

A CRISIS IN RELATIONS:

LEADERS OF THE USSR AND UKRAINIAN SSR DURING THE HOLODOMOR

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During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the population of the Russian Empire, and then of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), periodically experienced food shortages. Thus, widespread famine broke out in Ukraine in 1921–22, and the years 1925 and 1928–29 were also marked by famine.¹ In the latter half of the 1920s the leadership of the Communist Party, headed by Joseph Stalin, attempted to overcome episodic food shortages in various regions of the USSR by creating large state reserves of grain. These reserves were used for the centralized distribution of grain to industrial centers and the Red Army, as well as for export.²

In 1931, collectivization and dekulakization produced a severe food shortage in the country. On 1 January 1932 state grain reserves, concentrated mainly in the *nepfond* (untouchable fund) and *mobfond* (mobilization fund), amounted to 2,033 million tonnes.³ From October 1931, these reserves were managed by a powerful state organization, the Reserve Committee, led by the head of the USSR Gosplan (State Planning Committee), Valerian Kuibyshev, and his deputy, the head of the OGPU (All-Union State Political Administration or secret police), Genrikh Yagoda.⁴ Since one tonne of grain sufficed to provide a year's normal bread ration for three people, the available state reserves could adequately supply 12–13 million people with grain until the new harvest of 1932. But the number of people receiving provisions

¹ There is a considerable literature on this topic. See, e.g., L. Hrynevych, *Holod 1928–1929 rr. v radians'kii Ukraïni* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukraïny, 2013).

² Centralized distribution in the USSR was carried out by so-called distribution centers (institutions) with the aid of special release documents or cards numbered according to lists (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th). For example, the first list provided for 600 g of bread per day and a limited amount of food for the month, while the fourth list provided for 200 g of bread per day. Provisions were distributed according to social status based on various lists that included party or government officials, officials of punitive organs, military personnel, laborers, MTS (Machine-Tractor Station) employees, teachers, doctors, and so on. The so-called contingent of such individuals increased continually, testifying to the inability of centralized state distribution to supply the population with foodstuffs.

³ See R. W. Davies, M. B. Tauger, and S. G. Wheatcroft, "Stalin, Grain Stocks and the Famine of 1932–1933," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 650.

⁴ *Ibid.*

through the centralized distribution system was continually increasing and, as a result, the quantity of grain in state granaries was totally insufficient.

Under these conditions, Stalin and his entourage demanded very firmly that regional leaders ensure the fulfillment of state grain-procurement plans. Attention was focused on Ukraine and the North Caucasus, which supplied more than half the grain produced in the USSR. In 1930, state grain procurements in Ukraine amounted to 7.7 million tonnes, nearly 30.2 percent of the gross yield of grain crops. In 1931, when the harvest was worse than that of the previous year, Ukraine procured 7.0 million tonnes, or 41.3 percent of the gross grain crop yield.⁵ From December 1931 to March 1932, grain procurement continued in Ukraine under the control of Stalin and the head of the USSR Council of People's Commissars (CPC), Viacheslav Molotov.⁶ Not until 16 February did the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) (CC AUCP (B)) decide to establish seed reserves for spring crops on collective farms in Ukraine in the amount of 950,000 tonnes. The establishment of these reserves was entirely at the expense of local reserves. On the same day, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine (CC CP(B)U) decided to begin collecting seeds in the counties (*raiony*) that had fulfilled their grain-procurement plans. In the remaining raions, collection was planned to begin on 25 February. The secretary general of the CC CP(B)U, Stanislav Kosior, and the chair of the CPC of the Ukrainian SSR, Vlas Chubar, proposed in a telegram to local organizations that local workers stop talking about obtaining seed

⁵ Statistical information taken from the following sources: *Kolektyvizatsiia i holod na Ukraïni, 1929–1933. Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv*, comp. H. M. Mykhailychenko and Ie. P. Shatalina, ed. S. V. Kul'chyts'kyi (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1993), p. 10; M. B. Tauger, "Urozhai 1932 goda i golod 1933 goda," in *Sud'by rossiiskogo krest'ianstva*, ed. Iu. N. Afanas'ev and N. A. Ivnickii (Moscow: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi gumanitarnyi universitet, 1996), p. 315; N. A. Ivnickii, "Golod 1932–1933: kto vinovat?" in *Sud'by rossiiskogo krest'ianstva*, p. 334. Here and below, abbreviated references are given to publications from which information is cited.

