's how she ended up at the Consulate, where she sat down right in front of the gate.

The police are picking up peasants on the streets who have come from the countryside looking for bread, and as far as possible, placing them in makeshift cabins: Those who already show the characteristic signs of imminent death (swelling of the limbs) are loaded onto freight cars and carried some 50-odd kilometers away where they're dumped out in the open country and left to die far away from everybody else.

The hardest-hit district is Poltava, where even the doctors are dying of inanition: In the village of Grakhovo, 50 miles away from Kharkiv, the population has shrunk from 1300 inhabitants to around 200.

I am enclosing samples of bread prepared with ground roots; such is the sustenance of the inhabitants in and around Bilhorod. I am sending on a photograph from the same place showing a child, the son of German natives from the middle Volga, repatriated by the German Consulate in Kharkiv. The child shows the symptoms of starvation, and many are the children that we see in this sorry state, not just in the countryside, but also in the streets in the capital of Ukraine.

On the 18th of last May, upon his return from a tour of inspection (and repression as well, so it would seem), the Kharkiv GPU General, by the name of Brozsky, killed himself with a revolver after a violent scene with his boss, Balytsky, whom he told he had no wish to carry out any further inspections after the horrors he had witnessed out in the countryside. Another key figure in the Ukrainian Government supposedly went insane after a similar tour of inspection out in the countryside.

On my recent trip (cf. my telex No. 2519/1277 of today's date) I too have had occasion to observe the tragic living conditions of the Russian people, and of the Soviets as well: They're saying that out in the countryside just 40 kilometers away

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from Moscow, people can be seen wandering around already bloated from the state of malnutrition.

I have been getting letters from fellow countrymen living in remote regions of Russia, in which they say they no longer have any bread and are living off green vegetables cooked in water.

In Moscow and Leningrad, major labor centers, the conditions are comparatively speaking much better, according to people who have come from other labor centers. The *TIMES* is exaggerating when it says (in its issue of the 30th of last May) that 'Puffed-up faces' can even be seen on the streets of Moscow and that people who have died of starvation can frequently be found on the streets.

It is nonetheless true that the famine currently sweeping through Russia is certainly comparable, and in certain regions even more severe, than the famine of 1921.

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# **Royal Consulate of Italy<sup>o</sup>**

## **KHARKIV**

June 22, 1933

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Ref. No. 545/70

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
and for the information of the  
**ROYAL ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

**RE: THE APPEARANCE OF UKRAINE VIEWED FROM AN AIRPLANE ON  
JUNE 13 AND 16.**

Having to travel to Odessa on business, I took advantage of the recently established air service between Kharkiv and Odessa.

The flight, both there and back, was at an altitude of 500 to 600 meters, which afforded me an excellent view for some 6 km. to the right on the way there and to the left on the flight back. For this reason, I can claim to have observed some 8,000 sq. km. for over ten hours in great comfort. The visibility allowed me to see and recognize people and animals in the fields easily, given that in Ukraine there are no forests, only a great, endless, almost flat field.

The following consists of the observations which I made:

- 1) During the entire ten hours, from not one house or shack in all the villages, some of which were quite large (one had some 2,000 houses), did I see a single puff of smoke. The earth seemed uninhabited.
- 2) From no house did I see a child come out to look at the airplane pass over. Only rarely did I see people out on the threshing-floor, maybe a dozen in all. I also noticed just one small group of children in a ravine.
- 3) On the way there, from 7:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., in the fields I counted 341 peasants intently weeding and some 1700 animals, including cattle, horses, and pigs. On the return flight, between 11:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., some 500 people and 2500 animals, always in groups of 50 or 100, once 250.
- 4) The fields appear exceptionally green and the cereals look well developed, thus promising an optimal harvest. Only a few hectares of grain were visibly flattened down. I could notice when landing at Dnipropetrovsk that the corn is about 50 cm. high and the wheat almost a meter with tightly closed ears. Between Dnipropetrovsk and Kryvyi Rih for about half an hour, i.e. for around 70 km., the land appeared totally deserted. For the rest, the Fall weeding seems to have been done well, with only slight irregularities. The spring sowing still shows the earth widely uncovered, and the planting seems to have been done largely by tracts, sometimes dense, sometimes sparse. In Kryvyi Rih I saw a huge metallurgical factory building with eight furnaces, but completely abandoned. On the way there and back, I did not see one man working there.

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One can often see in the fields the ruins of factories, probably abandoned by *kulaks*, whose homes have been demolished.

Thus the agricultural situation could better be described as very good rather than good. The uneven plowing will definitely affect the Spring sowing. For certain crops the lack of weeding, which one could say has not yet begun for lack of manpower, will cause severe, really very severe damage (beets, potatoes). If the season continues to be so very rainy, it is possible that the grain will fall, stay empty, or rot. Still ahead is the harvest problem, which will have to be faced. Thus, there are many difficulties which threaten the harvest, which under normal living conditions would at the very least have been anticipated.

Everything is being readied for sending workers and employees into the field for the harvest. First of all they will be sent into the regions worst hit by typhus and assigned the toughest jobs, and later workers will be sent who will receive better treatment, also in terms of food. It is said that 40,000 employees and 60,000 workers will be mobilized in Kharkiv alone. I find it rather hard to believe that this type of labor will be able to save the harvest. There will most assuredly be a very high percentage of loss.

Sincerely yours,

**The Royal Consul  
Gradenigo**

# Royal Consulate of Italy<sup>o</sup>

## KHARKIV

June 22, 1933

Ref. No. 546/71

ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW  
and for the information of the  
ROYAL ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME

RE: THE FAMINE.

It is a dreary subject in itself, but some incidents should still be mentioned for the light that they shed upon the authorities' mentality and behavior.

The collection of the 'lost', 'abandoned', 'speculators', etc. is continuing so recklessly and energetically that I had to issue a certificate to my servant to show in case he is dragged off onto one of the 'death trucks'. It would seem that a daily 'plan' has been established for this 'collection'. In fact, an academic family told me this fact: A young girl, sent by her mother to wait in line for bread, sat down on a sidewalk and was reading and waiting her turn or perhaps the beginning of the distribution. A 'death truck' came by and took her. Her cries and shouts that her home was nearby were all useless. They are rather like Manzoni's carters, and they throw onto the wagon whatever comes to hand. A neighbor saw all this and ran to tell the girl's mother. The latter rushed to the nearest police station. All efforts were useless: They threw her out. Then she ran to a friend who worked for the GPU, who intervened, but the little girl was no longer at the police depot, but had already been taken to Holodna. The mother was given permission to enter the barracks (she later said there were dead and dying together, a stench from the corpses and the mutilated dead—abducted by night or starved by day?) where she finally found her daughter. A GPU senior official interrogated the 'attendants' about why they had picked up a well dressed young girl who had obviously not been abandoned. They answered, "We do not know who to take and who to leave, only that we must fill the daily quota so there will be no complaints."

From other reliable sources I have learned that the dying are dumped with the dead in the cemeteries and in ravines outside the city, and are either left there to die, exhausted, or are buried alive.

I can still add the following to the long list of villages whose inhabitants have been nearly destroyed and a percentage of the dead:

Collective Farm No. 47—Kharkiv region. Only the *Selsovet* (village council) is still alive, a few dozen persons in all.

Terstanyak—60 km. from Kharkiv—EVERYONE DEAD FROM TYPHUS AND FAMINE. One Doctor Gey, who was sent there, was taken aback upon entering the village by the horrible stench of corpses in full stage of decay in the houses (the doctor told me this personally).

Mohnak, Chuhuiev, once inhabited by about 1,000 people (Mrs. Ballovich took her vacations there) still has 12 men and a few women, plus a couple of children (visited by Mr. Ballovich, June 11).

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In Valky district, in an unnamed village (secretly disclosed by a university professor), once inhabited by some 3,000 people, since last fall there have been 800 'official' deaths and another 800 who have 'disappeared'; there is not one pregnant woman in the whole village nor one baby. One woman fled, because her relatives told her, half-jokingly, that she was the fattest and would be delicious in a pot. It would appear that the survivors have all become cannibals.

*At present some 300 cases of cannibalism have been brought before a tribunal in Kharkiv. Doctors of my acquaintance have noticed human flesh on sale at the market place.*

Government representatives admit to a loss of life in Ukraine alone of 9,000,000 people. In university circles, however, there is talk of 40-50% of the entire Ukrainian population, a figure which I consider to be more accurate (15-16 million).

Sincerely yours,

The Royal Consul  
Gradenigo

P.S. I have been unanimously informed by several health officials that pregnancies have come to an end out in the countryside; there are no more children.

**Royal Consulate of Italy<sup>o</sup>**  
**KHARKIV**

June 22, 1933

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Ref. No. 547/72

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
and for the information of the  
**ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

**RE: UKRAINE**

With reference to my two previous reports on the subject, 478/107 of May 31, this year, and another of June 9, No. 504/109, I now wish to make the following report:

Skrypnyk's secretary, arrested for having relations with the 'Austrian' group (Konovalets?), is still in prison and his name is Yesternuk; in recent days he has been joined by another, Hirchak, who has been arrested on the same charge. The latter was Vice Commissar of Education and also taught at the Ukrainian Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

The Ukrainian Republic would seem to have become the personal fief of Postyshev, who gives orders without consulting anyone anymore. In 48 hours he had demolished a large restaurant which was just built and not yet opened (near University Bridge—100,000 rubles were spent on it), as well as all the shops and the bar in ex-University Park, some of which were just barely finished and not yet open, 'because lunches should not be made into a spectacle while there is a food shortage'. This is the official version, unpublished but widely repeated.

Another arrest is that of the writer Yalovy, which also occurred over the last few days. I have been unable to get any further information about Yalovy.

I wish to confirm what was already stated, that here one is not speaking of conspiracies, or of any sort of systematic organizations, nor of any real agreements, but rather of one potential agreement and the concurrence of several currents of thought which have been gaining in breadth and depth. This new offensive, which has lashed out against those who have cultivated them, is most assuredly designed to paralyze any attempted manifestations of Ukrainian separatism, even if only of the platonic variety.

One of my informers was telling me, "Now the intention to deprive Ukraine of any chance to make demands for autonomy, however modest, has become plain to see. We are heading toward the Russification of the Donets Basin, where the theater programs for next year have already been put out entirely in Russian. Ukrainian stage performances are now confined to Kiev, Odessa, and Kharkiv. What is more, there is even an idea of repopulating the deserted fields with German Communists(?) or at least some such idea was being mooted before Hitler became chancellor. Now perhaps he would not let them out of Germany any more.

Of the Ukrainian language only that which is necessary to Moscow's policies will survive, to create a basis for demands for Polish Ukraine. In politics, Moscow

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knows that at some moment it will need to rely on the support of all these embittered Ukrainians, notwithstanding how they are mistreated today. Our own hopes now amount to little more than dreaming about a Japanese invasion..."

As seen in my other reports on the famine, the countryside has been stripped of around 50% of its population, and the famine is not over yet; indeed, it can even be said that matters are now coming to a head. Hardest hit are the central regions. Toward Poland the population seems a little better off. In Odessa I found the conditions better than in the past. In Donets I am told that the amount of food distributed has increased and things seem to be better than in Kharkiv.

The reasoning by which the government in Moscow has come to sacrifice and liquidate so many millions of people is clear: Because hunger always leads to revolution (in this case a counterrevolution) the main impact of the famine (in large degree provoked) has fallen on the shoulders of the Ukrainian peasants—who politically might have been the most dangerous and who in every way showed the most opposition to collectivization. However hungry he may be, the peasant cannot march on the city and pose a danger to the regime, primarily because of logistics. What could become dangerous are the working masses in the cities; that is why in 1923 there was 'NEP' and in 1932 the total destruction of the Ukrainian peasants, so as to avoid hunger in the cities. That is why even with such appalling slaughter and such dreadful famine, the Soviet regime pays no heed to danger signs: The workers are still eating, and even if they eat less and live in even worse conditions than the Russian average, they do not complain, or if they do they lash out at the peasants, who for months and months now have been described as *kulaks*, *sub-kulaks*, or infected with *kulakism*. If a solution to all this can be seen ahead, it lies in the possibility that the famine will also spread to the cities. But for the time being every measure is taken to prevent such a calamity or at least to keep it within bearable limits. Were the coming harvest to fail and if enough grain and food could not be imported, if famine were also to appear in the industrial centers, then and only then could one begin to ask whether the final chapter of Russian communism had not begun.

Sincerely yours,

The Royal Consul  
Gradenigo

# Royal Consulate of Italy<sup>o</sup>

## KHARKIV

July 10, 1933

Ref. No. 569/73

ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW  
and for the information of the  
ROYAL ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME

RE: THE AGRICULTURAL SITUATION

In Ukraine the agricultural situation currently presents two distinct facets: Grain crops, such as wheat, rye, barley, and corn, appear good almost everywhere. Storms have done some damage but nothing that would seriously endanger the harvest. On the other hand, if the weather were to remain rainy, the fate of the entire Ukrainian harvest could be decided in the next few days. The shortage of farm-hands alone could pose a grave problem, since the crops would have to stay out longer and be more exposed to the elements before being brought in. On the other hand, the outlook for the massive horticultural and "industrial" technical crops, among which sugar beets are of primary importance, is completely different. In this area, manual labor is of the utmost importance if the harvest is to succeed. Transplanting, aligning, weeding, and hoeing require the efforts of millions of hands, which Ukraine no longer possesses. The figures given in the newspapers from the Communist Party and the Agricultural Commissariat are compiled with the benefit, a large benefit, of inventories. They reflect the state of affairs inaccurately for two reasons: First, out of a desire to keep up appearances for the working class, and second, because the numbers given by the various local Party committees, trust directorates, and so forth, lack sincerity and portray the situation very optimistically, so as not to draw complaints and penalties upon themselves.

However, from Commissar of Agriculture Ovinsov's speech at the Party's June session in Kharkiv, we learn that the situation is anything but rosy, especially for the beet crop. From other bulletins we discover that this year the *cecidomyia tritici* is spreading significantly, and no measures have been taken to fight it because of the lack of manpower. Ovinsov estimates that for the proper cultivation of the beets alone two and one-half million workers are needed, but it is very difficult to gather such a force and supervise it properly.

An ongoing effort is being made to organize the transportation of masses of students, employees, and workers (in that order) from the cities. It is being claimed said that a large part of these citizens are really peasants who abandoned the fields only a short time ago and that for this reason the masses in question are already well-trained. This is true only up to a point, since the employees and students are all or almost all of urban origin and the others have been in the cities so long that they completely lack the physical training necessary to overcome the fatigue of working in the fields. The newspapers print identical notices about escapes and 'desertions'. The information at my disposal confirms that the quality of the work these people are doing is woefully inadequate. Quite often, weeding is transformed

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into real devastation because these inexperienced people have difficulty distinguishing the crops from the weeds (especially during the first weeding of certain crops). On top of that, they always come to work having walked from the nearest railroad station, 7-10 *versts*, often (from what I know) 15 *versts*, and in one case even 25 *versts*! No wonder they arrive exhausted. They have to bring along some food, and often a ration promised is later not provided. Thus far the weather has served to minimize the fruits of their labor. The work is supervised by armed soldiers, but often the latter are powerless in the face of widespread resentment. What is more, entire detachments of people, having arrived after a lengthy trek, have had to spend day after day in the empty houses of dead peasants waiting for the rain to stop, and when it did stop the time during which they should have been working has often passed, so they have ended up leaving without accomplishing anything.

Thus, the outlook for these crops cannot be bright, and it is possible that they will suffer a substantial loss.

The hay harvest was done late, and the rains have not yet allowed the hay to dry out. The harvest has been judged to have been good at most for fuel. With difficulty something will still be salvaged, but it will be of very poor quality because the harvest was done so late.

Sincerely yours,

The Royal Consul  
Gradenigo



# Royal Consulate of Italy<sup>o</sup>

## KHARKIV

July 10, 1933

Ref. No. 570/74

ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW  
and for the information of the  
ROYAL ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

RE: THE FAMINE AND THE SANITATION SITUATION

Today Ukraine presents one of the saddest of portraits. Except for regions that are in the immediate vicinity of cities, within a 50 km. radius, and the major cities themselves, the country has fallen victim to famine, typhus, dysentery, supposedly even cholera, and finally the plague, which has made sporadic appearances for now.

When last year the possibility of famine first presented itself, the government became preoccupied with the political situation that would emerge from it and, faithful to Lenin's doctrine that famines provoke revolutions, had taken action. It is now possible to explain why some of the measures have been adopted. The danger of a revolution or, better, counterrevolution because of hunger could be serious only in the large industrial centers. Thus it was necessary to think first of them and supply them as best possible. Given the vast distances, the quality and shortage of roads, the countryside was less threatening and could thus be left to its fate (in Ukraine the political question of liquidating the peasantry has also emerged). However, it could still be dangerous within a 50 km. radius around the larger centers (for Moscow 100 km. for greater security), and thus is it explained why around Kharkiv, Odessa, etc., people still live, and around Poltava or in Poltava itself, people die; why around Dnipropetrovsk people live, and around Kiev people die. And now one can explain the reason for the revival of passports and the exclusion of hundreds of thousands of people (the useless, the dangerous, the *ci-devant*) outside the 50 km. (or 100 km. for Moscow) so as to facilitate the task of supplying the major centers and to prevent any uprisings or even protests. The purge of the Party is connected with the food situation, or rather with the feared prospective reaction to the famine.

This famine has destroyed half the rural population of Ukraine.

This explains the savagery which all the peasants are inexorably picked up by the police (I have observed that the urban population, out of an obscure sense of defensiveness, deliberately promote hatred, or an unconquerable desire to tyrannize, willingly collaborate with this peasant hunt, and whenever someone tries to escape from one of the trucks in which they are carried to the police station for concentration, there are always ten people ready to chase him, to fight him, and to hand him over to the police), and this explains why doctors have been given orders not to treat peasants who show up in town.

Two thousand of these hapless people are being picked up daily and taken away by night. Whole families which came to the city as one last chance to escape death by starvation are mercilessly kept in police holds for one or two days and then

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taken, still hungry, 50 kilometers or more out of Kharkiv, and dumped into gullies formed by the torrential rains. Many lie their motionless and die, others manage to get up, and some even manage to make their way to the city once more, where alms can sometimes be had. From one of them I learned that one such place is in the swamps beyond Ray-Yelenovka, four hours from the nearest railroad station. Every three or four days a team of grave-diggers go there to bury the dead.

Some doctors who are friends of mine told me that the death rate in the villages has often reached 80% and is hardly ever below 50%. The hardest hit regions are Kiev, Poltava, and Sumy, where by now we can speak in terms of a desert.

I am adding one more name to the lists of ghost towns: LUTOVA, not far from Kharkiv, which once had over 1500 inhabitants and now has 90.

The sanitation situation could not be worse. The doctors are forbidden to mention typhus and deaths from starvation, nor can they even collect those observations which would be of great interest to them from a scientific point of view. However, I have received the following information about the pathological nature of this undernourishment. Those who have only been able to get a little bread (and this the blackest, made of the most disparate ingredients) become progressively and uniformly emaciated before they are struck down without warning by a cardiac arrest. On the other hand, with those who have had only fluids and a little milk, the feet and joints swell slowly until these people also die of a heart attack.

Very frequent is the phenomenon of hallucinations, in which people see their children only as animals, kill them, and eat them. Later some, having recuperated with proper food, do not remember wanting to eat their children and deny even being able to think of such a thing. The phenomena in question are the result of a lack of vitamins and would prove to be a very interesting study, alas, one which is banned even from consideration from a scientific point of view.

Sincerely yours,

The Royal Consul  
Gradenigo

# ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY

in the U.S.S.R.

Moscow: July 11, 1933 — Year 11

**Confidential**

**TELEX [illeg.: "3053/1697"?)**

**Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**RE: *German experts' opinions on conditions in Soviet agriculture.***

Dr. Schiller, attaché for agricultural matters at the local German embassy has recently come back from a trip to Ukraine during which he covered over 4500 kilometers by car. Also arriving in Moscow at that same time, at the German ambassador's invitation, was Dr. Dittlof, Director of the German Agricultural Concession in the *Drusag*, in the region between Kuban and the Northern Caucasus.

I have been able to gather some interesting news from these people as to the general situation in the agricultural regions of greatest importance to the USSR.

According to Dr. Schiller, the food situation facing the Ukrainian population has now reached its nadir. He showed photographs which he had taken of villages in which the still unburied bodies of inhabitants who had starved to death were clearly visible along the streets, as well as the interiors of hovels containing the bodies of little children abandoned because they were incapable of escaping, and dreadfully enough, just like in 1921, human corpses cut up into pieces.

The death toll and the flight of the population are the two phenomena which leave the greatest impression. Based on calculations of the death rates recorded in the districts and in the cities of Kharkiv, Kiev, Orel, and Kursk, over the period from September 1932 to June 1933, we arrive at the incredible figure (destined to increase in the months to come) of 6,000,000 people dead.

As for the flight of the population, this would have already reached its peak last Fall and will by now be sharply decreasing. The laws governing the fixing of peasants to the land (13th of last September), the law on agricultural theft (the 8th of last August), and lastly the law on passports (the 4th of last December), as well as heightened police surveillance in the countryside and the bans on purchasing rail tickets will all have sharply curtailed this fruitless exodus.

Trapped in their villages and unable to rely on the good offices of the cities (which have been reduced to a sorry state themselves), the peasants of Ukraine have been left with no alternative but to work for the government in order to obtain a bare minimum of food, or else quite literally to die of starvation.

According to Dr. Schiller, herein lies the key to the revival of Ukrainian agriculture which, left in a deplorable condition last year owing to its neglect and sabotage by the rural masses, would appear to be in good condition this year and leaves hope for a fine harvest. Weeds have been pulled up, grain has been properly sown, and greater care has been taken with livestock, which have turned out to be the salvation of innumerable smallholders.

The government's great skill has thus been its knowledge of how to make the most of the famine weapon. Peasants who have been drained of their strength will

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sometimes die on the job, but they produce just enough with the strength of their own despair to assist the endeavors of the masses.