⁶ Ivnickii, "Golod 1932–1933: kto vinovat?," pp. 335–36.

aid from the center and focus all attention on “procuring seeds locally.”⁷ This was taking place in March, as the southern counties of Ukraine began their traditional spring sowing.

After state grain procurements were fulfilled, there were no seed stocks left for sowing on the collective and individual farms. Between 19 March and 19 April 1932, the CC AUCP(B) Politburo was compelled on five occasions to adopt resolutions to provide Ukraine with a loan of barley seed from state reserves located on Ukrainian territory, as well as to deliver seed to the republic from reserves of the CPC USSR located in the Western and Central Chernozem regions. In addition to barley, Ukraine received seeds for oats, wheat, millet, and buckwheat from the state varietal reserve.⁸ At the same time, the centralized supply of grain was again cut back in the second quarter (April–June 1932).⁹

Thus, hunger spread throughout the towns. In many cases Ukrainian peasants, weakened and swollen from hunger, went out to sow, lay down in the furrows, and died right in the field. The catastrophe was becoming widespread, as people were dying of hunger by the tens of thousands.¹⁰ On 19 April, the CC AUCP(B) Politburo finally decided to provide Ukraine with food aid, planning to allot the aid from the central supplies located in the republic. This decision indicated that state reserves of foodstuffs existed on the territory of the Ukrainian SSR. Possibly they were insufficient to feed the population, but this in no way justifies the blatant unwillingness of Stalin and other Soviet leaders to help the starving. This inhumane and criminal

⁷ Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads'kykh ob'iednan' Ukraïny (TsDAHO), f. 1, op. 6, spr. 235, ark. 82; Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI), f. 17, op. 3, spr. 872, ark. 15; *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: ochyma istoriykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, comp. R. I. Pyrih et al. (Kyiv: Polityvdav Ukraïny, 1990), pp. 116, 119.

⁸ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, spr. 12, ark. 30–31, 37, 84, 108.

⁹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, spr. 11, ark. 172; op. 3, spr. 877, ark. 41; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 235, ark. 70, 110; Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vldy ta upravlinnia Ukraïny (TsDAVOVU), f. 318, op. 1, spr. 647, ark. 6. For comparison, in April–June 1932 the centralized monthly grain supply to Ukraine consisted of only about 100,000 tonnes. At the same time, in the Donbas alone there were 973,191 individuals on the central distribution list in May–June. Their consumption of grain was roughly equal to the aforementioned number. In March 1932, a total of 6,059,000 laborers and civil servants in Ukraine were dependent on central distribution. See TsDAVOVU, f. 318, op. 1, spr. 647, ark. 5. That number did not include family members (so-called “dependents”), employees of rail and water transport services, civil servants in rural areas, employees of punitive organs and their families, the Red Army, etc. A considerable number of these individuals, like most Ukrainian peasants, found themselves on the verge of starvation.

¹⁰ S. Kul'chyts'kyi, *Ukraïns'kyi Holodomor v konteksti polityky Kremli na pochatku 1930-kh rr.* (Kyiv: NAN Ukraïny, Instytut istorii Ukraïny NAN Ukraïny, 2014), p. 142; R. W. Davies and S. G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 407, 409–10.

attitude was accompanied by an attempt to shift blame for the famine onto the Ukrainian leadership.