Still according to Herr Schiller, no less crucial to the success of the harvest will be the work of the political sections in the *sovkhoses* and in the *kolkhoz* motor transportation sections. These sections, generally consisting of GPU agents in uniform, do not concern themselves with the technical aspects of the farms so much as with surveillance and management of the labor force.

In conclusion, in the opinion of the German agricultural attaché, while the Ukrainian population remains in an extremely serious predicament and the famine is wreaking havoc, the agricultural situation, the only situation the Soviet Government cares about, has undeniably improved in comparison with last year. The crisis cannot be said to have been overcome inasmuch as it remains to be seen, *inter alia*, whether the systems adopted during the sowing-season will perform equally well at harvest- and threshing-time.

According to Dr. Dittlof, Director of the German Concession in the Northern Caucasus, the situation in that particular region is quite different. There the Government, taken aback by the scale of the wholesale invisible revolt by the Cossacks (which took place last Fall) has had to resort to radical measures; replacing an appreciable portion of the aboriginal populations, assuredly sent off to Siberia, with other populations generally assembled into military collectives. Having as yet been implemented only in part, this operation has failed to bear full fruit and as a result, while the population's food conditions are still pretty distressing, the agriculture is in a dreadful state even in comparison with its poor condition last year. The regions of Novorossiisk and Rostov-on-the-Don are veritable graveyards, according to Dr. Dittlof. At the same German concession (which, managed with prudent criteria, achieves splendid results) five people have had to be assigned for the sole purpose of finding and burying the bodies of those who die of exhaustion while crossing the concession.

The current harvest is likely to fail in the Northern Caucasus, something which is not however highly significant from the standpoint of the Soviet economy as a whole.

(signature illegible)

**Royal Consulate of Italy<sup>o</sup>**  
**KHARKIV**

July 19, 1933

**CONFIDENTIAL**  
Ref. No. 599/80

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
and for the information of the  
**ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

**RE: FROM KHARKIV TO POLTAVA BY CAR. OBSERVATIONS MADE  
DURING THE JOURNEY ON JULY 16, 1933.**

On Sunday the 16th of this month I journeyed to Poltava by automobile in order to observe at close hand the same countryside which I examined during the trip to Odessa by airplane. In substance, I must confirm in full all the observations made previously. In particular I have the following to report:

**Road conditions:** A road with an artificial foundation and paved with cobblestones leaves Kharkiv. The cobblestones which jut out above the road level make the trip very uncomfortable because the car is constantly jolted by the uneven bumps which cause it to dance every time the speed exceeds 50 km. This road goes only as far as Valky, about 50 km. from Kharkiv. Further on a trail extends toward the fields. Sometimes it is fairly adequate, but often it is deeply plowed by the tracks of wagons which had driven over it in the rain. These tracks are 10 to 30 cm. deep and 10 to 15 cm. wide. They run in rows of four, six, eight or more parallel sheafs and make the route dangerous because, when a wheel gets caught in such jaws, it can cause the car to overturn. In addition to the journey being constantly delayed, depressions appear in the road every couple of kilometers where the watercourses or torrents had dug furrows when it rained. Such furrows measure a meter in length and are just as deep, with perpendicular margins. You have to approach these ditches at minimum speed, at a walking pace if you do not wish to topple over. Bridges exist over such ravines only here and there, amounting to only about 30% of what is necessary.

The cloud of dust is thick and (given the slow speed the terrain allows) almost always has time to settle on the car. In villages, and for several kilometers before and after, the roads are in a particularly disastrous condition. I recall Kolomak where it was a matter of climbing and then descending for about 40 meters from various levels. These disparities were formed by actual blocks of earth haphazardly piled up, with ditches a couple of meters wide on every side. It is a real test of nerve and ability to drive through such a road by car. Both the inbound and outbound road for this large village is better suited to tanks than to even the most robust passenger cars.

**VILLAGES AND TOWNS.** I passed through Liubotyn, which is unremarkable because it is not far from Kharkiv. Valky is a large town, and it is difficult to grasp its vastness, which is not unusual in Ukraine for these types of human settlements, given the vegetation which surrounds groups of huts and the cottages scattered

among the greenery. I observed a Sunday marketplace. There were farmers with about 30 carts but not many vegetables and several jars of beet marmalade. There was a total dearth of everything, of people, animals, and goods. No chickens, no geese, no piglets, no pots, no clothing, nothing. I asked myself what the purpose of such a market might be? It is probably a question of Sunday custom and nothing more. I found the same scene at Kolomak, about 30 km. farther on. In all I saw about 50 horses attached to wagons. The village of Vornovka was the richest in interesting features. Meanwhile, in the cemetery there were about ten crosses that had darkened with time, next to which there was a field full of freshly planted white crosses. There I was able to speak to a peasant who belonged to a collective farm, a man of about 30 and fairly well-built. Only a few words were spoken because the GPU circulates in every village. Now the village has about 40 men, women, and children. A year ago there were about 800. Many were killed by the peasants themselves 'because they had eaten the children of others'. Many 'had gone outside the village to die'. I noticed about ten demolished houses along the road. The survivors had taken any material that was still good. I saw the same sight in two other smaller villages, which I cannot find marked on my map (one cannot find detailed Russian maps for sale). I could not find out their names because I saw no one there. These are probably ghost towns. In Vornovka I noticed two houses with smoke coming out of the chimneys, several other houses in Kolomak, and another three in Paraskovyevsky, the last town before Poltava. At this last town the road was again paved with cobblestones. In all I had seen three dogs during the whole day (ten hours in the car) not counting Kharkiv, Poltava, and Liubotyn. In Paraskovyevsky (which is a state farm) I saw three flocks of geese totalling maybe 60 head, guarded by women, and a herd of about ten piglets in the same town. A little before reaching it, I saw about 50 cattle, one herd near Liubotyn and another before Valky. They belonged to the May Day State Farm located between Liubotyn and Valky. At sunset, near Liubotyn eight boys were tending about ten cows in a pasture. I saw only one woman with a child in her arms. I saw no old people. On the way home around 7:00 p.m. I saw a group of five middle-aged women chatting in front of a hut. Further on in the same village there were about ten boys ranging in age from 10-15. Except in the cities and in the two principal towns I saw no children between the ages of three and seven the entire day. Around 6:00 p.m. I noticed a group of about 20 peasants who, walking in twos and carrying spades on their shoulders, were on their way to Kolomak. Two meters in front, a cart carrying two merrily chatting rifle-bearing men led the way, and behind them a similar cart followed. Those that went on foot went quietly. They were very gloomy and obviously dead tired. The whole day I never heard anyone sing.

**THE COUNTRYSIDE.** Just outside Kharkiv I noticed a place, about 20 by 10 km., where the hay had been reaped and gathered into sheafs. A little was still scattered on the ground. The color was exactly that of chocolate, without even a hint of yellow-green. The hay was now good only for straw, or burning. Further on past Liubotyn there was an enormous field of wheat, about 30 by 15 km., splendid to look at, like an ocean. By examining it close up I noticed two things: It was rather sparse and the spikes stood very straight and seemed empty. A little less than half curved under the weight of the grain. This is my opinion and observation, not that of a specialist. Nevertheless, it might explain why the harvest appears to give a low average yield. I saw another field of similar size at Paraskovyevsky,

which is really a state farm, not far from Poltava. As for the rest, I saw medium sized fields flattened here and there, often overrun with weeds. The corn everywhere disappeared amid a forest of weeds as tall as I am. It was really all I could do to pick out the corn plants from among all of those weeds which had shot up to a fantastic height. It is a question of the peasant sowing all that he had left. Even seed meant for cattle has been taken from them in order to make the sowing as abundant as possible. I also saw vast sections of the fields cultivated with clover and oats mixed together, but the oats had already grown into spikes no longer of any use for forage. They should have been reaped a month ago.

**WORK IN THE FIELDS.** Until 10:00 a.m. I did not see a living soul in the fields. Later I noticed a mower pulled by horses and a peasant here and there busy with a hand scythe. Several others were busy weeding in their own little private plot (which does not belong to the *kolkhoz* or *sovkhoz*). Only in the afternoon did I see about ten groups of men and women peasants, about 20 at a time (at a generous estimate) busy weeding. After six, no one could be seen. Perhaps they were celebrating Sunday, but at harvest time and with a regime like this I hardly think Sunday would be observed. In three places I saw an armed man guarding the wheat. But on the whole it seemed to me that it was completely unguarded. This conflicts with what the newspapers write about surveillance.

I filled up with gas in Poltava. I wasted four hours to obtain 40 liters of gasoline and to reach the city council to see its head. He gave me a letter with which I went to look for the one in charge of the depot. When I finally found him, he signed the letter. Only after three more signatures and two inspections was I able to get 40 liters of gasoline.

Sincerely yours,

The Royal Consul,  
Gradenigo

**Royal Consulate of Italy**  
**KHARKIV**  
**U.S.S.R.**

Kharkiv, July 19, 1933 — XI

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Ref. No. 608/88

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
and for the information of the  
**ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

**RE: AFTER THE SUICIDE OF MYKOLA SKRYPNYK.**

I can now add the following details on the death of the above-specified individual:

Before taking his life he is said to have told his wife over the telephone: "I have no other choice; take good care of our son (who is a couple of years old). Farewell." After dashing to the *Gosprom*, his wife heard the revolver shot as she entered the entrance hall. The dying man was carried to the university clinic, where he regained consciousness during the blood transfusion. He told Postyshev, who had come by, that the real danger for Communism lay in Russian imperialism, which was on the rise. He was kept at the clinic overnight and taken to the House of Old Communists just half an hour before the funeral services. He was unpopular, because as head of the Cheka he had sent countless people to their deaths; however, his stoical suicide redeemed him in many people's eyes.

After Skrypnyk's death, Popov, vice-secretary of the party, gave a speech in which he retold the story of his deviation for the umpteenth time, and that before his death, he had repented and seen the error of his ways. Popov quoted a letter to this effect, but nobody believes it to be authentic.

Indeed, there is a rumor going the rounds which I mention purely as a word-of-mouth report, according to which Skrypnyk had reached an agreement with the Assistant Chief of Staff for the Red Army in Ukraine, Lebedev, who died of a natural death a few days before him (although people are now claiming that this too was caused by suicide)—an agreement which was to have resulted in an armed uprising against Moscow. The double suicide would thus have been due to the discovery of the plot; but Lebedev, so I'm told, was chief of the Army's 'Sovkhoz Administration' unit, hence a kind of quartermaster general, who had very little to do with the Army's innermost recesses.

Proceeding at all speed at present is the reform of Ukrainian spelling (it has been stripped of the vocative which Russian, unlike Ukrainian, does not have). In government offices the Russian language is once again being used, in correspondence as well as in verbal dealings between employees. I would cite the WOKS, which discarded Ukrainian first. A circular has been issued to all offices requiring that employees be asked if they have studied Ukrainian 'WILLINGLY' (for two years they had to study it, and if they didn't know it within one year, they were fired) or against their will. And naturally, showing their people's special brand of



courage, they all reply that they've studied it against their will; thus, this is a prelude to the total abolition of Ukrainian as an office language.

Even Gen. Guilio Douhet's book *The Dominion of the Air* which is being published by the Ukrainian Military Publishing House, is being translated into Russian and the Ukrainian translation that had been started has been discontinued. The book will carry the title *Na varzi!* [on the look-out].

When you consider that Ukraine has only had a concentrated Ukrainian population in areas confined to Kiev, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Poltava, Dnipropetrovsk, while elsewhere it has only been 50% and frequently just 30% of the population (and in the cities always approximately 60% at most), that the greatest proportion of Ukrainians has always been found in the population out in the country, that even in the areas mentioned above it has all but disappeared, we can only conclude that the Ukrainian people are about to go into an eclipse, which could well turn out to be a night without end, because Russian imperialism, with its present tender mercies (i.e., tender communist mercies), is capable of wiping a nation — nay, a civilization — right off the face of the earth if we aren't very careful.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

**Royal Consulate of Italy<sup>o</sup>**  
**KHARKIV**

July 20, 1933

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Ref. No. 616/89

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
and for the information of the  
**ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**RE: FORCED LABOR IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.**

The mobilization of urban inhabitants for work in the fields has assumed enormous proportions. It is estimated that everyday this week no less than 20,000 people have left for two to three weeks work in the fields. They are especially used in transplanting the beets and in weeding the fields of potatoes, corn, sunflowers, etc. The technicians are assigned to the grain harvest or as mechanics, drivers, etc. The food given them is minimal, and everyone tries to bring along whatever they can, **WHEN THEY ARE GIVEN TIME TO PROVIDE THEMSELVES WITH SOMETHING.** At the *torgsin* they now make a bread like the one they used to sell at "commercial" prices, and now it costs 21 gold kopecks, that is, 2.10 lira per kilo. This bread is made of rough rye and who knows what else. It smells musty and is like plaster.

The commandeering of people has come to resemble the black slave trade. The day before yesterday they surrounded the marketplace, took all the able-bodied men, women, boys, and girls, took them (under the GPU's organization) to the station, and packed them off to the fields. The merchandise was taken away by the GPU. Wherever a line forms there are GPU spies, and when they see that there are enough 'exportable' types, they move in.

I refer here to what was told me by a Communist Youth League girl upon her return from a three-week trip to the fields: The person in question is the daughter of the engineer Yenkov (who in his time married the daughter of the major Moscow manufacturer Kristovnikov). A family of the old school. However, the daughter in question has been and still is an ardent communist, a member of the *Komsomol* and of the factory cell at the Yuta works in Nova Bavariya (where there is a brewery of the same name). She was sent to weed the beets. There she remained for 21 days, quartered in a village school where the men and women stayed together. From the station she walked six *versts* to the village. As soon as she got there she was called by the director (one of the GPU), who warned her not to venture into the village alone, especially after dusk, because the surviving population was practicing cannibalism. Work started at 5:00 a.m. and broke off at 8:00 p.m. For the first few days she (strong though she is) felt exhausted but then she recovered herself and said that the three weeks did her health a lot of good. Three times a day she got some flour cooked in water, 'occasionally with a little fat, but very seldom'. Hunger made this bearable at first, but towards the end she found it so disgusting that she could not eat it. In addition she received 100 grams

of bread a day. The work was arduous, and often she could not pull out the weeds because they were so big and sturdy. The beets seemed tiny, scarcely a couple of clumps of dirt. Many of those sent neither understand nor were familiar with the work and ruined everything, but later they learned bit by bit; then there were the mounted GPU men passing judgment on the idle and malicious and negligent with the *nahayka* (riding-crop—trans.), which often successfully speeded up the work by giving the class enemies' backs a thorough working-over. Still, her faith did not appear to have been shaken, and she even found the *nahayka* quite natural, as of course it differs very greatly from the one used in the days of the Tsar: This *nahayka* is being wielded by proletarian dictators.

Sincerely yours,

The Royal Consul  
Gradenigo

P.S. As I write, the daughter of our porter, Mitrofan, has been press-ganged and has left with as much as her parents were hurriedly able to give her. She knows that she will be away for six weeks but has no idea where she will be sent.

Many factories (along with the one in where she was working and from where she returned home just half an hour ago) are closed, and it is the same with many offices.

# Royal Consulate of Italy<sup>o</sup> KHARKIV

July 31, 1933

Ref. No. 660/96

ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW  
and for the information of the  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME

RE: THE UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE AND THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE.

The reverse processes (i.e., de-Ukrainization and Russification), which has been the ascendant since the death of Skrypnyk, has now reached the following stages:

Cinema posters along with programs in Russian which come from Moscow nicely printed, and which used to make a stab at a translation handwritten in big letters on white placards, now stand alone without a Ukrainian translation.

Recitals are being given only in Russian in the open-air theaters and parks, and come Fall there will be permanent Russian plays.

The Kharkiv opera theater, which last since Fall had on its schedule the play *Taras Bulba*, permeated with themes of Ukrainian independence, rescheduled the first showing of this production until the last night of the season. On that evening, in departure from the custom for first nights, not only was there nobody from the government or Party in attendance, but the usual free tickets had not been distributed at the factories, and because of this the theater was unrecognizable and half-empty. The first act, which ends with the city of Kiev's rebellion against the Poles and their expulsion, ended without the actors being able to appear and thank the audience, who were applauding politely but not thunderously. This production did not show again, because the theater was closed down the next day.

A Polish colleague has drawn my attention to the constant repatriation of a number of Ruthenian (Western Ukrainian) teachers, some of whom had come to Ukraine back in Petliura's day, and who today are unemployed or fear being unemployed. The majority of them have acquired Soviet (initially Ukrainian) citizenship, but the Soviet authorities are getting rid of one after another and dismissing them from work, so that these lost sheep from the Polish domain are returning to Galicia.

I should like to point out that according to the "rumor mill," Skrypnyk left a letter of resignation which ends with these words: I am going to join the 14,000,000 Ukrainians who have gone before me, murdered by the famine. I have this information from a man whose wife is a friend of Skrypnyk's widow.

Another rumor is this: That when Skrypnyk died there were some troop mutinies on the outskirts of Kharkiv. This rumor was heard by the Poles and Germans; it also reached me, but I was unable to obtain any further details.

I should also like to draw attention to the following: The evening before the dispatch to the fields of the 100,- 150,- or 200,000 (the second figure is nearer the mark), four regiments were assembled at the GPU barracks, some quartered in 50-odd cabins and some in two large pitched camps. I saw them myself: Some on

*Italian Diplomatic and Consular Dispatches*

**June 25 and the rest on July 12, those who were in the camps. They have probably been assembled just in case the forced labor should happen to encounter some resistance.**

**Sincerely yours,**

**The Royal Consul  
Gradenigo**

**Royal Consulate of Italy**  
**KHARKIV**  
**U.S.S.R.**

Kharkiv: August 16, 1933 – XI

TELEX No.

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref. No. [illegible]

Reference: My reports of the 15th of this August, No. 75/104 (To the above Ministry) and No. 74/148 (to the Royal Embassy in Moscow)

ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW  
and for the information of the  
ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME

RE: CONDITIONS IN THE UKRAINIAN COUNTRYSIDE.

I have learned of an incident which could well find copycats and make matter even more tense than they are now, but which is at any rate a fairly important sign of the times, and accordingly one that needs to be pointed out.

In the countryside on the outskirts of Kiev, the peasants are particularly ill-disposed towards the workers who have been sent out into the fields from the cities. Here too, the word is that instead of sending out these bums, they ought instead to be giving some bread to the peasants, who will then work. This resentment has been taking on especially serious proportions in Kiev. The Polish Vice-Consul, currently governing the Polish Consulate General, returned from a tour yesterday evening (conducted partly by train and partly by car) along the zone between Kiev and the Polish frontier, and he told me that 15 survivors have been taken back to Kiev with severe burns all over their bodies, owing to the fact that in various places the peasants have started to set fire at night to those houses in which the city-dwelling workers have been billeted. Dozens of people have died. The unrest would appear to be spreading. The state of the countryside in the zone in question is similar to the conditions I described earlier. The Polish Vice-Consul visited one village where only 22 out of 250 inhabitants are still alive. Many houses are quite unapproachable because of the stench of dead bodies they give off, decomposing bodies which nobody is taking the trouble to bury.

The Red Army, whose intervention is spoken of repeatedly as is the intervention that is supposedly going to save the harvest, has indeed been employed for quite some time, but only on the Army's own *sovkhoses*, because the Government fears that the Army's unity would be shattered if it were to come into contact with the peasants on the Collectives, or worse still, with the independent peasants. However, the Army's contribution to the work of the Military *sovkhoses* can merely

serve as an example, because the Red Army's *sovkhozes* have had to face neither deaths from starvation nor any shortage of resources, and as such they are in a privileged position that is above average.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

# ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY

in the U.S.S.R.

Moscow: August 29, 1933 — Year XI

TELEX No.: [illeg.]

Reference: My Telex No. 3502/1704 of the 15th of this month

Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROME

RE: *Herriot's Visit.*

Accompanied by Senator Serlain, the deputies Julien and Marguin and M. Marcel Rey, Herriot arrived in Odessa on the 26th of the current month, and was solemnly received by the Ambassador of France, by Mr. Ghelfand, Vice-Director of the *Narkomdel's* Anglo-Roman Section, who had been suitably assigned to his person through his journey in the USSR, and by the main local authorities. He was treated to the usual speeches and banquets and was taken to visit some of the region's *kolkhozes*.

He left for Kiev on the same evening, where in addition to the ceremonial greetings, a popular rally was also organized for him along the streets which he traveled down by car. In an interview granted by him there to representatives of the press (see this Embassy's Bulletin No. 47 — Ref. 3632/1761), Herriot said that he had been touched by the rallies in his honor, and had mentioned how impressed he was with the cultural level of the peasants, and claimed he'd been struck by the way in which "respect for the spirit of socialism has been reconciled with respect for Ukrainian national sentiment" (*sic!*). This was the most important of the statements which he has made.

Herriot spent the 28th in Kharkiv. Once again, popular rallies, visits to factories and cultural institutions, and all the right speeches, etc.

On the evening of the 28th, at a dinner given for the former French Prime Minister by the Government of the Ukrainian Republic, Herriot warmly praised agricultural collectivization in the USSR, as well as the organization given to factory work, technical training for workers, etc., and ended up by saying how confident he was that friendly relations between France and the USSR would be strengthened.

According to telegraphic reports from Kharkiv to *Izvestiya*, the French party has found that "already our first impressions gained from our visit in Ukraine show that public opinion in France has been misled as to the real state of affairs in the USSR and in Ukraine in particular" (!).

At night, Herriot left to visit the Dnieper Hydroelectric Plant. He will then be going on through the Crimea, where he'll be holding talks with Stalin in Lupka.

My predictions as to the solemn importance that would be attached to Herriot's visit have been borne out in full. I have the impression that the Soviet Government has gone out of its way to impress its French guest, who — whether in good or bad faith — has happily gone along with all this stage-management in his honor.

As far as the press is concerned, and leaving aside the countless articles published on the nuts and bolts of this "triumphant journey," one need simply mention



**the in-depth article devoted to Herriot by the unofficial *Izvestiya* (sent in translation with Press Release no. 46—Ref. 36 23/1752 of the 28th of the current month). This concludes with “Herriot, a far-sighted bourgeois politician, rightly appreciates the USSR’s role as a key international player” and the “Soviet public opinion fully shares Herriot’s stated desire for peace and for closer ties between France and the Soviet Union.”**

**(signature illegible)**

# Royal Consulate of Italy

KHARKIV  
U.S.S.R.

Kharkiv: October 1, 1933 — XI

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Ref. No. 907-116

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
and for the information of the  
**ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

**RE: DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WHEAT, BEETROOT AND POTATO HARVESTS.**

In addition to enclosing some local newspaper clippings regarding developments in the wheat harvest, I have the honor to report the following information, along with some comments prompted by the information itself:

1. The harvest has not been as miraculous as the regime has cunningly proclaimed. The seeds used were of poor quality, and were often mixed up with different varieties and species; the sowing operations were poorly carried out, the land was unplowed and had been neglected for three years, and all of these things, in spite of the exceptionally favorable weather conditions, have turned this into a harvest which can be described as: Remarkably plentiful.
2. The Government has required independent peasants, Collectives and *sovkhozes* to pay quotas fixed in advance, specifically: One quota stipulated in tons to the State, one in a percentage to the MTS (State Agricultural Machinery Stations) and another to the State Mills. The remainder has been left at the free disposal of the collectives, the independent peasants and the *sovkhozes*. Probable output was estimated (and the quotas for the State, the MTS and the Mills were accordingly determined) on the basis of the findings of suitable commissions. The remainder was divided over however many days of work it had been estimated would be required by the harvest. For each working day, each worker was to receive, not only a payment (largely accounted for by the cost of food) but also a particular quantity of wheat, as his share in the fruits of the earth.
3. They have fancied they could make up for the manpower shortage brought about the millions of deaths (people in the know are now talking about the possibility of 18,000,000 deaths in Ukraine alone at this writing, because deaths from hunger are continuing, something that is perhaps difficult to believe in mid-harvest) by mechanizing agricul-

ture (tractors, combines, etc.) and forcing city dwellers to do agricultural shiftwork.

4. Their calculations regarding mechanization have been wide of the mark. It has been widely and repeatedly printed that mechanical performance has been meager, less than 50% of the anticipated amount. The combines have been incapable of working on the unlevelled fields, overrun with parasitic plants; the farm tractors have shown casting defects; and both combines and tractors have shown minimal durability and serviceability. Just like last year, the combines have consistently left an extremely high percentage of grain attached to the ears (and the grain drills work only by fits and starts). All agricultural machinery has been adversely affected by misuse, ignorance, and employee negligence. The shortage of working animals, and the poor performance of the malnourished surviving peasants (as they used to say: Leave those who know nothing of country work back in the cities, give us more to eat and we'll show you what we can do) and untrained city-dwellers, have changed the rest of the Government's calculations.

5. The harvested grain has all been taken and carried off to Moscow, Leningrad, to military warehouses, and to ports of export overseas, where it has to wait its turn to be sold. The watchword has been: Pay your grain tax to the State before anything else, and as soon as possible. They then started cutting the wheat while it was still green, and the wheat was taken to the elevators and mills while still moist and green. They went on collecting it at the railroad stations, even after the stations themselves were crammed to overflowing, and there was a shortage of manpower to load the wheat onto cars, and even a shortage of cars. Then there was a shortage of manpower to ventilate the wheat and put it under cover, and there was nothing with which to cover the wheat. For a month and a half now the newspapers have been full of thumbnail sketches of this kind, which help to give some idea of the Ukrainian wheat tragedy.

Conclusion: Officially up till the end of September (although what guarantees of truthfulness do these figures have?), the fields have yielded approximately 80% of the amount owing to the State, half or a little more than half of what is owing to the State MTS, and half or a little more than half of what is owing to the (State) Mills. We can't say precisely what this is in tons, since the MTS receive percentages of percentages (one portion of the land has not been worked by MTS machinery but rather by draft animals). The jumble of figures and percentages provided by the Commissars of the Economy in the *sovkhoses* and the main wheat depot, etc., has been made in order to confuse the issue rather than to clarify it. The newspapers' comments serve to obscure things even further, so that the old adage of the rhetorician holds good in this case: make it obscure, and even more obscure, because we can still understand part of it.

What is clear is this: For the time being, the State has gotten something out of the harvest, even if only 80% of what it was hoping for. However, an appreciable

portion of this 80% is still lying in collectives' warehouses, and railroad stations, and is fermenting, rotting away, etc., and it is certain that it was no better treated earlier on in the proceedings. The newspapers are forever sounding the alarm, and making accusations and appeals on behalf of the THOUSANDS of tons of wheat and the THOUSANDS of cars of wheat that are going to rack and ruin at railroad stations and collection centers.

The MTS have only gotten half. The *sovkhoses*, from which the Government has demanded more than was stipulated originally, when nobody had any idea that the harvest would meet with unexpected success, have responded by giving less than anyone, behaving just like all the other State industries into which they have been administratively assimilated, and revealing (in this uniquely Communist walk of life) a disaster that clearly mirrors all the other spheres of socialist reconstruction in the country.

The harvest has now been discontinued: It was abruptly halted at the end of September, after having already sharply declined for ten days. Party, Government and newspapers have been making very heavy weather of the presence of sabotage (and there's no denying that a vast spontaneous conspiracy of sabotage is at work, in agriculture and elsewhere, numbering tens of millions of slaves, a conspiracy without a cutting-edge, difficult to pin down, which has as its motto: So much the worse — so much the better), the need to continue wheat deliveries, even though the harvest of beetroots for "the Bolshevik woman" has started and must continue (although it's going very poorly, because the beets are small, as the plants have been suffocated by parasitic plants and pests, so much so that the weight per hectare is one-third short) and the simultaneous need to carry out the Autumn sowing at lightning speed (and with a full half of the tractors out of action). When the forces (and such forces!) are spread out over three fronts, the upshot is just what is beginning to be reported: That not a bit of good is being done anywhere. And Winter is knocking at the door.

How much good-quality grain will the State actually be getting out of this harvest? The harvest may be said to have been closed on October 1, although a little bit more may yet be gleaned. Perhaps 70% of the estimated amount (estimated when the harvest was still giving no grounds to assume that it would be quite so smiled upon by the weather), i.e., less than is necessary, as we must bear in mind that a full 10% of the harvest to date has been lost through fermentation, germination, thefts, waste, etc. The rest is still out in the fields. Will the peasants manage to harvest it still?

I have visited fields tens of kilometers in length and 3/4 of a kilometer in width, in the vicinity of Bilhorod; part of the wheat is on the ground, scattered where the harvester or reapers have left it, part has been gathered into bundles, part into sheaves, squat, unwrapped by the wind and the rain; the ears have approximately one third of their grains, and the grains have germinated in the portion closest to the ground; everything is a dark brown color (Sunday, September 24, 1933), 'cooked' by the rain.

But why should the peasant force himself to harvest, when the GPU is taking care of the plowing and Autumn sowing, and the potato and beet crops? He knows that he still has a debt to the State as well as to the MTS, and the Mills. Why work for them? Even when he could still afford everything, there would then come (and will still come) the requisitions to make provision for the Autumn sowing (which

will be 'deducted' from the entry recorded in his name, as his share for the days of work done—a share which for now has been left on paper, until full payment has been made to the State; a share which as yet nobody, other than Party members, as yet set eyes upon except in the form of "vouchers") and for the Spring sowing as well.

We must accordingly insist upon the inevitability of Winter famine out in the countryside, which will continue to strike down thousands of victims "until we're all dead," as the peasants say, and we must further insist upon the fact that people are still dying of starvation, as I know for certain from incoming reports and statements.

One other thing: The Government has once again triumphed (and at what a cost) over the Ukrainian peasants' resistance, especially by means of the *Politotdel*—the GPU unleashed in all the built-up areas.

The Government has exported wheat (perhaps it will have to reimport it in the Spring or buy some more, if it has been able to sell it at all); it has enough bread at least for the Winter for Moscow, for Leningrad, Kharkiv and other industrial centers; it will run into difficulties over meat and potatoes, but can count on six months of survival. The Government imagines that dying peasants can be superseded by machinery (which doesn't have any awkward sense of nationhood), and that broken machinery can be replaced with brand new machinery (the *Traktor-zavod* premises are currently recording an output of 145 tractors almost every day).

Which leaves us with this question: If, as it now seems, the Autumn sowing will be patterned after the Spring sowing of 1932 and the weather conditions will not be as exceptionally superb, wondrously superb, as this year's, and if the wheat harvest goes badly, just as this year's beet and potato harvest have been going to the rack and ruin, and the famine starts knocking on the doors of the industrial cities ... what then? Then the crucial year will be: 1935.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

Enclosed: 8 clippings from Kharkiv newspapers

**Royal Consulate of Italy**  
**KHARKIV**  
**U.S.S.R.**

Kharkiv: October 1, 1933 – XI

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Ref. No. 911-118

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
and for the information of the  
**ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

**RE: TWO DOCUMENTS CONCERNING THE CONDITIONS IN THE  
UKRAINIAN COUNTRYSIDE.**

Enclosed herewith are two documents illustrating the present situation out in the Ukrainian countryside.

With truly 'Bolshevik' ingenuousness, the first document hails the arrival of 'culture' and 'a life of comfort' inside a Ukrainian collectivist's hovel. The 'culture' consists of an old funnel phonograph, and the 'life of comfort' is represented by some pairs of trousers, a toothbrush shared by the whole family, and a bar of soap.

This aspect of the document, which might simply strike us as a bad joke, is important only because it shows us the degree of gullibility in the people upon whom this macabre Communist experiment is being performed. We need only examine the question of the 250 *poods* of wheat, which the Ukrainian collective farmer and his family are entitled to receive in compensation for their days of work performed for the Collective.

In the first instance, these 250 *poods* are only being counted up for now. Secondly, still on paper, half of them will be taken away to provide the Autumn sowing (by order of the Commissariat to the Economy); thirdly: To make flour out of the wheat the Ukrainian collective farmer must pay 33% to the mill. Fourthly and lastly, he will have to see to going to collect it himself when the Collective has entirely paid off its tax liability to the State, by turning over its entire required quantity (for now we're standing at barely 80%), to the agricultural machinery stations (we're just barely at 60%) and to the State mills (here also at around 60%). All of this could perhaps come to pass by October, but in all probability it will never happen, because October is all taken up with the Autumn sowing and the beetroot harvest, and for this reason there won't be any farmhands who can concern themselves with saving the rest of the wheat, which is still out in the fields.

If and only insofar as the Collective may have managed to keep some concealed provisions hidden from State requisitions, well represented almost everywhere by the *Politotdel*, or else from the GPU detachments, the collectivists will have something to eat this Winter: Otherwise there will be nothing to satisfy their hunger. This total absence of wheat at the collectives has already revealed itself, right where the collectives have been delivering the wheat to the railroad warehouses. At many posts the collectives have even attempted to keep their grain either by bribing the GPU officials (a common practice these days), or else by letting the wheat take up

water, in such a way as to be able to excuse the nondelivery by the need to dry the wheat off.

We cannot accordingly rule out the possibility that the usual methods will be used for the Spring sowing next year as well, i.e., the pitiless requisition of anything that can still be found among the peasants. Collective farm workers and independent peasants share a common fate in these cases, although greater violence is inflicted in the case of independent peasants.

As for the second document, we need add nothing to this *cri de cœur*.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

2 enclosures

**Royal Consulate of Italy**  
**KHARKIV**  
**U.S.S.R.**

Kharkiv: October 1, 1933 — XI

Ref. No. 913-119

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
and for the information of the  
**ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

**RE: PUBLIC EDUCATION IN UKRAINE.**

I am enclosing translations of three articles which have appeared in local newspapers, specifically one dated the 14th of last August which was carried in the *Kharkiv Proletarians*: "Without Oars and without a Rudder;" one from the 1st of last September which appeared in *Visti* and which reproduces an interview granted by the Commissar for Education, and one from the 17th of last September which appeared in *Komunist*.

As a foreword and commentary at the same time, I should like to make the following remarks:

Ever since the Revolution, the organization of education in Ukraine has differed in certain respects from that in the RSFSR.

This was the scheme in force up until a few months ago. Primary school is started at the age of eight (kindergartens may or may not be available for younger ages, but this grade of education is only undertaken in certain pilot institutes, for the use of foreign visitors). This schooling is of uncertain duration. At times this has had seven years (groups), sometimes six, sometimes eight. It was set at six groups last year. Now it is being extended to seven years, but there are plans to take it up to ten. Special care is devoted to primary school (which is the 'only' school), and while new texts are being prepared, they are trying to make use of those text books from previous years which, because they were prepared by Skrypnyk, have been condemned. Even pupils are being urged to hunt for textbooks, especially history books, on the prewar period. In spite of these agonizing temporary abdications in favor of Petliurists and the bourgeoisie, the schools, with the exception of the first year, are almost wholly lacking in textbooks. Where there are just five books for an entire class, the situation is already felt to be exceptionally conducive to studying. For the first year, it is said that full provision has been made for the entire Ukraine. It's just that ... distribution is awfully slow. It is true that here in Kharkiv only two schools have their first grade fully provided for: School Number 36, attended by the children of employees of the GPU, the Government, the Party, etc., and the school situated in front of the Evangelical Church, which is the school they make foreigners attend.

All the same, where books are concerned we've come a long way since the days when books were openly condemned as an instrument of bourgeois oppression, and it was proclaimed that 'there was no need of books in the schools' (1919-1920).



In these primary schools, the parents, guardians and 'those responsible for' the pupils pay a fee corresponding to 2 to 4% of their earnings; those who can also afford to pay a monthly room-and-board of 15 rubles (something which for a worker is either impossible or very difficult) get to receive a glass of tea, a pat of butter, a roll, and a dish of meat each day—at least at school ['Nr. 36' altered to 'Nr. 32' by hand]—although perhaps that's because it's attended by the "upper crust." Anyway, the rule is: If you don't pay you don't eat, a new twist on Lenin's motto: Those who do not work, will not eat.

After finishing primary school, the students, after passing an entrance examination, may move on: (1) to the Technicum, which here in Ukraine has hitherto held the status of a school of higher education, while in Moscow it has been classified as an intermediate school. Now, because up till now it has not been permissible to attend and complete more than one institute of higher education, those people who intend after the Technicum to attend an institute of higher education at a later date have usually discontinued their attendance at the Technicum after their second year and have progressed to a specialization institute. In this way, they have managed to attend part if not quite all of a genuine intermediate school without denying themselves higher education, to which access has best been gained through the *Rabfak*, a sort of two-year preparatory course for workers who have wanted to go directly to college from the factory floor, a course which has not only been quite worthless (and is still quite worthless), but also which due to the exceedingly low cultural level of its attendees) cannot provide serious preparation for college education, and is simply one of those institutions that have been created for pure propaganda purposes, quite bereft of any practical common sense. (2) To the People's Education Institute—now known as the *Ped-Institut*—which has corresponded in its intentions to our teacher training colleges or Education Departments. (3) To a factory or office, as a worker or employee.

In tandem with primary schools, primary education (for the most recent classes) has been conducted at the so-called Factory Schools [FSU], which are now said to be almost a complete failure, because they are so badly organized from the theoretical standpoint, although they have tried to be something akin to Italian subsidiary education. Accordingly, after children have attended primary school for some years, and having already reached the minimum working age after successive losses of years of study, they have had the option, while moving on to a factory, to continue school attendance, i.e., at the school in the factory (where available) which has offered them a syllabus similar to the syllabus in the final grades in primary school. However, this has always been very vague. At what age should you leave primary school, and after which grade? What role in primary education is actually played by the FSU? There's no rhyme or reason. It's at the professor's discretion, at everybody's discretion.

Workers advised to do so by the Party, while remaining 'in force' at their Factory, have been able and may still attend special preparatory courses instituted at each college, known as the *RABFAK* (Workers' Faculties). With assistance from students on the higher courses they have been and still are required to achieve sufficient preparation in a couple of years to begin the college's very own courses proper. It is here in this area that the Communist experiment takes home the booby prize, for semi-literates have sometimes been seen arriving from the countryside who, after two years of indescribably harrowing effort, have found

themselves right back at square one, and in desperation and in fear of the Party, they have no longer known which way to turn. These people have produced (when they've produced them) the most inferior professionals out of all the substandard output of Soviet colleges. There have as yet been no exceptions.

Colleges for all science specialties are present in large numbers, with an average course length of three years. For example: The Institute of Geodesy, the Technological Institute (a sort of multisection polytechnic), the Institutes of Architecture, of Chemistry, and of Medicine—with several sections, the Institute of Veterinary Medicine, the Institute of Agronomy (also subdivided into various sections), the Forestry Institute—a branch of the Forestry Institute in Moscow, the Marx and Lenin Institute, for training Party officials, now raised to the status of Academy, etc.

The University was dissolved in 1919, and initially replaced by an 'Academy of Theoretical Sciences', which comprised roughly the same faculties and courses as before, apart from medicine, which came to form a separate institute which it remains today.

In 1920, this Academy of Theoretical Sciences, seeming still to have too bourgeois a name, was renamed the Institute of Popular Instruction (for training teachers and professors), with the following sections: Mathematics and Physics, Biology, Geography, Literature and Languages, History and Economics. At first one could graduate to these sections after just one year of preparatory study, the same for all, and later on directly after a two-year course of study. It is interesting to note the syllabus for this preparatory course: Marxism and Leninism, ORTHOGRAPHY, GRAMMAR AND SYNTAX. This would be followed by three and a half years of study in some section or another.

Subsequently (in 1928) this Institute of Popular Instruction changed its name once again and was entitled: Institute of Professional Education, and it was reserved for the training of teachers for the intermediate institutes (the Technicum, the FSU, the *Rabfak*), while training of elementary school teachers and physical education teachers was entrusted to a new Institute of Popular Education.

This is a systematic overview of public education in Ukraine, as it had remained in effect until June of this year.

We might also add that since each nationality has the right to be taught in its own language, there are schools, courses, groups and faculties in Ukraine which have Ukrainian, Russian, Moldavian, German, and Hebrew as their teaching language. Skrypnyk, the Commissar of Education who recently committed suicide, had taken it upon himself to minimize the number of foreign schools, thereby incurring the odium of the Russians and the Jews, who moreover wanted to be able to attend Russian schools rather than Hebrew schools—but not Ukrainian schools. Moreover, he had tried to cleanse the Ukrainian language of all the foreign elements, especially the Russian elements, that had crept into it.

This policy of his, sustained by summoning a number of Ruthenian teachers and professors into Ukraine from Polish Galicia, was manifestly aimed in the long run at rescuing Ukraine from the totalitarian submission or assimilation which Moscow has always openly pursued, be it Tsarist or Communist Moscow. The well-known statements by Rosenberg provided the ostensible grounds for being able to demolish this policy. With Skrypnyk out of the picture, a special policy for Ukraine was grafted onto the Public Education reform already prepared for the Union as a whole.

According to the interview granted by Comm. Zatomski, all teachers and professors known for their attachment to Skrypnyk's ideas or who had at any rate compromised themselves or who were under suspicion, were eliminated, in such a way that higher education in Ukraine is short by several hundred professors. An appreciable portion of the teaching posts left vacant as well as those (many newly-created) resulting from the reform, were entrusted to young people who were all too often ENTIRELY lacking in the training and aptitude for higher education, and in the most depressing manner possible.

In the primary schools and the Technicum, many classes were discontinued in which the teaching language had been Ukrainian, to be replaced by the Russian courses. In his interview, the Commissar says that: New Russian or German groups were created, etc. In actual fact, Russian or German, Hebrew or Moldavian courses were substituted for the same number of Ukrainian groups in the same buildings.

I cannot quote figures. My impression is that, helped along by the wasteland left by the famine, Stalin's lieutenants have by now cut the teaching of Ukrainian down to less than half of the population.

With a little help from Ukrainian nationalism, Ukrainian itself is turning into a Russian salad (the term is apt) in which what with all the Russian and the terms being picked and chosen from all languages, there'll be precious little Ukrainian left over, so much so that we can see the day when Ukrainian will no longer be able to aspire to the status of a language.

From the organizational point of view, education is undergoing the following changes:

Primary schools are being brought up from six to seven classes, with a syllabus aimed at turning them into a ten-year school.

From being a school of higher education, as it had been regarded, the Technicum has become an intermediate school akin to our schools of arts and trades.

The *Rabfak* remain intact in theory, but in practice they tend to be eliminated, by toughening the entrance examinations to the Institutes of Higher Education.

The FSU are coming to be regarded as failures, and through new organization there are plans to turn them into a kind of preparatory school for attendance at the Technicum.

The Institutes of Medicine remain unchanged.

The Institutes of specialization vary, depending in part on the various Commissariats, for which they train officials and professionals—nonetheless, they are staying as they are.

The Institute of Popular Education, for the training of elementary schoolteachers and physical education teachers, is being changed, in name but not in substance, to the *Ped-Institut*.

The Institute of Professional Education (formerly the University, stripped of the faculty of medicine, transformed into the Academy of Theoretical Sciences, subsequently becoming the Institute of Popular Instruction, then of Professional Education) is officially becoming a University once again, with eight faculties in Kharkiv (Physics/Mathematics; Chemistry; Biology; Geology/Geography; History; Economics; Literature; Science of Law); with six faculties in Kiev (less Economics and the Science of Law); with four faculties in Odessa (Physics/Mathematics; Chemistry; Biology; Economics); four at Dniepropetrovsk (Physics/Mathematics; Chemistry;

Geology/Geography; Economics). Admitted up to the age of 35 are those who can prove their proletarian social origin or Jewish nationality and can pass an examination which recapitulates the syllabus established by the Technicum. Also admitted are those people coming from the *Rabfak* or the FSU, provided they can pass the exam. However, graduates of the *Rabfak* or the FSU have successfully completed little more than the Primary School syllabus, and hence their admission to the exams is destined to remain an outlet open only to those who have been specially "recommended", and perhaps not for very many.

The examination is particularly tough in language and mathematics (written and oral) and further comprises oral examinations in: language and literature, mathematics, physics, chemistry, sociology, history of the class struggle, history of the Party, History of the Ukrainian Party, History of the Comintern, Leninism, Political Economy and Economic Policy (information gleaned from admission programs).

Still unchanged is the special Institute for Communists which trains: Directors of Clubs, Libraries, and Propaganda Offices. The three faculties are divided thusly: for Club Directors: Industrial Section and Agricultural Section (Clubs for workers and for peasants); for Directors of Libraries: Organization and Methods Section, Management Section, Teaching of Disciplines Section, Section for Intermediate Institutes' Libraries; for Directors of Propaganda Offices: Historical Section, Organization Section, Section for Party Institutes' Teachers, Economics Section, Philosophy Section, Anti-Religious Section. Only members are admitted to this Institute, at the Party's proposal and recommendation.

The reform also makes provisions for returning books to the various libraries from which they had been taken, when the decision was adopted in each city to collect all the books into one single library. In this way, Kiev made a mishmash of all the books, which had originally been shared among universities, academies, institutes, etc., but in throwing them all together it did not keep the origins of the stocks separate. Happily, Kharkiv had failed to comply at the time and so it now has its libraries in place.

Scholastic programs, whether for primary schools or for schools of higher education (the universities in particular) have had to be strictly modeled on their Moscow counterparts and have been sent there for approval. They still haven't come back yet, and this is the real reason for the scholastic year's stuttering start (along with the shortage of teachers and professors), rather than the one mentioned in the newspapers.

I shall not dwell on a description of the squalor and immoral behavior, etc., in students' boarding schools (which are co-ed) nor on the living conditions in which the State requires students to live (the Party on the other hand gives fat stipends), conditions which I have already described in my report of the 4th of last April Nr. 274/33 to the Royal Embassy of Italy in Moscow. I nonetheless think it advisable to mention the following example, which illustrates the conditions and the circumstances in which one student in the pay of the Party has found himself:

Comrade Tolkhach, who lives at the Pushkin boarding school for students, was a bookkeeper at Horol (Poltava). A good Communist, and Party member, he was chosen by the Party to attend the 'Superior Institute of Agriculture'. He sold all his personal property, etc., and moved to Kharkiv with his wife and child. Needless to say, he didn't have the three or four thousand rubles necessary to 'purchase' a room (sale of rooms is granted to those people who move house to go and live in another

city, and there is an accommodation market under this clause). He accordingly had to ask for a 'place' at the boarding school. His wife was able to rent a 'corner' in her sister's room, her sister living at 24 Liebnecht Street. She was able to put down a bed in that 'corner', upon which she sleeps together with her 12-year old child.

What with his institute, studies, and meetings, she never sees her husband any more. In addition, at the boarding-school he has found as many girls as he could possibly wish for, and doesn't care about his family any more. To earn a living, his wife works as a waitress at the Police Restaurant, waits on tables, sweeps and washes dishes. She earns 100 rubles a month. She has to turn over 40 rubles to her sister for the rented 'corner'. The little boy is not entitled to study in the house, and couldn't anyway, because his cousins are little and won't leave him in peace, nor does his aunt want him in the house when his mother isn't there. Now he goes to his father's place and stays there, in the room his father occupies together with 5 companions. The father-student has a stipend of 250 rubles per month. He pays out 80 rubles for the room and board, and around 20 rubles for various contributions: To *Osoviachim*, to the Party, for loans, etc., but he declares that the 150 rubles he has left over are barely enough for him to live on, because apart from the bread the rest of the boarding-school's food is inedible. He's even had to sell his extra clothes in order to get by. The family is destroyed, the home has died, and nobody is happy.

In summary and conclusion, I would like to make the following two comments: (1) the bastardization of the Ukrainian people is being actively pursued through the schools; (2) the Regime, having observed the failure of its scholastic policy, is slowly returning to more serious and more realistic arrangements for the organization of education, to be modeled on programs adopted by states of advanced civilization. The programs are a little less overblown where class rhetoric is concerned, although this is less apparent to anybody surveying the scene for the first time.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

# **Royal Consulate of Italy**

**KHARKIV**

**U.S.S.R.**

Kharkiv: December 12, 1933 — XII

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Ref. No. [illeg.]

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
and for the information of the  
**ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

Classic epidemic typhus, which usually starts spreading in October, has held back until the second half of November this year. This delay fueled hopes that the plague was on the wane and that the 50/60 cases per day, normal for the Summer period, would be as far as these would go. However, with the first cold snaps at the end of November and the consequent return of Winter furs, typhus suddenly spread on an even more severe scale than the previous year, especially in the countryside. In Kharkiv there have been around 300 new cases each day, with a death rate of 15/20% if my information is correct (although it got up to 40% last year). A meeting of all the city's public health personnel was convened for December 4, to fight this epidemic, which by now we might as well call endemic. Committees and subcommittees of inspection were set up in large numbers. All barber shops have been carefully checked; there are also physical examinations of staff employees and customers found in these stores. Other committees are inspecting the rooms in people's houses. Fines upon fines are being imposed wherever the squalor is outrageous. The practice of raising chickens and rabbits in people's rooms has been abolished, as this had been widespread. This particular practice is permitted only in the houses' bathrooms. All the roads in Kharkiv have been covered with eye-catching white letters on the sidewalk asphalt that say: **DOWN WITH GARBAGE**. Out in the countryside, typhus has around 10% of the population bedridden. In Kharkiv's hospitals, typhus sufferers are once again showing miscellaneous symptoms and strange phenomena attributable to malnutrition.

A further plague, increasingly spoken about, has suddenly emerged on a large and severe scale, namely **MALARIA**. The humid and exceptionally rainy Summer has dangerously encouraged the spread of a disease which in previous years, both because of the heavy droughts which hit the harvests as we well know, and because of the torrid nature of the Ukrainian states, had been kept within far more manageable bounds. Certainly the widespread sapping of strength throughout the population has played its part in the current grim reports of **AT LEAST ONE MALARIA SUFFERER FOR EACH HOUSE OR SHANTY**. The parlous state of the general public's health is borne out by the fact that the malaria has assumed unusual forms; appearing along with the fever are extremely acute pains in the nape of the neck, the backbone and lumbar region. It seems that the country has been completely out of quinine; or at least that it just hasn't been in any position to fight the disease. At present, quinine is only for sale **IN THE TORGSIN STORES**, and

that is also true of the countryside – which is tantamount to saying that the peasants are getting no help at all in this area.

Yet in general, we are witnessing the same decline in the field of sanitation that we have had in all other services. I might mention the case that happened two weeks ago at the university clinic. The professor had to defer all five scheduled operations because he was short of oil to heat the disinfection baths (electrical heating appliances are no longer an issue, because the current is haphazard, sometimes at 80 volts, sometimes at 100, other times at 110, etc., and other times at nothing at all), and for light, and also short of light and linen.

All of Kharkiv hospitals have been given notice that the only ether factory in the Union, namely in Moscow (an old pre-war factory) is going to be shut down for six months, and that the hospitals will accordingly have to fall back on old-fashioned chloroform for their operations.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

# **Royal Consulate of Italy**

## **LENINGRAD**

Leningrad: January 2, 1934 – XII FASCIST ERA

**CONFIDENTIAL**  
**TELEX No. [illeg.]**

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
**and for the information of the**  
**ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

**RE: *Arrest of students, professors, and intellectuals.***

I have the honor to report to Your Excellency that several students connected with the All-Union Academy of Sciences were recently arrested for reasons as yet unknown since none of them have returned home yet.

Six officials and curators of the Hermitage Museum were arrested, including the distinguished Professor Schmidt, a leading authority on Italian art, supposedly for having unlawfully favored the restitution of works of art to museums in Ukraine.

For the same reasons, the same fate has befallen each and every one of the officials and curators of the 'Russian' museum in Leningrad, which has now been left at the mercy of understaffing.

(signature illegible)



**Royal Consulate of Italy**  
**KHARKIV**  
**U.S.S.R.**

**KHARKIV: January 31, 1934 – XII**

**Ref. No. [illeg.]**

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
**and for the information of the**  
**ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

**RE: TRANSFERRING THE UKRAINIAN CAPITAL FROM KHARKIV TO KIEV.**

I have the honor to repeat uncoded hereunder the three coded telegrams which I sent to the Royal Embassy of Italy in Moscow on the 21st (No. 3), the 22nd (No. 4), and the 27th (No. 5) of the current month:

No. 3—On Friday the 19th of the current month, the Executive Committee of the CPU resolved in secret session to propose to the Party Assembly that the capital be transferred to Kiev. This news, slated for publication in the newspapers in a matter of days and for official approval at the forthcoming Moscow session, is borne out by reports which have been reaching me from various sources. Transferring the capital will entail the exodus of 100,000 people from Kharkiv. Also moving to Kiev along with the Government will be the opera theater, the Woks, the main newspapers and certain superior institutes of political and literary culture. Remaining in Kharkiv will be the superior institutes of technical culture and the general directorates of industries. The new capital will take up its duties on the first of next August. In light of foreign and domestic developments over the last year, this news lends itself to the following interpretations: The future borders of Ukraine will tend towards those of the original primitive Ukrainian State between the Dnieper and Black Sea, while all of the richest territory on the left bank of the river will be annexed to Muscovy in a second step. The famine has already laid waste to this territory, which for two months has been repopulated with trainloads of Great Russians, brought here from Siberia. While showing that the state of Russian-Polish relations is able to inspire the deepest trust, even in the light of the intentions being attributed to Germany, the Ukrainian capital's transfer to the border further serves quite intentionally to belie the persecution of the Ukrainian people, who should be ecstatic at the return of their capital to its historical seat. This return of the capital to Kiev closes the chapter opened by Petliura in 1919 with the foundation of the great independent Ukraine with its capital in Kharkiv, and commences the process of territorial decapitation now that the national decapitation of the Ukrainian people is already proceeding nicely, and will continue with the imminent famine in the months to come.

No. 4. In their evening edition, the newspapers have officially announced the transfer of the capital to Kiev, decided upon by the Party and the Government on the following grounds: With the industrial districts having achieved full development, it is now necessary to bring the Government into the center of the

agricultural districts, still a stronghold of the counterrevolutionary nationalist contingent which is causing a slowdown in the growth of the agricultural economy. I have had confirmed to me that the territory on the Left Bank of the Dnieper will shortly be transformed into a federal autonomous industrial territory.

No. 5. The autonomous territory mentioned in my previous telegrams will comprise the *oblast's* of Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Donets. Kharkiv is destined to remain just a university center, and right from the beginning, a partially Russian-language center. Dnipropetrovsk will be the administrative center of the above-mentioned 'South-Eastern Industrial Territory—*Yugovostochnyi Kray*' to be run under the auspices of the Muscovite Republic. The region of Poltava still has yet to be definitively assigned to this new territory (even though it forms part of the Kharkiv *Oblast*), and it may perhaps be meant to round off the remaining Ukraine. Chubar is to be assigned to Moscow to a new post. Kossior will be moving to the Professional Union, as President. According to rumors that cannot be verified, Postyshev is to become chief of the new autonomous territory.

To my foregoing remarks, I have the honor of adding the following:

To judge not simply by my previous reports on the subject, the depopulation of Ukraine (particularly on the Left Bank of the Dnieper) can also be broadly inferred from the following news that has reached me over the last two months: From the approximately 10,000 inhabitants it once had, the township of Bolshaya Perekhovka now has just 250 (two hundred and fifty). Typhus has been wreaking havoc along with the famine; five villages between Poltava and Dnipropetrovsk have been visited, in which not a single soul was left alive; Buki has slumped from 2,000 to 400 people; the German colony of Hubonka had 25 dead children in ten homes during the *Autumn* months; and the township of Malopisarevka (Solochinski) has fallen from 9,000 to 3,000 inhabitants. One hundred 'voluntary' workers were sent out into this region during the Summer to assist the collective farm workers, who are semi-invalids from undernutrition. During threshing-time, these collective farm workers were given 50 grams of bread and 200 grams of boiled barley a day, but later the bread went up to 70 grams and finished up at 140 grams; not one grain of the harvest was given to the collective farm workers; all of it has been sent off on the trains.

In general, the average wheat allowance for to the workers in return for their work, has been approximately one *pozd* per head ALL TOLD, as their SUPPLY FOR THE ENTIRE WINTER. I could enclose a dozen letters from the German colonists regarding the present situation, a famine situation all over again. These are the heartbreaking episodes I have already described. On go the deportations, the violent expropriations without any compensation, some of which have even affected our own Italian fellow countrymen (the Zanier family) as I have also had occasion to report. Once again, the expropriations are being carried out intensively, and are even affecting the families of Red Army soldiers. Whereas previously, as soon as the military authorities were informed that a soldier's family had been chased out of the house and land which the family owned, the authorities would intervene to reunite these families with their possessions; but now, if a soldier should protest against such treatment being meted out to his family-members, he is expelled from the Army.

I can give you the following figure for the death toll: The Commissariat of Agriculture with its subsidiary 'Soyuz', which is required to submit an annual calcu-

lation of the number of people who need to have food in order to survive, has calculated a reduction of those present out in the countryside equivalent to 11.5 million individuals. I have also learned from my usual informants that there are countless villages in which "an old person" is a young boy who may be from 14-17 years old.

The repopulation with Russian people is proceeding on a regular basis with the arrival of trainloads of Great Russians from the less fertile Siberian regions. But their situation is none too funny either, for they are coming into possession of hovels that have been abandoned for months, and which are overrun by parasitic plants during the exceptionally fertile Ukrainian Summer (the hovels always have an earth flooring), completely unfurnished, long since looted by the survivors, and always infested with typhus lice. In this regard, I read in the Polish newspapers (*Nowy Czas* of L'viv and *Nedila* of L'viv) that Jewish colonies have also been formed in Ukraine, the Crimea, and Northern Caucasus with 18,627 families, while in the Far East, the Ukrainian groups formerly 'fixed' in earlier times on the Amur, have been deported off to the center of Siberia on the grounds that they are suspicious characters.

In general, the coming months are expected to be tougher on the people than the same time a year ago. It is simply that we will be seeing fewer people around, both because the great mass of them have already died, and also because the authorities are better organized and will not allow themselves to be caught off guard like last year, and that is why they will be making people die *in situ*, denying them any chance of slipping away to the major urban centers.

We already have clear proof as to the organization of the Autonomous Territory: Today for example an order has gone out that factories producing lightly spiritous beverages, instead of reporting to a Ukrainian state center as has been the case up till now, must each by themselves transfer to the *raions* of the *oblast* in whose territory they are located. Thus the administrative system will be caused to split up into *oblast's* a little bit each day, the better ultimately to regroup industries and administrations into two separate state centers.

Lastly, I should mention the fact that the daily bread rations for the workers have already been reduced by 100 grams, and that the trainloads of wheat are still being sent eastward. This wheat's condition may be readily inferred from the enclosed newspaper clippings. As far as the overall mass of the Ukrainian harvest is concerned, I can quote a figure which I take to be near enough to the truth, and that is: 6,000,000 tons, of which however my informant tells me that 40% has been severely damaged by bad weather, theft, etc. We are accordingly looking at a slightly better harvest than for 1931, in terms of whatever has appeared right from the beginning of the harvest-time. Needless to say, the situation has benefited greatly in the absence of all those millions of mouths to feed.

I might also point out that the local Legation Counsellor, Polish Consul General Sedlewski, has been hardest hit by the news of the transfer of the capital to Kiev. Quite out of character, his demeanor has suddenly changed. Whereas previously he had sung the praises of the work of Soviet reconstruction, he speaks disparagingly of it now and is once again of the opinion that everything is running to rack and ruin. He has approached the German Consulate General and showered the Consulate with invitations, etc. Because he keeps in such close touch with Polish diplomatic circles in the capital, his antics quite unwittingly reveal the way the wind is

*Appendix II*

blowing. Consequently, my interpretation of this is that in Poland there are fears that in its proximity to the frontier, and surrounded by fortifications that are said to be similar to the fortifications at the French-German border, Kiev could well become a center of attraction for Ukrainian irredentism and that the USSR, spared of any fears of potential nationalistic complications, thanks to Ukraine's newly-acquired diminutive stature, might wish to play this new trump card, so ideally revamped and suited to the game at hand.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

3 enclosures

# ROYAL CONSULATE OF ITALY

## ODESSA

February 19, 1934—XII

Confidential  
Ref. No. 262/42

Dear Ambassador:

I recently had occasion to confer with the Diplomatic Agent of the People's Commissariat Mr. Gailiunski who confirmed to me regarding my query—whether transferring the Ukrainian capital to Kiev signified an increase in the unitary concept of the Ukrainian state—that this is not the case.

This is also the opinion of Roth, the German Consul.

It has also been clear for quite some time that the Moscow Government intends to settle the Ukrainian problem once and for all.

The persecutions conducted against the Ukrainian intellectuals accused of sympathizing with their colleagues and brothers in Galicia and Poland; the suicide of Skrypnyk, the Ukrainian Commissar for Public Education; the incarceration of numerous Germans accused of sympathizing with the Ukrainians; the withholding of the grain reserves from the peasants, which has turned Ukraine over the Spring of last year into the site of an unprecedented famine, which according to reliable evidence has sent 7,000,000 people to their deaths; all of these things betoken the Moscow Government's intention to use every means at their disposal to crush every last vestige of Ukrainian nationalism.

Lastly, we must not forget that sizable groups of Ukrainians have been sent off to Siberia against their will to set up new *kolkhozes* on the banks of the Amur, with the twofold aim of harnessing that particular territory's agricultural potential as well as increasing its local population, while numerically weakening Ukrainian unity at the same time.

The transfer of the capital from Kharkiv to Kiev would accordingly seem to be designed to split the Ukrainian territory into two parts, of which one would probably have its capital at Dnipropetrovsk—the large future industrial city—and be directly dependent upon Moscow.

In Kiev, however, buildings suitable for use as headquarters of government offices are in short supply in comparison with the recent facilities in Kharkiv, and the Ukrainian Government there will have more flash than substance.

Ukraine used to be the sole major population center endowed with some degree of ethnic, linguistic and historical cohesiveness that was resisting Moscow's centralization program: This obstacle may now be said to have been overcome.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL GENERAL

**Royal Consulate of Italy**  
**KHARKIV**  
**U.S.S.R.**

**KHARKIV: MARCH 5, 1934 – XII**

**Confidential**  
**Ref. No. [illeg.]**

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
**and for the information of the**  
**ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

**RE: AUTUMN SOWING IN SERIOUS JEOPARDY; THE FAMINE.**

As I have previously had occasion to report, the famine, after a brief respite in the Summer and Fall, has resumed its decimation of the rural population in Ukraine, now into its third year of malnutrition.

After compulsory delivery of everything successfully reaped and threshed during the 120 days of most hectic activity and 40 days of semi-fruitless exertions last Autumn, the people in the countryside had received minimal advances, ludicrous "shares" in the fruits of the earth; however, with the Autumn sowing having been finished as well as possible, they had been able to rely partly on what they had been able to conceal, what little of it there was, and partly on gathering up whatever hadn't yet completely rotted or scattered, out in the fields themselves, still largely unreaped or else lying in sheaves or bundles still abandoned to the elements. Then the chronic rural marasmus set in: The starvation, the swollen limbs, the deaths in silence, the cases of hallucinations and all the other handmaidens of the sorrowful agony of the peasantry, now being made largely redundant by machines thanks to the USSR's agriculture futurism.

The organization of the *Politotdel* and of the GPU in the villages is however vastly superior to the previous year, the cities are far better guarded and the starving people only rarely manage to breach the militia's circle and break into the major industrial built-up areas, but should they succeed, no sooner do they cross a couple of streets in the city center than they are seized and carried off to the police stations, and then taken out into the countryside once again at daybreak.

My fellow countryman Giuseppe [Insam?], who recently came to Kharkiv, has told me how in the area of Kiev, where he lives, matters are even worse than last year, as last year's zero has been compounded by this year's zero. He told me that Ukrainians are dying, just like last year. They start to swell up in December and die towards the end of January. The German colonists were somewhat better off as long as the Government allowed them to buy something at the *torgsin* with whatever Germany was sending them in marks (five marks for each order), but towards the end of January the order came from Moscow not to give them anything but instead to make them sign, or write, a letter to the German Committee (hence to the German Consul General in Kharkiv, but also directly to Berlin) in which they were to declare that they were refusing any assistance, because they wanted for nothing after last Summer's bumper harvest, and because the abundance was such

that they were begging the Committee to send thousands of hungry people to Ukraine in shifts to satisfy their hunger, and that at any rate they should spend the marks they had been sending on *these* people, in view of the fact that there were people dying in Germany (although not in Ukraine). So even the work of the German Committee is being frustrated by this campaign, which began in earnest one month ago.

Reports along the same lines are coming in from the regions of the Middle Volga.

Then the other day I obtained the following information on the living conditions in the Russian (Kazakh) villages in Ukraine. Their circumstances are felt to be exceptionally favorable as everyone there receives 200 grams of bread a day. The rest they must provide by themselves. This is famine, but a famine which the Russian peasant by now seems able to live with. In the village of Liptsi (to the North of Kharkiv—a village 'with Church', i.e., very large, and it does in fact have approximately 700 homes), for 700 houses there are 57 horses all told. In an attempt to make some money and to put food on the table they come to the cities in their carts in search of work, or transportation from the railroad station, etc. It was from two such temporary employees that I got this information, as well as reports that an appreciable portion of the population at Liptsi has already been stricken with the first symptoms of death by starvation: Swellings, hallucinations, etc. ('they're going berserk' *[sic]*).

Seasonal trends over the last two weeks have been truly lethal for the seeds scattered out in the fields in the Autumn. The none too plentiful snow which fell over the preceding months has been gradually supplanted (owing to the high daytime temperatures) by an increasingly thin layer of ice, which by generating water during exposure to the sun, has penetrated the earth and turned the sown fields into frozen clods. At night the temperature has always dropped (and is still dropping) to 12/14° below zero, while from 10:00 to 15:00 it goes up to six or seven above zero. I have heard that similar conditions have largely destroyed the Autumn sowings in the *oblast's* in northern Ukraine and damaged the sowings in an appreciable portion of the middle *oblast'*. Add to this the customary difficulty which the Government encounters in the preparation of the Spring sowings and particularly of fertilizers for vegetables. The forecast we can make at this writing is that the foreseeable harvest this year will not be comparable with the harvest for last year, which was no more than a good average. Yet the famine will see to redressing the balance, by reducing the surplus population by a few million people. They will be replaced by machinery.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

*Appendix II*

General

**Royal Consulate / of Italy**

**KHARKIV**

**KIEV**

**U.S.S.R.**

**KHARKIV: May 3, 1934 – XII**

**confidential**

**Ref. No. 505/62**

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW  
and for the information of the  
ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

**RE: NEW TRANSFERS AND APPOINTMENTS WITHIN THE UKRAINIAN  
GOVERNMENT.**

As I had the honor to inform you as far back as the 16th of December 1932 (in my report No. 614/234) the Chairman of the Board of Commissars for the People of the USSR – CHUBAR – has no longer been able to shun the invitation and has had to accept the subordinate post, which is universally regarded as a demotion.

Rather than by Balitsky, he was replaced instead by Liubchenko, thereafter designated as his successor. Liubchenko owes his appointment primarily to the friendship of Postyshev, hence to the fact that he had been one of Chubar's fiercest enemies, and then to his personal tactics whereby he would always adopt a pro-Russian stance (he was public prosecutor at the SVU [Union for the Liberation of Ukraine] trial in 1929). He is a Jew of German origin, who has taken a Ukrainian surname, as has his cousin, who is President of the Kharkiv WOKS, but who has always been a staunch advocate of union. Balitsky, on the other hand, would appear to be in rather a tight spot, for he is being blamed for having been unaware of the doings of the Kiev GPU (already charged two years previously with instituting proceedings against innocent people just to score points). In fact, the Kiev GPU had organized an association for exploiting the city-dwellers, who had been stripped *brevis manu* of any and all of their precious possessions. Furs and valuables were then sold off at various marketplaces by *ad hoc* agents. This scandal had reached such a pitch of brazen effrontery that an inquiry had to be held, leading to 90 arrests. Balitsky is also being blamed for having allowed a Ukrainian nationalist plot to be hatched at Kiev, resulting in a bomb explosion on a railroad track which was to have been traveled down by the train carrying Petrovsky to Kiev. The bomb did indeed go off, but without causing a great deal of damage; Petrovsky at any rate escaped unhurt. About two months ago, the railroad followed a detour for some days in the vicinity of Kiev. Eighty arrests were made in Kiev, involving people suspected or implicated in the affair, and not just in Kiev, as I stated in another report.

Selihs, Chief of the City Council, has transferred to the Chairmanship of the Board of the Commissars of the People, as Liubchenko's first alternate (i.e., the post heretofore occupied by Liubchenko himself).



Kossior, the Secretary of the CPU, is supposedly intended to take up the post of Chief of the USSR's Professional Unions in Moscow, and to join the fledgling Commission of Inspections within the Communist Party.

Last of all, Postyshev, whose popularity is growing day by day, is to inherit Kossior's post. However, they are saying that he has been starting to arouse Moscow's suspicions, and that a new post in the Urals is already prepared for him. His popularity is due to his affability with the workers, to the fact that he makes a point of answering all letters that are sent to him, and to his having increased the monthly allowance of 15 rubles for all students, without exceptions. Only Postyshev's praises are sung any more in Kharkiv: I report to Postyshev.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

*Appendix II*

**General**

**Royal Consulate / of Italy**  
**(KHARKIV)**  
**U.S.S.R.**

**KIEV**

Kharkiv: May 3, 1934 – XII

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Ref. No. 506/63

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
**and for the information of the**  
**ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

**RE: CONDITIONS OUT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, AND PROGRESS OF THE  
SOWING-SEASON.**

According to the more or less reliable official statistics, approximately 85% of the Spring sowing has been completed.

It has not been possible this year to sow on ground still wet with half-melted snow, like last year, because it snowed very little during the Winter and hardly at all in February; whereas Spring got under way from the end of February with a few genuinely warm days, which melted the thin blanket of snow in three days, interspersed with bitterly cold nights. There was thus one kind of damage for the sowings done in the Autumn, which were partly ruined, and a larger damage because in being so early, the sowing-season found preparation of the seeds only just under way and 80% of the tractors still unrepaired. The small amount of snow helped to give a little moisture to a layer of approximately ten centimeters deep, but the steppe wind, which blew throughout the months of March and April, made the land dry and crumbly, like sand.

The Autumn sowing, which had withstood the Winter fairly well, although ruined in part by the February frosts, has been replaced in part with the planting of corn. The rest was sown on dry and unworked land, frequently on the same land that had been planted with wheat the year before, and thus putting an end to crop rotation.

The wheat from the new sowing-season has already come out in several regions, but because of the complete absence of rain which has been tormenting Ukraine for some 70 days now, this wheat is already yellow-colored (i.e., dead-colored) to an increasingly alarming degree. The season seems identical to that notorious season back in 1921. The harvest cannot yet be written off but it is still in grave danger, and this goes for both cereals and feeds. Only a period of heavy rains can save a good portion of it, but these must arrive by no later than May 15/20.

However, if this year should come to resemble 1921, the consequences could be far worse this time around because the famine could well engulf the cities, and this might well have political repercussions which could conceivably take on exceptionally serious dimensions.

The situation out in the countryside in the aftermath of collectivization is quite different ever thereafter, because there are no reserves of any kind whatsoever. No animals for slaughter, no supplies, no farmyard animals. Even human resources are in short supply and hard to come by, decimated as they have been by the shortages of 1931, the terrible famine of 1932 and the appreciable famine of 1933 (those peasants still standing and with clothes on their backs have been reaching the city a few at a time, have been managing to elude the iron cordon put in place to drive them back and have been searching breathlessly—and are still searching each morning—for bread on the market, and they are stocking up with stale bread, any kind of bread). Those who still have a little strength left are migrating to the cities, to the Donets, etc, in search of work. The immigration of Great Russians, carried out systematically throughout the Winter, has been of little use inasmuch as the newcomers have been finding themselves on derelict land, bereft of animals or provisions apart from the pittance which the State is giving to them today but may no longer be giving them tomorrow. The rest will probably be facing extinction in a few months time. Anything the parched earth can produce will all be going to the State, but perhaps there won't even be enough farmhands to harvest the meager and inaccessible "fruits of the Earth".

We also need to take a closer look at the conditions down on these collectives.

The collectives closed their books for 1933 in the following condition: They have given back to the State the advances of seeds which they received in the Autumn of 1932 and the Spring of 1933. They have sold their wheat quotas to the State at six PAPER rubles per quintal. They have once again given 20% of their entire harvest to the MTS in return for the provision of agricultural machinery; THEY HAVE FREQUENTLY HAD TO PAY THE FACTORIES FOR THE AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY IMPOSED UPON THEM, only to be cast aside as unusable or because they had no idea how to use them. They have given away 10% of whatever they have had ground by the State mills for their requirements. They have maintained a large bureaucracy, a *Politotdel*; they have been feeding their collective farm workers a cabbage and root soup, more or less devoid of fat in the Summertime and wholly bereft of fat in Winter. They have been giving these same collectivists first 600, then 800 grams of bread in the Summer, and often just 300 or even 100 grams of bread in the Wintertime. They have 'nominally' been supposed to give their collective farm workers some 'profit sharing', which to my knowledge at the best *kolkhozes* has never exceeded 1.25 kilograms of WHEAT per working day. This wheat has then had to be sufficient for all the collectivists' other needs, i.e.: clothes, supplementing their soup and crust of bread from the *kolkhoz*, something (they have never managed this, at any *kolkhoz*) for paying their quota to the *Kultfond* and the *Osoviachim*, for buying loans, and for paying taxes to the Red Cross. By selling the wheat on the market, the collective farm workers are often unable to do anything more than to meet all these assorted contributions. To give their collective farm workers something that will keep them from dying of starvation, the *kolkhozes* have been buying wheat on the same market (at market prices, i.e. at 150 to 200 rubles per quintal), frequently the same wheat which they had been giving to their collectivists. Another *kolkhoz* has been asking to borrow wheat from the State. Today there isn't a single *kolkhoz* around which isn't debt-ridden or empty-handed. Where once there was a cow or veal-calf, it has long since been sold off or slaughtered. Villages of 2,000 inhabitants have only three or four

*Appendix II*

cows left. In all the 80 houses in Lokitsa, the best collective farm in the vicinity of Kiev, there are just three cows left.

The *kolkhozes* are trying to take it out on the independents, who are being harassed in every possible way and hit with extremely heavy contributions to all the various causes and institutions. But they can't get much out of these people either, as the lands assigned to them are always the worst, and so there is considerable misery among the independents as well.

It follows that another year like 1921 could have terrifying consequences out in the countryside, with very serious implications for the cities as well.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

**Royal Consulate of Italy**  
(KHARKIV)  
U.S.S.R.

KHARKIV: May 3, 1934 – XII  
KIEV

**CONFIDENTIAL**  
File No. 509/65

**ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW**  
and for the information of the  
**ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME**

**RE: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISM – MANIFESTATIONS AND REPRESSIONS  
THEREOF.**

The suppression of any and all Ukrainian nationalistic activities has been rigidly pursued in recent months, and there have been incidents in Moscow, in Kiev, and in Kharkiv.

These measures for destroying all Ukrainian separatist aspirations have gone hand-in-hand with an accentuation of the policy of exploiting Ukrainian national characteristics, as I had predicted right from the time when Kiev was earmarked to become the capital of Ukraine once again. In other words, they are trying to replace Ukrainian nationalism of the separatist variety, which looks towards Poland, with Ukrainian nationalism of the centripetal variety, which is meant to lure Ukrainians in Poland towards a possible or desirable union with Ukrainians in the USSR.

Poland has already noted this tendency and has responded. In this connection, there has been a highly significant statement made by Prime Minister Lendrzicz-wicz of the Sejm, in which Ukrainians in Poland have been assured that Polish policy towards them is to undergo a full review.

Here are the details of the policy for cracking down on Ukrainian nationalism of the separatist variety:

In Kiev they have uncovered a conspiracy to liquidate various representatives of the Ukrainian government, and in particular Petrovsky, the President of the Republic. It is not quite clear what they were hoping to get out of the gestures of this nature. There is talk of possible international complications, upon which many hopes have been pinned. The only thing we know for sure is that some weeks ago a bomb devastated the railroad tracks in the vicinity of Kiev, where Petrovsky was supposed to have been passing through. We have further ascertained that around 80 arrests were made in Kiev in the aftermath of this incident; the detainees all belong to the group of those revolutionary ex-socialists who converted to Communism only the second time around and who are suspected of sympathizing with the measures carried out by the late Commissar Skrypnyk.

Personally, I have the suspicion that printed pamphlets of unorthodox nationalist content are being distributed, because after having submitted to the local Book Inspection Commission a list of books which I am planning to take away with me,

I actually heard myself being asked on approval for a mere dozen propagandist books, printed either here or in Moscow in recent years or months. Upon inquiring as to why they wanted to see these books in particular, the person employed in the Office told me quite openly that apart from the dust-jacket, inside there might well be something quite, quite different from whatever was announced in the title, and that there were many such disguised books still in circulation.

Needless to say, it is hard to find out anything definite about the charges leveled against those people who have been arrested, tried and convicted, nor about the grounds for their convictions. All we have to go on is what the convicts themselves have been able to tell their families at the time of parting, before deportation or the firing squad.

We know for example that after the arrest of the Director of the local Museum of Ukrainian Art (still closed for reorganization), weapons were found on the Museum's premises. Arrested in this connection was a fellow by the name of Ostavichna, a former revolutionary socialist, not a member of the Communist Party but supposedly a 'member of the GPU'. Ostavichna is an alias, and I don't know his real name. Years ago, the detainee was editor of *Krokodil* and a highly popular Ukrainian author. He was arrested once again back in December, and charged with having planned acts of terrorism, and in particular the throwing of bombs at the Conference of the local *Vuzik*. A bomb was found at his home. His wife claimed that it was an old bomb, already intended for Makhno. He was sentenced to the firing squad, a sentence that was subsequently commuted to ten years of forced labor. He left on April 6 with a company of 150 convicts (eight such companies left in April), all of them intellectuals. While waiting for the 'Etape' (they have picked up the old Tsarist era names for these deportations), he had a chance to talk with his wife, and said that he hoped he might be pardoned after serving three years of his sentence. These groups of prisoners have been deported to Dimitrov, to a 'model' concentration camp which is also going to be shown to tourists. Insofar as their skills allow, the prisoners will be working at the Moscow-Yaroslavl Canal.

Still in connection with the Ukrainian movement, a further wave of arrests has reportedly occurred in Moscow and in Leningrad. Several professors of Slavic languages in Moscow have fallen foul of this, including Durnovo, who had previously been on a business trip to Czechoslovakia, Peterson, Silishev, and that Prof. Schmidt originally from the Kiev Academy, but residing in Leningrad, who had been the organizer of the exhibition of icons in Berlin, years ago.

Still in the nationalist group, the following have been arrested on conspiracy charges:

Prykhotko, ex-Commissar of Justice and former Presiding Judge in Court at the Yefremov proceedings in 1929 against the organization for Ukraine's independence. It would seem that disclosures and accusations against others, etc. are attributable to him. It is definite that he has accepted responsibility for causing the arrest of Polos, ex-Commissar of Finances in Kharkiv, but employed for five years at the Commissariat of Finances in Moscow. Polos used to be a big wheel in the Communist Party, but three years ago his wife was accused of Trotskyism and deported. No sooner was I transferred to Kharkiv than I met a relative who said: "Antoni Prykhotko deserves to be thanked."

Still in the same group we find Ozersky, head of the Ukrainian printing works and the Ukrainian Board of Censors, and Kechinsky, professor at the Institute of Agriculture in Kharkiv. The latter has been held responsible for putting too tight a squeeze on the peasants during the Summer of 1933, when he was sent to carry out grain requisitions in the Ukrainian countryside, and for having done this quite deliberately in order to 'provoke insurrections' and for having actually provoked rebellions and the destruction of wheat.

All four of these men have just been condemned to death, but we suppose that they will be reprieved and their sentence commuted to the customary ten years of deportation and forced labor.

One person whose death sentence has *not* been commuted is Maksymovych, who was secretary of the *Narkomdel* in Kharkiv some four years ago. The news from his family is that he has already been executed in connection with the nationalist conspiracy.

At variance with this policy of repressing nationalism of the separatist variety is the current re-enhancement of the national Ukrainian flavor of the language and traditions.

Marching at the Military and Civilian Review of May 1 were some 20 young ladies dressed in gorgeous Ukrainian national costumes. At the Theater of the Opera the night before, after the celebration of the red festival, done with a brief speech, Ukrainian songs were sung and traditional Ukrainian and Cossack dances were performed on stage. Not just modern dances, but also (and especially) Ukrainian dances (at Postyshev's orders) were performed at the various open-air gatherings on the 1st and 2nd of May.

Systematic courses in Ukrainian language and literature (as a nation's special and distinctive means of self-expression) are being held at the Institutes of Higher Education in Moscow, Leningrad, and Tbilisi. The same thing is being done with Byelorussian.

To give the schools Ukrainian teachers, a decision has been made to take 10,000 Ukrainian peasants out of the *kolkhozes* and make them attend crash courses to turn them into Ukrainian elementary school teachers.

In other words, an orthodox Ukrainian nationalism is being introduced, one that is loyal to Moscow, as well as a means of luring Ukrainians away from Poland, a nationalism which is to have its official seat in Kiev, the historic capital of Ukraine from the Carpathians to the Dnieper.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

General

**Royal Consulate / of Italy**  
(KHARKIV)  
U.S.S.R.

KIEV

KHARKIV: May 15, 1934 – XII

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref. No. 573/72

Royal Embassy of Italy, MOSCOW  
and for the information of the  
Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROME

RE: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISM – SENTENCES AND DEPORTATIONS.

With reference to my report of the 3rd of the current month No. 478/39 (to the Royal Embassy of Italy in Moscow) and No. 509/65 (to the above-mentioned Ministry in Rome), I have the honor to report once again as follows:

This Ostavichna, or rather *recto* Ostap Vyshnia, ex-editor of *Krokodil*, was not deported to Dimitrov nor were the other Ukrainian intellectuals. That was just a little practical joke played on the prisoners and their families, to make them expect a special and tolerable place to live. In actual fact they have been deported to the mouth of the Pechora in the Far North, to cut down forests. Deported along with Ostap Vyshnia were *inter alia* Kurbas, the director of the Berezil Ukrainian Theater and whose arrest I reported at the time; Pylypenko, director of the Shevchenko Literary Institute (accused of having attached too much importance to Skrypnyk's linguistic nationalism) and two others, whose names I have not been able to ascertain. Their families were living in the *Budynok Slovo*, House of Scholars. On the day after the prisoners' departure, all five families were expelled from the House and were of course stripped of their food books.

The 30th of April saw the arrest of Sliuzarenko, who had been responsible for the public prosecution at the famous Yefremov trial, as well as others. It would seem that he has now been charged with having been too severe. As for the suspicion which I voiced in my last report to the effect that pamphlets or books of nationalist propaganda, I now learn that several arrests, have also been made among Ukrainian typesetters.

In general, we can say that an anti-Ukrainian offensive has once again been unleashed against persons suspected of being secretly separatist, because we keep hearing every day of people who have disappeared.

We cannot of course rule out the possibility that this wave of arrests must be seen in connection with the news given by the GPU that it (the GPU) is on the verge of a reorganization, that the armed forces are going to take away its administrative judgment, etc.

Nor can we rule out the possibility that as usual, an imaginary fortress of conspiracies, etc., is being built up on the backs of poor innocent people, designed



**to demonstrate that the role of the GPU as it currently stands is essential to the State's integrity.**

**Sincerely yours,**

**THE ROYAL CONSUL**

*Appendix II*

General

**Royal Consulate / of Italy**  
(KHARKIV)  
U.S.S.R.

KIEV

KHARKIV: May 15, 1934 – XII

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref. No. 575/73

ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW  
and for the information of the  
ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME

RE: CONDITIONS OUT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND PROGRESS OF THE  
SOWINGS.

With reference to my reports of the 3rd of the current month No. 476/37 (to the Royal Embassy in Moscow) and No. 506/63 (to the foregoing Ministry), I should still like to make the following report on the above-specified topic:

I have heard reports from farmers (both independents and collectivists) from Bessabotovka (Volga), from the region between Poltava and Dnipropetrovsk and from the region between Kursk and Belgorod. They are all agreed that as of the 10th of May, 90% of the Autumn sowings had been ruined and that only 10% will be saved as long as it rains immediately and copiously, i.e., in torrents and for several days running, something which simply hasn't been happening. In many parts, the Autumn sowing has been laboriously replaced with a fresh sowing of corn and millet, laboriously because the resources for plowing and the sowings themselves are in such short supply. The peasants all say: When we were independent, we all had sufficient reserves to sow where appropriate, at short notice, as much as we considered necessary. Now we have to wait for approval from the government's agronomists, who are ignorant of the land's particular features. They give us permission to replot and resow only after having wasted valuable time, days if not weeks, and they prescribe seeds which aren't always suited to the region as a whole and then .... the seeds arrive, when they are no longer any good for anything and we even have to eat a portion of them so that we don't all die of hunger.

One peasant from the Volga was saying: "By myself I would have already plowed up the Spring sowing, which has all gone already, in the hope that it would rain in a couple of weeks and that the new sowing would have better luck than the sowing planted two months ago, but they won't give me permission. I have to wait for the agronomists from Moscow to give the all-clear; and I would have a stock of seeds, because I am German and I have been able to preserve my freedom."

Another peasant: "I am still independent, as a German colonist in the Volga; I have some land which is very fine, and I have been able to keep it. My situation is 50% better than the one of collective farmers are in. That's why if it rains (speaking on May 10), I'm still hoping to obtain twice the weight that I sowed."

The forage is now down to nothing. I have heard reports that horses and oxen are dying of starvation. Miscarriages among cows are at 30%.

Just 5% of the beetroot has emerged to date. We don't know whether the rest has already died or whether it's still hanging in there.

Of the new sowings, carried out on replowed land where wheat had been sown back in the Autumn, 50% have been given up for lost.

Fifty percent of the Spring sowings have also been given up as lost for good, and it now seems too late to plow again and sow corn and millet, as the peasants would by and large liked to have done a couple of weeks ago. The heat wave has produced a phenomenon of earliness, in a number of patches near the main roads, and nobody has explained why; the wheat has now already produced empty ears on stalks of barely 20 centimeters, and in the opinion of experts it is doomed to stay that way, owing to the lack of nourishment from the earth. Another phenomenon that isn't easy to explain is the phenomenon of the parasitic plants, which ought not to have flourished in the drought but which instead are as luxuriant as ever, perhaps on account of their remarkable growth last year.

The consensus of opinion is that if the rains have not come by the end of May, the harvest will be nil. It hasn't rained for over two and a half months from Kursk to Melitopil. From Kiev, where they had a few innocuous downpours one month ago, to the Volga, to Northern Caucasia, the drought has to date been absolute. What's more, the hot steppe wind has been blowing for two months, and this has dried out the land still further.

In the *sovkhozes* in the Vuzik and in some factory collectives, the land is being watered with barrels, hauled on carts by people. One manager has said: "This way at least, as long as you work, you don't think about what lies in store for you."

Some days ago the bread ration was reduced to 100 grams per person. The open market continues, but production is down, and that is why they are not giving out more than half a kilogram per head, and after a few hours the sales in the stores stop when the bread runs out. In compensation they have been displaying a quantity of loaves made of painted wood in all the shop-windows in anticipation of the visit by the French professors, and they're a very good likeness. They are talking about the forthcoming suspension of the open bread market and the suspension of rationing for card-carriers' family members, so that the card-carriers alone will be entitled to bread.

Sincerely yours,

THE ROYAL CONSUL

*Appendix II*

General

# Royal Consulate / of Italy

KHARKIV

KIEV

U.S.S.R.

KHARKIV: June 7, 1934 – XII

CONFIDENTIAL

TELEX

Ref. No. 622/77

REF.: My reports of the 3rd of last May (No. 478/39 and 509/65) and the 15th of last May (No. 572/72)

ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW

and for the information of the

ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME

RE: UKRAINIAN NATIONALISM – SENTENCES AND DEPORTATIONS.

It would seem that the GPU has received orders (or has taken the initiative of its own accord) to liquidate the entire stock of political prisoners present in Kharkiv, before transferring to Kiev. Indeed, the departures of the 'Etapés' have just recently been stepped up.

Of those arrested in connection with the matter of the weapons found at the local Ukrainian History Museum, four have been sentenced to five years deportation, namely: University Professor Summer, University Professor Gordiyev, University Professor Taranushenko, and Professor Dubrovsky. I have not been able to ascertain the name of the fifth person. Three others, including Prof. Poplavski and Prof. Chukin have been sentenced to three years of forced labor. Their families, who were promptly evicted from the homes where they were living and stripped of their *paiky*, or food books for intellectuals, do not know whether the deportation is to the region of Astrakhan or else off to Siberia.

## **Consulate-General of Italy** **KIEV**

Kharkiv: December 18, 1934 — XIII

Status. U.P.1.

Ref. No. 1533/162

**RE: *Crackdowns in Ukraine. Executions in Kiev.***

The murder of S. M. Kirov has given rise in Ukraine to a series of police measures carried out both in the countryside and in the major urban centers. Several hundred people have been arrested in Kharkiv and in Kiev, while many other people who had been deprived of their personal freedom for months are currently being subjected to particularly harsh treatment, including interrogations during which the investigative agencies will stop at nothing to obtain relatively spontaneous confessions. The GPU has continued to be active in furnishing the mobile military tribunal of the USSR's Supreme Court with the greatest possible number of those people whom the GPU arrested before and after the first of December.

The military tribunal has been set up in Kiev, and from the 13th-16th it adjudicated on 37 individuals accused of having plotted a conspiracy, of having planned a series of terrorist acts in Ukrainian territory, and of having illegally held firearms, hand grenades and explosives. According to the statements and indictments in the prosecution, solely based on the GPU's reports, the pseudoconspirators supposedly entered Ukraine across the Polish and Romanian frontier. The tribunal, presided over by Mr. V. V. Ulrich, has handed down death sentences for the 28 accused and has ordered further inquiries for the other eight, who include a woman by the name of Anna Ivanivna Skrypa-Kozlovska. According to the new rules of procedure issued on December 1 by the central executive committee of the USSR, the judgment was enforced immediately, and news thereof was received in Kharkiv at around 11 o'clock today from travelers arriving from Kiev. The local newspapers which came out at 2000 hours rather than in the early hours of the afternoon have published a summary of the sentence and the names of the executed men, which I shall now transcribe: 1) Roman Fedirovych Skazinskyi; 2) Ivan Antonovych Krushelnytskyi; 3) Taras Antonovych Krushelnytskyi; 4) Mykhaylo Moyseyevych Lebedynets; 5) Roman Ilyich Shevchenko; 6) Anatoliy Yurevych Karabut; 7) Petro Yosefovych Sidorov; 8) Hryhoriy Mykhaylovych Kosynka-Strilets; 9) Dmytro Nykanorovych Falkovsky; 10) Mykhaylo Havrylovych Oksamyt; 11) Oleksander Havrylovych Shcherbyn; 12) Ivan Petrovych Tereshchenko; 13) Kostiantyn Stepanovych Burevyi; 14) Oleksiy Fedirovych Vlyzko; 15) Yevhen Kuzmych Dmytryiiv; 16) Adam Adamovych Bohdanovych; 17) Porfiry Ivanovych Butuzov; 18) Ivan Moyseyevych Butuzov; 19) Volodymyr Vasylyovich Piatnytsia; 20) Yakiv Pavlovych Blachenko; 21) Domynek Yosefovych Polevyi; 22) Ivan Onufrovych Khoptiar; 23) Petro Mykolayevych Boretskyi; 24) Leonid Ivanovych Lukyaniv; 25) Kostiantyn Ivanovych Pivnenko; 26) Havrylo Mykytych Protsenko; 27) Serhiy Yakivlevych Matyash; 28) Oleksander Korniyevych Liashenko.

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Most of the above were not arrested during the days following the murder of S. M. Kirov, but had already been held in custody for several months pursuant to administrative proceedings on grounds of pure suspicion: They are writers, students, teachers, engineers and workers, and they are almost all young people.

...  
(...) Minsk and in other locations the authorities and Party managers are going to great lengths to spin a yarn among the masses about a dangerous conspiracy against the Soviet Union organized by 'class enemies', by members of the old White organizations and by followers of Trotsky and Zinoviev with branches and points of support in the States adjoining the Soviet Union.

This version of events enjoys little currency inasmuch as the general public reckons it to be nothing more than an excuse to justify the measures adopted by the Central Executive Committee in Moscow in order to forestall any domestic difficulties which could fester in the general unrest, in the shortage of supplies, in the dreadful predicament facing the rural population and the clashes between the managers of several workers organizations and youth organizations, and within the Ukrainian Communist Party itself.

Meanwhile, the wildest rumors are going the rounds in Kiev, Kharkiv, and in the minor urban centers, and the people are living in constant fear of new and even tougher crackdowns in an atmosphere of tip-offs, suspicion, and mistrust. Except for those times during which workers and employees are obliged to go out of doors to get to their jobs or to return to their homes, you see very few people out in the streets and in the city squares, in the stores, theaters and public meeting-places.

The endless arrests, the persecutions launched at the universities, in schools and institutes of secondary education, in offices and factories have struck terror and despondency not merely into the long-suffering Ukrainian community but even into those people who have been forcibly imported and transplanted into Ukraine from Great Russia, from the Urals, and from Siberia.

In spite of active propaganda efforts designed to convince the masses of the benefits conferred by the dictatorship of the proletariat and the economic and agricultural policy systems pursued by the Communist regime, and despite the surveillance and police coercion, there is an increasing sense of distrust and resentment towards the men and methods imposed by Moscow.

Sincerely yours,

(illegible signature)

To the Royal Embassy of Italy, in Moscow.  
To the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Rome.

# **Consulate-General of Italy**

## **KIEV**

Kharkiv: December 21, 1934 – Year XIII

Status U.P.1.

Ref. No. 1537/163

**RE: *News on the Kiev executions.***

Further to my report of the 18th of the current month, I have the honor to advise you that most of the people recently executed in Kiev (pursuant to the decision by the mobile military tribunal of the USSR Supreme Court) belonged to families of peasant or working-class origin: And with the exception of the two brothers Ivan and Taras Krushelnytsky of Galician origin, the others were all Soviet Ukrainian citizens.

Roman Y. Shevchenko used to teach Ukrainian literature at the Superior Institute of Communist Instruction in Kiev, and was well-known as an active and enthusiastic Party member. Hryhoriy Mykhaylovych Kosynka-Strilets, Oleksiy Fedorovych Vlyzko, and Dmytro Nykanorovych Falkovsky enjoyed a certain reputation in literary circles as writers and art critics, and the latter was reputed to be an active Chekist. Kostiantyn Burevyi and Serhiy Y. Matiash were secondary school teachers and literary contributors to magazines and newspapers.

Among those who—at least for now—have managed to avoid getting acquainted with the firing squad is Mme. Anna Ivanivna Skrypa-Kozlovska, believed to be an activist of long standing, and who used to enjoy a privileged pension in recognition of her services to the party.

...  
Levko Borysovych Kovaliv is a professor of Leninist doctrine who used to divide his time between Moscow and Kharkiv: He was arrested in Kharkiv in the early days of last November while a guest of his friend Mykhaylovych (Abramovych), the Ukrainian Government's Commissar for Justice. Kovaliv had enjoyed some degree of notoriety for having signed the separate peace treaty between Ukraine and Germany in 1918 and for having been part of the Soviet delegation to Brest-Litovsk in his capacity as representative of the Ukrainian Republic.

In Kharkiv and Kiev alike, the public continues to live in constant fear of fresh repressive measures: Even harsher measures have been adopted by the authorities in matters concerning law and order, and arrests are still continuing on a large scale. In Kiev both police and troops are being used for patrol duties both inside the city and in the suburbs.

Sincerely yours,

(signature)

To the ROYAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME  
To the ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY, MOSCOW

# **Consulate-General of Italy**

**KIEV**

Kharkiv: December 24, 1934 — XIII

Status: U.P.3

TELEX [illegible number]

Royal Embassy of Italy, Moscow  
and the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome

RE: *Soviet rural elections in Ukraine.*

The elections to the rural councils were recently completed after intensive propaganda efforts by the authorities and the party organizations. According to information at my disposal, voter turnout reached 88% compared with 76% in the last elections. Also noteworthy has been the increase in the female contingent which voted in the amount of 87%, showing a 15% progression with respect to the figures for the last elections.

Two hundred and eleven thousand and two hundred deputies have been elected all told, and 27% of these deputies are women. The rest are divided among farmers from the collective farms, the workers, and the *Komsomols*.

Although conducted through the customary procedures in effect throughout the Soviet Union and despite the apathy and stoical resignation shown by the masses as they were herded to the polling-booths like so many flocks of sheep, the election campaign has not been without incident: Groups of young people were responsible for disturbances in the provinces of Kharkiv and Poltava. Premises where meetings were being held were evacuated and the election committee chairmen were beaten black and blue. In several locations, the peasant community openly opposed the normal course of the election campaign. So far from going into hiding, the instigators of these disturbances and acts of violence actually gave themselves up to the Court of Kharkiv and justified their actions without showing the slightest signs of remorse. Party organizations and a portion of the press have been calling for severe penalties, but in practice (on grounds of expediency as well as other reasons) the judges have confined themselves to passing relatively lenient sentences consisting of fines or a few months in jail.

Sincerely yours,

(signature)



# Consulate-General of Italy

## KIEV

Kharkiv: January 16, 1935 — Year XIII

Status U.P.1-  
Ref. No. 87/10

RE: *Crackdowns in Ukraine.*

Further to my letters dated the 18th and 21st of last December, I have the honor to inform your Excellency that the police forces in both Kiev and Kharkiv are continuing to arrest anybody (regardless of age, sex, or circumstances) suspected of sympathizing with Zinoviev's opposition or of harboring sentiments of Ukrainian nationalism. My generally well-informed sources inform me that the number of detainees in the city of Kharkiv would appear to be in excess of 1500, and has reached the figure of 3,000 in Kiev. In spite of the fact that many detainees have been transferred to Moscow or directly packed off to the notorious places of exile in Siberia and the North, the buildings in these same cities which are being used as prisons are swarming with people, and they are having great difficulty in accommodating the daily intake of newcomers.

The detainees consist chiefly of students, physicians, lawyers, clerical workers, engineers, and skilled workers, i.e., members of the 'intelligentsia'. A special persecution has been launched in motion against teachers from superior and intermediate schools, musicians, writers, and artists. Considering how difficult it is to accuse everybody of sympathizing with Zinoviev's opposition, attempts are being made to rattle the cage of Ukrainian separatist nationalism. People known to be completely apolitical have mysteriously vanished and are now paying the penalty for having published verses—even in their youth—concerning the charms and attractions of Lady Ukraine, or sunsets over the Dnieper, or else for having written monographs or magazine and newspaper articles on historical subjects or local folklore.

The detainees abound with individuals of tried and trusted Communist persuasions who in recent years have held important posts and sensitive positions, such as Liubchenko, heretofore President of the VOKS in Ukraine; the editor-in-chief of the Kharkiv *Komunist*, known to have resided overseas for some considerable time with Soviet Government missions; Politsky, former Vice-Commissar for Public Instruction, an intelligent and sophisticated person endowed with a breadth of vision and sense of understanding not often found among the leaders on the executive committee of the Ukrainian S.S.R.; Kudriy, ex-director of the 'Ukrainian Bank'; Fabichenko, a highly capable engineer and director of major industrial concerns, and holder of decorations from the major Soviet orders for countless services rendered to the Party and for his virtues as a dedicated activist. I would be taking up far too much time if I were to list the names of all the artists, men of letters, journalists, and students who have met the same fate as the people mentioned above. But add to these no small number of male and female youths and adolescents who are members of workers organizations and student organizations.

Coursework has been discontinued in quite a few schools and institutes because the instructors are finding themselves *in domo petri*. In many offices and factories

*Appendix II*

the work has ground to a halt owing to the shortage of managers, engineers, and personnel. The families of the detainees are being singled out for the same old acts of tyranny, reprisals and pointless cruelties in vogue during the early years of the Bolshevik Revolution: Withdrawal of documents and ration cards for buying basic necessities, the loss of housing, confiscation of all property, even essential household furnishings and clothes and bedspreads, dismissal from their jobs, and most disgracefully of all, denial of medical or hospital treatment and the eviction of old people, children, and invalids from old people's homes, schools, and shelters.

The reign of terror and abuse which the general public has had to suffer through, to say nothing of the difficulties resulting from the Winter season, the shortage of supplies and the abysmal living conditions, are all serving to heighten unrest and resentment towards the bigwigs and the System itself.

Notwithstanding the tight surveillance carried out by the authorities and the Party and the spy network which has stretched its offshoots and tentacles into every walk of life, there are signs emerging which, however seemingly insignificant, do nonetheless arouse the suspicion that the Ukrainian people's forbearance and stoical resignation may well have reached their limits.

The complaints, protests, and criticisms emerge continually, and in the most diverse and unexpected forms. With all the extravagant and inflated claims about the superb condition of the harvests, the advances and benefits of industrialization, the abolition of ration books/ration cards for bread purchases, and in defiance of the display of statistics, figures, plans, charts, and diagrams, even those who subscribe to the very narrowest orthodoxy of the Communist Party are beginning to voice doubts. They live in fear of further and severer complications and are overcome by a sense of skepticism and dejection.

The repudiation of moral and spiritual values, the absolute lack of guarantees and assurances as far as life, property and common decency are concerned, the atmosphere of treachery and intrigue, and all the privations cannot help but cause such feelings to emerge among the public at large and especially among young people at schools and workshops.

Sincerely yours,

(signature)

Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROME  
Royal Embassy of Italy, MOSCOW

## Consulate-General of Italy

ODESSA: March 21, 1935.XIII

Highly Confidential  
Ref. No. 105/M

RE: *Economic conditions in the city and out in the countryside.*

Dear Minister:

I have the honor to inform your Excellency that there has been such a bread shortage in this city for the last two weeks that long lines of people waiting their turn to buy have been starting to form outside the shops right from the earliest hours of the morning.

Reports are also coming in from the countryside about the famine that is rampaging there. The people had believed the promises that the January 1st abolition of the bread ration books was tantamount to an abundance of grain. Now they are realizing that the Government has simply sought to unload the bread problem onto the people in view of the fact that there is a shortage of grain.

Our fellow countryman Masnato Giovanni, residing in the village of Shirayeyev in this province, and who has come here to attend to the formalities of his and his family's repatriation, has provided the following account:

Every week I struggle to get to Odessa, and I cover the distance of some 200 kilometers to buy the bread I need to provide for my seven-member family, as I can't get any bread at the village, where only those in power are able to do so, i.e., card-carrying communists employed at the 'Selsovet' (village council). Not even peasant members of the agricultural cooperatives are getting any bread, as there are no baker's shops for several miles around. These peasant members receive only one kilogram of flour leavings per head, which must suffice for two days, whereas for each of their family members this article has been reduced to one kilo every five days. But all of this is not as bad as it gets, for there are agricultural communities which are dispensing 'makuka' (baskets of linseed) to the peasants instead of flour.

Bear in mind that the bread enjoyed by members of the 'Selsovet' is carried directly to their homes by truck.

Consequently, the farmers in our village are suffering greatly from the famine and their bodies are swelling up. The first cases of death have already been reported even though the phenomenon is only in its early stages. But after March 15, when the Spring sowing season begins and whereupon the peasants will no longer be permitted to go to the city, we can predict that many people are going to be dying of starvation. Over three months still have to pass before we get to the new harvest.

A large number of people are doomed to die, now that their limbs are so puffed up the doctors are saying that they're beyond all hope, even if a proper diet were to be resumed.

Just as in 1932, the famine has begun to claim its victims in the month of March, as soon as the stores from the previous harvest have begun to run out.

The influx of peasants into the cities from the surrounding countryside to buy bread, which they are permitted to do in limited quantities over and above which they get arrested by the police on duty at the police station, has caused the same kind of bread shortage in the cities as well. The cities enjoy preferential treatment

pursuant to a classification list, in view of the fact that riots in the cities would be far more difficult to quell.

This well-documented grain shortage in a bread basket like Russia, which used to export millions of quintals of grain before the war, simply serves to demonstrate that: Either the Soviet Government is quite deliberately taking grain away from the Ukrainian people to break any lingering national spirit through death or deportation; or else that the Soviet Government has failed to take account of national requirements in the exports, albeit reduced, which it has been carrying out in order to obtain machinery and chemicals in return; or else these are the consequences of last year's meager harvest. In all probability, it is some combination of all three factors that is contributing to the present famine conditions. The fact remains that the Communist agricultural organization simply isn't designed to boost a peasant's individual productivity. Yet therein lies the key to thriving agriculture, as we well know. It follows that in order for a peasant to produce intensively, he must own the land he's cultivating if he is to develop a real attachment to that land and to take pleasure in seeing it improve from year to year—or else he should have the usufruct thereof under such conditions that there is some incentive for him to boost the land's yield. Yet if he has no guarantee that he's going to be staying at the same *kolkhoz* for two seasons running, it's obvious that he's going to turn into just another agricultural petty bureaucrat, slothful, and indifferent. Add to this the atavism factor whereby in the past the Russian farming classes used to be credited with very limited efficiency by reason of their unwillingness, unintelligence, and unsophistication, and we reach today's paradoxical conclusion that there are people dying of hunger in the fertile Ukraine, where four-fifths of the population are living in a state of vegetation, and where even intimations of mortality are no longer enough to jolt them out of it.

Further confirmation of the impracticability of Communist principles can be found in the shocking state of the livestock resources. This is the most problematic aspect of any agricultural economy, and is similar to forestry, in that once destroyed it takes several years to rebuild. Preoccupied by this problem—which also has implications for military efficiency—the Soviet Government has been planning under recent regulations to restore livestock to the peasantry. Yet in order to achieve tangible results it will be necessary to unravel a tangled skein, and that means giving the peasants the option to procure grains and forage without middlemen, i.e., and the eventual return to a family-style farming economy. Now, the two toughest problems hanging over the Soviet State are the transportation system and the revival of Soviet agriculture, branches of activity which while both badly organized are also intimately bound up with each other in the overall picture, so much so that they represent the Soviet Union's 'Achilles' Heel'.

If war materiel is now so plentiful (and it would seem to be manufactured along modern lines, and its huge quantities are shown by the diagrams published on the occasion of the 17th anniversary of the Red Army's foundation on February 23, 1918), if such special care is being lavished on food and supplies for the military armed forces and the armed forces of the police, if in peacetime the Red Army may be regarded as the strongest in the world in numerical terms, then the two above-mentioned chinks in the Soviet Union's armor still persist nonetheless.

Of course, appointed as Commissar of Transportation two months ago to remedy this lack of organization in transportation was none other than the former Vice-

Secretary of the Party, Kaganovich, who is known for his vigor and intelligence. We might add that Stalin wanted him out of the post of Vice-Secretary because of the influence as a Jew which he held over the Jewish community, which has managed to gain a privileged position in many managerial offices, and Stalin has simultaneously handed him one of the thorniest problems in the entire Soviet Union, an age-old problem in which distances stand in the way of a solution.

While this communications shortfall might well have represented a defensive mainstay in times gone by, it has since become a handicap when you consider that modern-day armies require materials for combat purposes in far larger proportions than ever before.

This is a problem which calls for radical solutions, since the Soviet Union is now self-sufficient in iron and steel production, starting with railroads where the rail levels need to be reinforced so as to allow for higher speeds, to replace the rolling stock and in particular the passenger cars and freight cars, most of which are of the antiquated variety with wooden structures, which accounts for the baleful consequences of the all-too-frequent rail disasters.

The Soviet press warmly praised the Red Army's efficiency on the occasion of its 17th anniversary (enclosure 1); but for now we must bear in mind that in view of *the persistent shortfall in key services which are an integral part of any army in times of war, the Red Army could withstand a prolonged ordeal only with difficulty.* But some years from now, with improvements in the road system, with the railroads replenished with brand-new material, and with the agricultural economy perhaps revived with a retreat from Communist abstractions and a return to Fascist practicality, military effectiveness will be that much greater and in view of the numbers involved, perhaps even substantial. If falling back on principles of good Fascist common sense can still produce tangible results, then this too will be hailed as the fruits of Communist ideology.

There is always the unknown factor of how the soldiers are going to behave. Yet these young men, raised in an apocalyptic atmosphere, who've had drummed into their callow skulls the idea that they alone are truly 'free' (when they're more slaves than their parents ever were) and also that they must struggle to liberate their other brothers and sisters who are oppressed by capitalist exploitation, in addition to preserving existing welfare, and ignorant as they are of the way in which human life is lived beyond Soviet borders—they could well turn out to be vicious fighters, especially as the aching voids which disease and malnutrition have visited on people's families leaves these young men quite unmoved, thanks to the loosening of family ties which has brought their baser instincts to the fore. If only the Russian people were smarter and more self-assertive, then Communism would surely have given up the ghost a long, long time ago.

Sincerely yours,

(new illegible signature) The Royal Consul-General

Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROME  
General Directorate for Political Affairs

Royal Embassy of Italy, MOSCOW

# ROYAL EMBASSY OF ITALY

in the U.S.S.R.

Moscow: June 13, 1935 – XIII

TELEX NO. 2763/1105

Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Under-Secretariat for Press and Propaganda, Rome

1 Enclosure

RE: UKRAINE, POLAND, AND GERMANY.

One year after the declaration of the 'Bolshevik victory' over Ukrainian particularism and the transfer of the capital from the industrial district (Kharkiv) to the agricultural district (Kiev), then supposedly a 'hotbed of subversive nationalistic elements responsible for slowing down the region's economic growth', there can be no question that by now *the process of radical Sovietization to which Ukraine has been subjected has achieved its purpose, and that the vestiges of nationalistic particularism have been devastated by the latest ruthless purges.* Now even this great Russian bread basket has escaped the famine's horrors in recent years, and so now it is tightly bound by all the regime's shackles and economic practices.

While emboldened by this state of affairs, the Moscow Government is nonetheless afraid of the Polish/German menace which 'is setting its sights on Ukraine', and has accordingly sought to celebrate the XVth anniversary of the occupation of Kiev and the 'defeat of the Polish army under Pilsudski', and thereby to admonish 'certain imperialist nations' whose foreign policy 'is interwoven with designs on other countries' territories and on small nations', so as to show them the new situation that has arisen in that region, which has become the stout 'bulwark of the Socialist fatherland'.

Solemn local festivals were held to mark the occasion, and an address was sent out from the Ukrainian Soviet in Kiev to 'dear Comrade Stalin', a translation of which has been enclosed.

The nature of this message and the purple prose in the press these days point to the ultimate objective of all of this stage management, at the very time when Western politicians are lining up to visit Moscow.

Karel Radek sets the tone for the 'entertainment' with an article carried in *Izvestiya* on the 12th of the current month entitled *A History Lesson*.

His aim in brief is to prove through quotations from Pilsudski's writings and from Polish press articles that 'the Polish campaign in Ukraine was aimed at the partition of Russia so as to make Poland judge and jury in Eastern Europe'.

Even now these tendencies have not yet disappeared. Contrary to the hopes which he himself expressed at the time of Pilsudski's death, Radek is forced to acknowledge that the 'entire anti-Soviet imperialist framework' (*Studnitsky* books, *Czas* articles, *Slovo*, etc.) is still standing in Poland. The Soviet author counters by saying:

The new socialist Ukraine, a nation of peace-loving endeavor, cherishes no dreams or war to unite the Ukrainian people, because it knows that sooner or later Socialism will triumph throughout the world. Fifteen years after its liberation, Ukraine will allow nobody to enter its territory. Those who wish to maintain friendly relations with Ukraine should stop rattling their sabers. And so long as there are influential circles overseas threatening war on the fields of Soviet Ukraine, Ukraine will stand on guard, by continuing to boost its own defensive capability, and in this the proletariat and collectivist peasants all over the Union shall make common cause.

In a further editorial of the 13th of the current month, *Pravda* declared in turn, "...that Ukraine shall never forget her 'war wounds' and the bloodshed of the *Polish* occupation and of the *German* occupation shall never be forgotten either."

The invective of the Communist Party's organ deserves quotation in full:

The workers of the Soviet Ukraine know this only too well from their own experience and from the savage and the terrible fate of their comrades in Western Ukraine. The workers and peasants in Western Ukraine live in abject poverty, they have no legal rights, and they are being trampled underfoot by unprecedented national oppression. The lash and the bullet—these are the administrative methods in that benighted country. When they hear the wailing from afar, the people of the Soviet Ukraine start to boil with rage towards these oppressors and are filled with ever more passionate devotion towards their own free fatherland.

The German and Polish fascists are making plans for a new campaign against the Soviet Ukraine. These fascists dream of subjugating Ukrainian workers and peasants, and they are dreaming up fresh murder and mayhem for the people.

The powerful demonstration of Soviet patriotism with which the Ukrainian people have marked the 15th anniversary of their liberation from Polish occupation stand as an eloquent rebuke to their enemies' skulduggery.

The Soviet regime and the Communist Party are doing everything in their power to keep the great Ukrainian people free and content. And the Ukrainian people will not surrender their freedom and contentment to anybody. We fought and defeated the occupiers when we couldn't even claim one hundredth of the strength that the land of the Soviets now possesses. But if the occupiers were once able to rape and pillage the occupied Ukraine until they were driven out, now our aggressors will lose their lives before they so much as set foot inside our sacrosanct and inviolable Soviet territory. Guaranteeing this is the Soviet people's great love for their country as well as their cast-iron solidarity with their leader, so forcefully demonstrated by the workers of the Soviet Union on the fateful anniversary of their liberation from Polish occupation.

Radek's words and the words in *Pravda* signify a backlash which, at first contained in thinly-veiled acrimony, is now on the verge of exploding all over again.

The Poland which had hitherto been spared, has at this writing once again been assimilated into Hitler's Germany and hence placed among the enemies of the USSR.

(signature illegible)

## **THE KIEV SOVIET'S MESSAGE TO STALIN**

Today—on the 15th anniversary of the day on which, under your direct guidance, the army of the Polish property-owners was crushed and Kiev and Ukraine were liberated from the Polish landowners and capitalists—the Ukrainian people's first words of greeting are for you, our Lord and Master.

Fifteen years ago, implementing the plan prepared by yourself and your closest companions-at-arms—Voroshilov, Budënný, and Yegorov—the master plan for routing the Polish invaders, the valiant division of the Red Army, the workers, and the peasants all occupied Kiev. The Polish invaders took flight, terrified and panic-stricken, with the Red forces in hot pursuit. Fleeing alongside them away from the battleground of Ukrainian nationalist counterrevolution were the mercenaries which the Polish landowners had brought with them. The Soviets' red flag was raised over our glorious city, which has once again become the capital of Soviet Ukraine.

Fifteen years have gone by since then. Our socialist industry's gigantic projects have now sprung up in that nation where once the parties of Polish landowners and the organizers of Petliura's 'pogrom' despoiled and slaughtered. Over the vast expanses on which the glorious red cavalry gave chase to the Polish invaders, we now find as an indestructible fortress the mechanical tractor stations, and the collective and State farms which are getting stronger and more prosperous all the time.

The inviolability of Soviet territory is protected with a watchful eye over our borders by the glorious Red Army which has covered itself with memorable glories in battle and in its victories. The industrialized and collectivized Ukraine is thriving and prospering in the fraternal family of nations.

We shall never forget those days of struggle back in 1920. With ineffable devotion and boundless loyalty, every worker in Ukraine pronounces your name, dear Comrade Stalin, to whose name we are all indebted for his resounding triumphs in the struggle against the Polish landowners, and a man whose strategies clinched our victory over our overbearing foe, you whose sound guidance has turned both the Soviet Ukraine and all the USSR's sister republics into a land of economic and cultural prosperity.

The traditions of heroism of 1920 live on in the Ukrainian people. Ever ready to fight on behalf of this, the happiest of homelands, millions of workers have been educated in accordance with these traditions.

Adventurers from the land of the Polish landowners and German fascist bandits are now preparing a fresh assault on our workers' homeland.

The peoples of the Soviet Ukraine shall never allow these plans to be put into effect. Our socialist fatherland is strong and invincible, our Red Army is powerful, and our Red Navy is dependable.

Woe betide those who would seek to put our strength to the test, who would try to undermine our Soviet territory, in our workers' homeland conquered with the blood of the finest sons of our workers' nation.

Let the landowners Radziwill, Potocki, and their allies and mercenaries, the Ukrainian nationalists, the Konovaltsi, the Levytski, and others remember this well. Let the German and Polish fascists who are planning adventures (which will prove fatal for them) remember this also.



*Italian Diplomatic and Consular Dispatches*

**Long live the free and prosperous Soviet Ukraine, a secure and invincible outpost of the mighty USSR.**

**Long live our mighty Socialist fatherland, the great Soviet Union.**

**Long live our Party of Lenin and Stalin and its Stalinist General Committee.**

**Long live our most virtuous Leader, the beloved friend of all the inhabitants of the Union and of the Soviet Ukraine – Comrade Stalin.**

## Consulate-General of Italy

ODESSA: June 19, 1935.XIII

My fellow countryman Carlo Masnato (father of five) and brother of my fellow countryman Masnato Giovanni (recently sent home), in addition to Masnato Giovanni (son of the latter) who has been unable to return home because the formalities pertaining to his wife's Italian citizenship have not yet been fulfilled, residing respectively in the villages Volodymyrivka and of Oleksiivka at about 200 kilometers from Odessa in Ukrainian territory, have told me what I had already learned from the brother and father in question concerning the famine that is raging in Ukraine. Their statements have been confirmed for me by other Italian and foreign sources, i.e., from German and Turkish colleagues preoccupied with the same problem of providing their fellow countrymen with assistance.

The famine will inevitably last until the new harvest—which seems promising thanks to this year's favorable weather conditions—i.e. until next August, and it seems quite clear that owing to last year's poor harvest the Soviet Government does not have sufficient grain reserves to enable normal distribution of wheat.

This phenomenon has been going on for some years now, and we are familiar with its principal causes—i.e., the farming community's minimal interest in production intensiveness—and the poor organization of rail transportation so clearly illustrated in the Kaganovich report.

Inasmuch as Russia is almost wholly lacking in roads in the alluvial plains of Ukraine and the Don, where the gravel for the roadbed would have to be obtained several hundred kilometers distant, only limited provision for transportation can be made, with mechanical traction vehicles. Furthermore, those motor vehicles which one sees in circulation (and which have not been assigned to military duties) are few and far between, as the factories have resupplied the Army in the first instance and have manufactured a large number of farm tractors.

Judging by the press's scolding, the percentage of broken-down vehicles is substantial, on account of the centralization of resupply facilities, the distances involved, and the shortage of skilled engineers, so much so that the return to efficiency is only inching along. During a visit which I paid to a 'kolkhoz' in the vicinity of Odessa, I observed tractors and agricultural machines parked out in the open air and in a shocking state of repair.

Ever since the Bolsheviks became lords and masters in Ukraine, we might well say that the tragedy of famine has been happening over and over again. The question then arises: How do we account for the fact that before the war, the reserves of wheat were quite sufficient and there was even a large export business? Above all the Tsarist government, which unlike the Communist government could be described as a paternalistic government, concerned itself with the fate of the people, if not in the manner of Western countries then certainly to a large degree, and the practice of religion served to encourage this. In the tsarist government's acts there was accordingly a fund of human fellow feeling, and it is by no means true that common crimes were put down as savagely as some would have us believe. They certainly did not culminate in execution as readily as is the case now.

The current regime's brutal materialism has shown little quarter to humanitarian gestures. Back then, the means of communication (albeit not commensurate with

the numerical population) worked normally, and the local authorities were not simply gangs of thugs and dimwits. Warehouses of reserve wheat were available in the various regions, and private relief could perform its work to supplement aid from the State, in such a way that weather-related production differentials over such a vast territory could be compensated for. Whenever the critical season was not promising, then the landowners could change crops of their own initiative and carry out a fresh sowing without having to go through a tortuous bureaucracy. The question of bread shortages was unknown in the cities, while out in the countryside taxation was eased if the harvest was a poor one.

At all events, there was still so much wheat in excess of annual requirements that at Novorossiisk, the largest port for grain exports, gigantic silos were built from which the wheat was sent out to steamships which could be loaded up in very short order. This facility is now quite derelict.

The bread issue in Russia is not attributable to the slothfulness of the Tsarist regime which (as the Bolsheviks claim) had condemned the country to ignorance and chaos, but rather to the chaos and ignorance brought about by the Communist regime. During its 18-year stewardship, the Communist government has proved quite indifferent to the fate of the Russian people, who have suffered and are still suffering horribly—because the government has given top priority to organizing of the military and the police forces.

Perhaps because of this rather obvious discovery, namely that there can be no cultural or economic progress if a person is sealed inside an envelope of terror and poverty, and instead of being (as he should be) a pillar of the community, he is turned into an apathetic and parasitic creature—‘depersonalized’, to use an expression that comes up frequently in the Soviet press—the Soviet authorities have been relaxing their procedures and seem inclined to permit an increase in degree of individual ownership. In other words, these are the early signs of a shift away from collectivist extremism, which has failed so conspicuously—if today we still have to count the deaths from starvation, in this nation of such immense potential agricultural wealth—and towards the Corporativism’s more even-handed approach to social equilibrium with its proper balance of rights and responsibilities between the individual and the State.

Thus we may say that Communism has begun its march ... towards Fascism, even if people are continuing to write that Fascism (still maliciously identified with capitalism) itself is at death’s door. Of the three cardinal principles of Communism—limitation of individual ownership to a common denominator of subsistence, depreciation of family ties, and destruction of religious sentiment—a revision is under way over the first two. As for the third, however, there would seem to be a desire to keep on forging ahead (cf. my highly confidential Report of the 18th of this June, No. 126 M). The gradual disappearance of the ministers of religion, accelerated with arrests and deportations, has made religious worship impossible; in consequence the churches are closing down, and they are gradually being demolished.

It’s a safe bet that the churches will all be gone in a few years time. Odessa’s Orthodox Cathedral (the work of the Italian architect Francesco Frappoli) is in need of repairs, but the Gorsoviet has no money for such a purpose. Currently undergoing demolition in Kiev, where I recently passed through, is the ancient monastery of Saint Michael founded in 1108 with a beautiful seven-dome church.

*Appendix II*

The magnificent Cathedral of St. Sophia has been shut down and is in a state of neglect; it used to contain famous mosaics in the Byzantine style, but these are no longer on view to the public. Soviet youngsters are now almost all atheists: The churches are attended only by old people, and by women in particular.

If it is true that major decisions are under consideration regarding the Orthodox Church's return to the fold of the Church of Rome, might I submit to Your Excellency that it seems advisable to me that these decisions be expedited, as with the passage of time they will be received with indifference by an increasingly large proportion of the Russian people. For now the time is still ripe, even if the decision is to be adopted by a reduced representation of the orthodox clergy and specifically by the clergy residing overseas, since it is not possible to rely on a proclamation by the clergy residing in Russia which (once a decision is reached) will surely tend towards a moral strength as great as that of the Church of Rome from whose assistance alone can it derive any hope that the Soviet Government's destructive intentions can be mitigated.

The Orthodox Church's welcome back into the fold of the Church of Rome, a fusion that has been hankered after for centuries, will be thanks to the everlasting universality of Rome, the barrier to barbarisms of every stripe, enriched by the spiritual essence of Fascism.

Sincerely yours,

The Royal Consul General

# **Appendix III**

**Final Meeting**

**of**

**THE COMMISSION ON THE UKRAINE FAMINE**

**April 19, 1988**

**MEETING**

**Tuesday,  
April 19, 1988**

**Rayburn House Office Building,  
Room 2222**

**Washington, D.C.**

**The commission met at 3:40 p.m.**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

HON. DANIEL A. MICA, Chairman  
HON. WILLIAM BROOMFIELD  
MR. BOHDAN FEDORAK  
HON. BENJAMIN GILMAN  
HON. DENNIS HERTEL  
DR. MYRON KUROPAS  
MR. DANIEL MARCHISHIN  
MS. ULANA MAZURKEVICH  
MS. ANASTASIA VOLKER  
DR. OLEH WERES

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

DR. JAMES E. MACE, Staff Director  
DR. OLGA SAMILENKO, Staff Assistant  
MR. WALTER PECHENUK, Staff Assistant

## PROCEEDINGS

**Congressman MICA:** The Commission on the Ukraine Famine will come to order.

We are nearing the close of our business with this commission and the work that has been done, I think, has been a fantastic job. I have had an opportunity to review in great detail the executive summary, and in lesser detail the balance of the work. We have made some comments on it.

What I would like to do—here is what I would suggest, and we are open to any suggestions from commission members. First, I am going to ask Dr. Mace to give us a brief oral summary on the work on the report and the executive summary. As I understand it, you should have had the draft of this copy for some time.

We will then, after his oral summary, open it up to any comments and anything that we think should be changed before final approval. At that time there will be a motion for final approval. We must approve by Friday. And I will also ask each member—and I can just tell you right now if any individual commission member wants to submit supporting, or dissenting views as separate documents to be included in the final bound document, they would be welcomed to do that, and we would include that in the final version.

With that, Dr. Mace, Jim, if I could ask you to maybe take a microphone and give us an oral summary. And I would just tell you that we appreciate all of the work that you and your staff have done, a fantastic job, particularly given the session where members have been so divided in their attention. You have really carried the ball and we appreciate that.

**Dr. MACE:** Thank you very much.

First of all, I would like to remind you this was done on a word processor last evening and we are still able to make changes.

Primarily, what you have before you today is what you have already seen in a little different format. We pulled out the specific findings on pages 6 and 7 of the executive summary, listing them 1 through 19. I think that the easiest thing to do is for me to go through very quickly and read them. And then the text of why we proposed those particular findings are clear from the executive summary, which you have already read.

- 1) There is no doubt that large numbers of inhabitants of the Ukrainian SSR and the North Caucasus territory starved to death in a man-made famine in 1932-33, caused by the seizure of the 1932 crop by the Soviet authorities.
- 2) The victims of the Ukrainian Famine numbered in the millions.
- 3) Official Soviet allegations of “*kulak* sabotage” upon which all difficulties were blamed during the Famine are false.
- 4) The Famine was not, as is often alleged, related to drought.
- 5) In 1931-32 the official Soviet response to a drought outside the Ukraine was to send aid to the areas affected and to make a series of concessions to the peasantry.
- 6) In mid-1932, following complaints by officials in the Ukrainian SSR that excessive grain procurements had led to localized outbreaks of famine, Moscow reversed course and took an increasingly hard line toward the peasantry.



*Appendix III*

- 7) The inability of Soviet authorities in Ukraine to meet the grain procurements quota forced them to introduce increasingly severe measures to extract the maximum quantity of grain from the peasants.
- 8) In the Fall of 1932, Stalin used the resulting procurements crisis in Ukraine as an excuse to tighten his control in Ukraine and to further intensify grain seizures.
- 9) The Ukrainian Famine of 1932-33 was caused by the maximum extraction of agricultural produce from the rural population.
- 10) Officials in charge of grain seizures also lived in fear of punishment.
- 11) Stalin knew that people were starving to death in Ukraine by late 1932.
- 12) In January 1933, Stalin used the alleged laxity of the Ukrainian authorities in seizing grain to further strengthen his control over the Communist Party of the Ukraine and mandated actions which worsened the situation and maximized the loss of life.
- 13) The new leadership that Stalin sent in, in January 1933, led by Postyshev had a dual mandate: One, to intensify grain seizures and therefore famine; two, to eliminate such modest national self-assertion as Ukrainians had hitherto been allowed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.
- 14) While famine also took place during the 1932-33 agricultural year in the Volga Basin and the North Caucasus territory as a whole, the invasiveness of Stalin's interventions in both the Fall of 1932 and January 1933 in the Ukraine are paralleled only in the ethnically Ukrainian Kuban region of the North Caucasus.
- 15) Attempts were made to prevent the starving from traveling to areas where food was more available.
- 16) Joseph Stalin and those around him committed genocide against Ukrainians in 1932-33.
- 17) The American government had ample and timely information about the Famine, but failed to take any steps which might have ameliorated the situation. Instead the administration extended diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union in November 1933, immediately after the Famine.
- 18) During the Famine certain members of the American press corps cooperated with the Soviet government to deny the existence of the Ukrainian Famine. And,
- 19) Recently Soviet scholarship in both the West and to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union, has made substantial progress in dealing with the Famine. Although official Soviet historians and spokesmen have never given a fully accurate, or adequate account, significant progress has been made in recent months. And this is evident through a number of things that have appeared in the Soviet press, letters to the editor in *Ogonëk*.

At this point I would like to suspend my testimony, so that the Honorable Mr. Gilman will have a chance to say a few words, should he wish to do so.

**Congressman GILMAN:** Thank you.

I regret that the way we have been over on the floor on the Lapinski-Ukrainian-American Resolution, commemorating the millennium and our distinguished Rank-

ing Minority Member, Bill Broomfield indicated that he would come right over as soon as that debate is completed.

I want to commend you for the good work done on the report, and for all the work done by our commissioners. I would hope that we are going to be able to extend the time of the commission, to ensure that all of the congressional colleagues will work together in trying to get some additional time, so that they can properly fulfill all of the responsibilities that we would like to see fulfilled.

This is a monumental effort, and one that certainly will give researchers a great deal of material to build upon. It is a base and I think it is an important one. And again, I commend the staff and Dr. Mace for the work you have done.

**Dr. MACE:** Thank you.

**Congressman MICA:** Thank you. I think we have one or two more to go.

**Dr. MACE:** We have got to 19.

**Congressman MICA:** At this point the record will be open for comments from commission members. I understand there may also be a motion to extend the mandate of the commission, and there are several members willing to introduce such legislation. It would be referred to by my own subcommittee. I don't think it would be appropriate for me to introduce that at this time, but we will follow the appropriate course, and if necessary, certainly I think we will get the appropriate extension.

The key on the extension is not so much the mandate, but the legislative authority for funds, if funds are needed—we can talk about that.

Does any commissioner have additional comments, or any comment on the report?

**Dr. KUROPAS:** I would like to read my comment into the record.

The Ukrainian-American community is extremely pleased with the work of the United States Ukraine Famine Commission. Drs. Mace and Samilenko deserve much praise, recognition and gratitude from our community for completing this historic document in a timely and professional manner. There is no doubt in my mind their work will have an impact, not only on the scholarly world, but on public policy as well.

American citizens should note well how their interests are portrayed by the administration policies of 1932-33, and by liberal American correspondents eager to defend the Soviet Union at all costs. The United States Congress, our State Department and the White House should recall the lessons of the Ukrainian Famine whenever they become overly enamored with the glitz and glamour of glasnost.

Today, a full 55 years after the Famine the Soviet Union still denies the fact that the Famine was a direct result of Soviet public policy. No matter how much the Soviets try to change their image in order to accommodate current internal stresses, we should remember that the same system which produced the Famine in 1932-33 is still in place in the USSR. Mikhail Gorbachev is an heir of Joseph Stalin.

What about the future? I am aware that there are those who would prefer to have our report buried in some musty US archival file, never to be mentioned again. This would not be in America's best interest. And it is for this reason that the Ukrainian-American community is supporting legislation which would allow the commission to continue its work at no cost to the American taxpayer.

*Appendix III*

I cannot imagine any member of this commission being opposed to such legislation, or supporting it in a half-hearted way. Given the significance of our report, such an attitude would be difficult to understand.

The commission has just begun its work, ladies and gentlemen, and there can be no talk of termination, regardless of how warm and fuzzy we may believe Mr. Gorbachev is.

In conclusion I want to personally thank the commission staff for their hard work, and those commission members who cooperated so closely with them, despite many pressing commitments. Especially laudatory were the contributions of the Chairman, Dan Mica; Senator Dennis DeConcini; Congressman William Broomfield and Congressman Dennis Hertel and Congressman Benjamin Gilman, as well as White House Aide Gary Bauer.

I look forward to working with you during the coming year.

**Congressman MICA:** Any other comments?

**Mr. MARCHISHIN:** Yes, Daniel Marchishin.

I was particularly concerned with conclusion No. 17, as Myron also mentioned about the American government having ample and timely information about the Famine, but failing to take steps concerning it, in its decision in recognizing the Soviet Union.

And, unfortunately, through the years Washington's administration, whether they be liberal or conservative, as the present administration may like to identify itself, tends to look the other way when it comes to the Soviet Union, and the opportunity to indulge in trade. In the face of the Soviet aggression in Nicaragua, in Angola, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Secretary of Commerce C. William Verity is even today leading a delegation, I believe, I read, of 300 businessmen to Moscow, trying to open up trade, more trade with the Soviet Union on these so-called joint ventures.

I am also aware that members of Congress are involved in joint ventures with the Soviet Union and have business in the Soviet Union, even in Ukraine. I, personally, find this kind of behavior on the part of the administration – conservative, liberal, Democrat or Republican – entirely reprehensible and immoral.

And I am glad that the commission did their work so thoroughly in researching the period around the Famine, and I am sorry to say that on the same what I call immoral attitude toward the Soviet Union, that is looking to gain a few dollars of short-term profit in trading with the Soviet Union, and not looking at the long-term situation regarding the Soviet Union and their policy towards Ukrainians and the entire world.

And that's what I have to say.

**Congressman MICA:** Thank you.

I might just point out that on page 151 there is about a 20-page discussion of the American response to the situation. Additionally, I might tell you that there are at least one or two, maybe a third volume of appendices that go with this document, but the staff did, indeed, address the American response in a good portion of that.

**Mr. MARCHISHIN:** I know.

**Congressman MICA:** Any other comments? Commissioner?

**STATEMENT PRESENTED BY DR. OLEH WERES**

**I greet the Final Report of the U.S. Government Commission on the Ukraine Famine with great satisfaction as a big job well done.**

**I wish to thank and congratulate our government members for bringing this Commission into existence and securing its budget appropriation. I wish to thank our many supporters in the Ukrainian-American community for their financial support which allowed this Commission to continue its work far beyond the reach of our original government appropriations.**

**I thank and congratulate our Commission staff—Dr. James Mace and Dr. Olga Samilenko—for the tremendous and successful scholarly work that culminated in this report.**

**The collection, transcription, and translation of eyewitness testimony from over 200 survivors of the Famine has produced an invaluable body of raw data for future researchers, work that had to be completed now, while these witnesses are still with us.**

**The Report prepared by our staff—consisting of several “Working Papers” that deal with specific aspects of the Famine and responses to it—is a substantial book. As one who has written his share of government reports, I can vouch for this report’s exceptional readability and informative nature. The individual Working Papers are significant scholarly works in their own right, which I am sure will quickly become articles in the scholarly literature dealing with Ukrainian and Soviet history and literature.**

**I feel that we deserve to congratulate ourselves collectively—government members, public members, and staff—for our accomplishments in expanding public awareness and recognition of the Famine, its causes and consequences. Five years ago, at the 50th anniversary of the Famine, this monstrous episode was scarcely known outside of the Ukrainian community. Since then, through our efforts and the efforts of other Ukrainian-Americans and Canadians and our friends, knowledge of the Famine has become commonplace among historically aware people. We have thus helped establish this tragic event as part of the history of the Ukrainian people and of mankind.**

**The timing of our efforts could not have been better. The present is a time of change and progress in the Soviet Union, which includes “filling the blank pages of history.” In just the past weeks the Famine has come to be acknowledged and openly discussed in the Soviet press. The historicity of the Famine is no longer disputed, its artificial nature and the culpability of Stalin and his cohorts are acknowledged, and a death toll in the millions, heavily concentrated in Ukraine, is alluded to. The only element yet to be acknowledged is the willfully genocidal nature and purpose of the Famine.**

**I do not believe that the timing of these admissions, just weeks before the presentation of this report, is coincidental. The word of the United States Government carries great authority among people in the Soviet Union, and when the Congress of the United States accepts this report, people in the Soviet Union who hear the news will accept it too. The persons and agencies in the Soviet Union that are responsible for defining “historical truth” were forced to preempt our report by conceding the major facts about the Famine to be true. This fundamental concession establishes new, much broader limits for acceptable research and com-**

mentary on Ukrainian history in the Soviet Union. This concession will enable honest scholars and publicists in Ukraine to conduct serious research and discussion on the Famine, until very recently a totally forbidden subject.

While our original mandate from Congress is almost at an end, I have no doubt that we will receive an extended mandate and will continue our work with the financial support of the Ukrainian-American community. I hope and expect that, by the end of our renewed mandate, our work will be recognized and appreciated in the Soviet Union, and members of our Commission and staff will be invited to visit Ukraine in their official capacity. Then we will have the final satisfaction of knowing that we have helped Ukraine and the Soviet Union take one more step toward joining the community of free peoples.

**Congressman MICA:** Thank you.

Before we proceed, I would like to recognize Congressman Bill Broomfield, who has joined us, and ask if you have any comments?

#### **STATEMENT PRESENTED BY CONGRESSMAN WILLIAM BROOMFIELD**

Members of the Commission, honored guests, this Commission was established two years ago for the purpose of expanding the world's knowledge of events collectively known as the Ukrainian Famine and, as a result, to provide the American public with a better understanding of the Soviet Union by revealing the Soviet role in the Famine.

The Commission has held several public hearings around the country in an effort to hear firsthand the chilling recollections of those who actually experienced and survived the 1932-1933 Famine in the Ukraine. Testimony was taken by the Commission from 57 eyewitnesses to the Famine, and in-depth interviews were conducted with over 200 other survivors of this tragedy.

During the hearings, we heard of the millions who died of starvation in Ukraine during this terrible period. Famine survivors told the Commission of seeing bodies left where they died, of watching their loved ones progressively weaken from hunger, and slowly give way to prolonged and painful death. The Commission learned of Ukrainians staying alive by eating anything from grasses, weeds, and tree limbs, to wild animals and birds that they caught and ate uncooked.

We also learned from eyewitnesses that crop harvests in Ukraine during this period were as bountiful as those in previous years when there was no famine. Rather than being the result of natural causes, the Famine of 1932-33 was caused by the organized confiscation of grains and other foods from the people of Ukraine. Witnesses before the Commission told of train loads of foods and grains leaving Ukraine, and of systematic house-to-house searches where every ounce of food was seized by government officials. We also heard of Soviet-imposed travel restrictions preventing Ukrainians from going to other areas where food was available.

The conclusion, which is detailed in the Commission's report to the Congress, is inescapable. The Famine, which occurred in Ukraine and which took millions of lives there, was the result of deliberate policies of the government of the Soviet Union. Thus, it is important that we call this man-made famine what it truly is, an act of genocide by the Soviet government against the people of Ukraine.

**This is a difficult story. It was heartrending for those of us on the Commission who heard the details of this genocide for the first time. It was painful for those who survived this tragedy to call up memories that many had buried with friends and loved ones so many years ago.**

**The Ukrainian Famine and the events surrounding it are, however, an important part of history that should be known to the American people and the rest of the world. In one sense, it clarifies the events that took place in Ukraine during 1932-1933. In a larger sense, it speaks to the degree of suffering that man will inflict on his fellow man when the world—including the United States—is willing to look the other way. Above all, the lessons of the Famine also tell us of the moral depravity of the Soviet system of government, a system that would initiate a policy of genocide, and a system that is essentially the same today. Through the lessons of the Ukrainian genocide, we are all reminded of the importance of vigilance, and of holding the Soviet government accountable for its human rights practices.**

**Mr. Chairman, the members of the Commission and their staff, led by Dr. James Mace, are to be congratulated for their diligent and dedicated work in pursuing and revealing the truth about the man-made Famine in Ukraine. I understand there is still unfinished work for the Commission in finalizing its research, and in disseminating more widely the results of its efforts. I urge the Congress to consider extending the life of this Commission so that this important work can be accomplished in the memory of those who died, and in honor of those who survived the Soviet genocide in Ukraine in 1932-1933.**

**I would like to take the opportunity, though, of obviously paying tribute to you, and particularly Dr. Mace and his staff, in the preparation of this report. I think it has been extremely important. And if we have accomplished setting the record straight about the Famine, then we have accomplished a great deal. This is something that I think is very important.**

**And it was interesting today, we had another bill on the floor, and I was happy to manage that on the Republican side.**

**But I really haven't had an opportunity, truthfully, to look over all of the recommendations, because of the tight schedule. But it has been a great pleasure to serve on this commission.**

#### **STATEMENT PRESENTED BY SENATOR DENNIS DeCONCINI**

**First of all, I would like to commend Chairman Dan Mica for his effective leadership of the Ukraine Famine Commission during the last two years. I would also like to express my appreciation to the staff, under the able leadership of Dr. Jim Mace, for an excellent job. Their dedication and commitment in painstakingly seeking the truth about the tragic man-made Famine of 1932-33 are exemplified by the quality of this report.**

**As you may know, in February 1987 I chaired hearings of this commission in San Francisco. I cannot help but recall the moving testimony from some of the courageous persons who witnessed firsthand the incredible human suffering caused by Stalin's government. I realize how difficult it was for them to relive their painful and traumatic experiences. Their testimony was an extremely valuable contribution in helping us learn more about the Ukrainian Famine.**

### *Appendix III*

Since the commission began its work, there have been many interesting developments in the Soviet Union, including an increasingly open discussion of the so-called "blank spots" of Soviet history. I am gratified that the Soviet media has made progress in discussing aspects of the Famine, although I must say that all too many "blank spots" remain, including the fundamental question of why the Famine took place. Indeed, I hope that the work of this commission will contribute to the discussion taking place today in the Soviet Union concerning the Famine.

Many of the report's conclusions are profoundly disturbing, most notably the conclusion that Joseph Stalin and those around him committed genocide against the Ukrainian people in 1932-33 in order to eliminate manifestations of Ukrainian self-assertion. But I am also disturbed that our government did not do everything it could to ameliorate this tragedy. I hope that if there is any lesson to be learned from this, it is that we must always be vigilant in monitoring human rights abuses and must never be afraid to act upon the information that comes to our attention.

Despite the significant work to date, there is more that we need to do in bringing the full dimensions of this tragedy to light. Senator Bradley will shortly be introducing legislation, which I am co-sponsoring, to extend the mandate of the commission. The extension would be used for completing some of the important work that still needs to be done, including the continuation of efforts to collect and prepare for publication oral histories, and furthering commission efforts to make materials on the Ukrainian Famine available for school curriculum use. We need to continue to bring the Famine to the world's attention in order to prevent similar tragedies from ever occurring again.

#### **STATEMENT PRESENTED BY MS. ULANA MAZURKEVICH**

The existing two-year legislative mandate of the Ukraine Famine Commission has run its course. Under the able chairmanship of Congressman Daniel Mica the commission held six public hearings, collected over 200 oral history testimonies, and thanks to the research and scholarship of the staff director of the Famine Commission, Dr. James E. Mace, and his two assistants, Dr. Olga Samilenko and Mr. Walter Pechenuk, produced a brilliant report.

I especially want to thank Congressmen Broomfield, Gilman, and Hertel, as well as Senator DeConcini, for taking time out from their busy schedules to travel to different parts of the country in order to preside at the hearings of the Ukraine Famine Commission. I want to thank them for their commitment to gathering information about the Famine and to exposing the Famine before the American public. They expressed their concern; they demonstrated their commitment. This is what America is made of—men who do not hesitate to take arms against grievous injustice.

I would also like to add that it was exciting for me to work with the other public members of the Commission and to contribute personally in a small way to the success of the final product, the report we are adopting today.

It was especially moving to be present during the testimony of the Famine survivors, to hear firsthand the bitter accounts of the slow agonies of starvation and of the valiant struggle for survival.

Perhaps as many as 8,000,000 Ukrainians were forcibly starved to death as the world turned a deaf ear to their anguished cries. Not until the Commission on the

**Ukraine Famine** began its work did the story of these victims have the opportunity to be fully told.

At the start of the hearings I often referred to the Famine as a footnote in history. Today, thanks to the efforts of the Commission, the Famine has received considerably more attention, and in time this notorious event will gain its rightful place in the pages of history textbooks, which hitherto have been left blank.

A brilliant report has been produced. Let us hope that the Congress and the President will allow us to build on this achievement by extending the commission's mandate. But regardless, it is now up to the commission members to propagate and to publicize our findings. It is up to the members of this commission to see to it that every secondary school interested in so doing will have available to it the necessary materials so that it will be able to include the Famine in its curriculum. Thanks in particular to the efforts of my colleague Dr. Kuropas, we have produced such an excellent guide, which I know that he is eager to further improve upon. This in itself is sufficient justification for allowing us the time necessary to continue our work as a Commission.

Furthermore, those who helped perpetrate this genocide by famine and those who contributed to its coverup must be exposed and condemned. The reprehensible actions of Walter Duranty, who knowingly sent out false dispatches on the Famine, must be condemned. It is particularly tragic that the heirs of the Famine's perpetrators cannot be made to answer for their crime.

Today, in this era of "glasnost" the individual players in the Kremlin have changed, but the essence of what they are remains the same; they have merely adopted more human guises. The core of their policies remains the same. To this very day there are areas of the world which suffer the ravages of hunger artificially created by clients of the very regime that caused the Famine. Afghanistan and Ethiopia bear the imprint of the same Soviet policies that brought about the Great Famine in Ukraine more than 50 years ago. Violations of basic human rights in Ukraine continue unabated. A government which denies its citizens the basic rights given by God is a regime to be rightly feared.

America must be vigilant. It must be ready to oppose repression and the destruction of human lives. America is a great and beautiful country. The generosity and humanity of its people is unparalleled. Millions of lives were irretrievably squandered in Ukraine over half a century ago; we cannot restore them. But we can in some small way ensure the small measure of justice that derives from setting the record straight by seeing to it that their story becomes a permanent part of the consciousness of future generations.

**Congressman MICA:** Thank you. And you know, let me just say for the commissioners, early on when this commission was formed, at least the Chair had some concern that there might be some constraint on the staff because of the political activities of various members. And I think I can say without any fear of contradiction that the staff was given totally free hand, they researched every aspect of this. And in no cases were they told that they could not mention certain subjects, or could not venture into certain areas.

And as a result you have a document that has been heavily researched and all has been included that they felt was important. And no one has pulled anything out of this.



And I have served on I don't know how many different commissions and groups here over the last 10 or 20 years, and that is rare. Very often before it ever gets to a point when you sit down, somebody has gone through with a black marker and said, "We can't get into this, we can't get into that." So, it is not only a public document we can be proud of, but a solid, legitimate work for future researchers. And it is a compendium which has not been censored.

Any other comments?

*(No response.)*

**Congressman MICA:** At this time it would be in order for someone to move recommendation of the adoption of the report, or to move that the commission mandate be extended.

Now, I would advise you that we can recommend an extension, but it would take legislation, as I understand it, to extend the mandate. The legislation, as was indicated, would be without additional funding, at no expense to the taxpayer. It probably—and I will only suggest this, but whatever the commission members would feel appropriate—first, recommend approval of the report. Secondly, recommend that the commission approve a resolution asking for an extension of the mandate, without any additional cost to the taxpayers. So we would have two different resolutions that could be passed, one to finalize the report.

Then I will again state without objection the report will be open for additional comments, individual comments attributed to individual members of Congress or the commission, as a part of this report.

**Mr. MARCHISHIN:** Mr. Chairman, I move that the commission accept the report.

**Mr. FEDORAK:** Second.

**Congressman MICA:** It has been moved and seconded. Any debate?

*(No response.)*

**Congressman MICA:** All those in favor, signify by saying "Aye."

*(Chorus of ayes.)*

**Congressman MICA:** Opposed?

*(No response.)*

**Congressman MICA:** Let the record show it was unanimous.

The other motion?

**Mr. MARCHISHIN:** I move that the commission support the introduction of legislation to extend the mandate of the commission, without additional congressional funding.

**Mr. FEDORAK:** Second.

**Congressman MICA:** It has been moved and seconded. Is there any discussion?  
Mr. Gilman.

**Congressman GILMAN:** Mr. Chairman, would it be appropriate to suggest that some minimal amount be available to the commission to wind up their affairs? I think it would be very helpful to the commission to wind up their affairs, even to the mailing of the report, and even prepare some extra copies, if need be, if there is a great demand for it.

**Congressman MICA:** Let me say the resolution would simply be a resolution recommending. So the Chair is open to any recommendations.

I have been advised, at least informally, that it would be next to impossible to get any new money for the commission from the budget at this time. Now it may be

that within the Foreign Affairs committee budget that there may be some money that could be allocated for finalization or termination of the commission, and the report, the mailing, and so on.

**Congressman BROOMFIELD:** Could we get an idea, Dan?

**Congressman MICA:** We have approximately \$30,000 left at this time, is that right?

**Dr. MACE:** That is over and above what we will need to finish out our existing mandate at the current level of expenditure through June 22, 1988.

**Congressman MICA:** Does that include the printing of the report?

**Dr. MACE:** That does not include the printing of the report. The trouble with the GSA is you can get one report that says one thing, and another report which says something quite different. We have learned that to our chagrin.

And in the past according to the most pessimistic projection, if we were to receive no more contributions from today, print the report, send it out, continue our current level of expenditure until the end of our mandate, in mid-June, we would still have about \$30-\$40,000 left over.

The Ukrainian-American community has been extremely generous, we have raised about \$140,000 in private donations from that community. And at this time should the mandate be extended, we would certainly have to raise more funds, but I do not anticipate that being a severe problem.

**Dr. KUROPAS:** Having been involved myself, personally with the raising of some of these funds, I want you to know the strong support this commission has, and that generosity is the reflection. They are very, very warm people.

And if the Famine Commission is extended, and I hope it will be, I am very confident whatever funds are necessary our Ukrainian-American Community will be able to provide them.

**Congressman BROOMFIELD:** There is one thing obviously if we don't have any money in this, and you raise the money outside, it is more likely this resolution can be extended. I don't think there is any doubt about it, that's my feeling.

**Congressman MICA:** No doubt about it. If it goes to the Appropriations Committee, that may be the end of it. And that's where I see a problem, we lose control of it.

**Congressman BROOMFIELD:** That's correct.

**Congressman MICA:** We would have to get our technical staff to look at it, but under reports and documents within the Foreign Affairs Committee budget, if I am not mistaken, we might be able to say that the mandate has been extended, and they will need an additional \$10,000 to finalize mailing and printing.

What I would suggest is this, you can offer the resolution as you have, that it be done without taxpayer funds. But if the Foreign Affairs Committee—and we can have this as an aside from the resolution—if the Foreign Affairs Committee can find a way to provide additional funds for mailing and printing, and it is necessary, that we will attempt to do so.

The resolution, I would think, ought to be without costing taxpayers additional dollars.

**Congressman GILMAN:** Mr. Chairman, I withdraw my resolution.

**Congressman MICA:** All right.

Is there a second?

**Dr. KUROPAS:** Second.

**Congressman MICA:** It is moved and seconded.

Any discussion on the resolution?

**Mr. MARCHISHIN:** Yes. I think it would be helpful for the coming year for at least a broad based budget, or an agenda, if you will, of what the commission would hope to do in the coming year, also could be prepared.

So if we have an opportunity, and we will have an opportunity to do additional fund raising within the Ukrainian community, that we have a sales pitch that we can make, and at least a general agenda that we can present to them.

**Congressman MICA:** Let me direct the staff at the conclusion of the meeting, preparation of a projected budget for an additional year, if indeed, the mandate is extended. I think that would almost be required if legislation is introduced, as a basis for us to pursue the legislation.

And I would agree with Mr. Broomfield, I wouldn't see any problem without putting a dollar amount in it—and I don't mean to say this in a negative sense, I would see it dying in another committee, if you put a dollar figure on it.

Would you agree?

**Congressman BROOMFIELD:** Yes, there is no doubt about that.

**Congressman MICA:** If the staff will do that. And I will leave the judgment solely up to the commission members, as to the appropriateness of the budget and so on, plans to use it, and ask the staff to prepare it. And then we can either poll the commission, or if necessary, have an additional meeting.

All those in favor, signify by saying "Aye."

*(Chorus of ayes.)*

**Congressman MICA:** Opposed?

*(No response.)*

**Congressman MICA:** It has been approved—the resolution supporting the extension of the mandate. The report has also been approved.

And, again, let me thank each of the commissioners for the time that they have spent. And I would invite you, even if you agree with everything in the report, to write a statement that could be included in the final printing of this, as your own views and comments on the commission. I think it would be an excellent addition. As I have indicated, this will be, I am sure, a work for scholars around the world for years to come.

And as a commissioner, we in Congress often do this on reports and legislation, no matter how much we agree or disagree with the bill, to at least include in the official report some comments of our position.

So, I would ask you to do that and submit it to Dr. Mace for inclusion in the final report.

Any comments? We have had an additional congressman join us, Congressman Hertel. Would you have any comments?

**Congressman HERTEL:** No, Mr. Chairman, but I am very pleased with the work that the commission has done, the staff, I would like to thank them. I have really enjoyed working with all of you. It has been a great sacrifice, especially for the public members, and a great assistance to all of us, to have you carry the brunt of the work, you might say, because of our schedules.

We appreciate you keeping us involved on such a regular basis.

**Congressman MICA:** Let me just say one more time, I would absolutely agree with Congressman Hertel, we have been the vehicle, but it was born and bred in

the Ukrainian community. The work was carried out by the members of the commission and the staff. And we are proud to be supporters and contributors in the process, but the work was done by the people here. And we appreciate it, we commend you, and we thank each and every one of you for the service you have provided.

**Mr. MARCHISHIN:** I wanted to add some specific remarks along that line of thanking the chairman of the commission. I appreciate it on a personal level being able to perform on the Famine Commission under Chairman Dan Mica.

I hope that in the next year we will be able to continue, but I understand that there is another campaign that our chairman has undertaken. And if it is successful, he may not be able to—

**Congressman BROOMFIELD:** Yes, but he broadens it. He can pick it up in the Senate.

**Mr. MARCHISHIN:** I hope it works out that way.

**Congressman MICA:** Thank you very much, and we thank each and every one of you. Again, Dr. Mace and your staff, we truly appreciate the work and dedication. You carried the ball and did a yeoman's job.

If there is no further comment, the commission stands adjourned.

Thank you.

*(Whereupon, at 4:12 p.m., the commission was adjourned.)*