On 23 April, the CC CP(B)U Politburo decided to send a telegram to the CC AUCP(B) and Stalin requesting the release of 25,000 tonnes of grain and to dispatch Vlas Chubar to Moscow to address the issue of grain resources for Ukraine.¹¹ On the same day, the CC AUCP(B) Politburo resolved as follows: “a) Considering that the difficulties with grain supplies in Ukraine are fundamentally the result of very poor deliveries from the *mirchukovyi zbir*,¹² which was planned to yield 100,000 tonnes in April, the CC CP(B)U is to be obliged to make every effort to produce a maximum increase of the *mirchukovyi zbir*, with its immediate transport to depots near railway stations; b) As an extreme measure, to release 25,000 tonnes of grain for the purpose of supplying Ukraine in April; c) To oblige the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Trade to release 30,000 tonnes of wheat from warrant.”¹³

The last point referred to a forced renunciation of exporting wheat and its return to Ukraine. More precisely, that grain was stored in Ukrainian ports on the Black Sea, and the CC AUCP(B) Politburo gave permission for it to be used to supply the republic. It is also worth noting that the export of grain from the USSR in the first half of 1932 amounted to 750,000 tonnes, enough to provide a daily ration of bread (1 kg) during those months for nearly 4 million people.¹⁴

The famine in Ukraine spread in May, and it was becoming clear that the sowing was being disrupted. On 25 May, the CC AUCP(B) Politburo resolved to send a group of top Soviet leaders headed by Viacheslav Molotov to Ukraine to fully implement the sowing campaign.¹⁵ The Molotov commission arrived in Kharkiv on 26 May for a joint meeting of the CC CP(B)U Politburo. The main issue was the distribution of the previously approved food aid. As a result of

¹¹ TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 236, ark. 8. A telegram was sent over Chubar’s signature. See RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 881, ark. 10.

¹² Amount of flour in payment for processing grain in the mills.

¹³ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, spr. 12, ark. 108. Warrant: agreement between the USSR and other countries on the export of grain.

¹⁴ Tauger, “Urozhai 1932 goda i golod 1933 goda,” p. 313.

¹⁵ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, spr. 12, ark. 153.

the talks, the CC AUCP(B) Politburo resolved to provide an additional seed loan.¹⁶ On 5 June, it resolved to deliver an additional 26,080 tonnes of grain to Ukraine from Central Asia.¹⁷

Meanwhile, Vlas Chubar and the head of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (VUTsVK), Hryhorii Petrovsky, aligned their positions and sent letters to the Kremlin on 10 June informing the Soviet leaders of the imminent threat of widespread famine in Ukraine. Stanislav Kosior gave the impression of remaining on the sidelines, assuming no responsibility for their actions. Chubar noted that famine had engulfed a minimum of 100 counties of the republic, writing openly that by 1 July 1932 Ukraine might find itself completely without foodstuffs, and that the resources provided by the Soviet leadership would be exhausted by 20 June.¹⁸ Petrovsky drew the attention of the Soviet leaders to the growth of anti-collectivization, anti-Soviet, and “Petliurite” sentiments among the peasantry and requested food and seed aid in the amount of 1.5–2 million poods of grain (24,000–32,000 tonnes).¹⁹ He wrote in so many words that the CC CP(B)U was at fault, having agreed without objection to fulfill the grain-procurement plan in the amount of 510 million poods (8,160 million tonnes). This was done “by way of submission to the overriding need to maintain the pace of socialist development that we have set, while also taking account of the strained international situation.”²⁰

On 12 June, Secretary of the CC AUCP(B) Lazar Kaganovich passed on both letters to Stalin,²¹ who responded to Kaganovich on 15 June 1932 that the letters were not to his liking. He was particularly displeased with the attitude of Chubar, who was “demanding” additional millions of poods of grain from the Kremlin and cutbacks of the grain-procurement plan.²² In all

¹⁶ TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 236, ark. 105–7; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 886, ark. 11.

¹⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, spr. 12, ark. 175.

¹⁸ *Komandyry velykoho holodu: Poïzdky V. Molotova i L. Kahanovycha v Ukraïnu ta na Pivnichnyi Kavkaz. 1932–1933 rr.*, ed. V. Vasyl'iev and Iu. Shapoval (Kyiv: Heneza, 2001), pp. 206–12. Hryhorii Petrovsky wrote cautiously that resources were being depleted “in a number of villages.” The problem, however, lay elsewhere: no reserves of grain or foodstuffs remained in most counties.

¹⁹ *Komandyry velykoho holodu*, p. 213.

²⁰ RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, spr. 139, ark. 162–65, published in *Komandyry velykoho holodu*, pp. 212–15.

²¹ *Stalin i Kaganovich. Peregypka. 1931–1936 gg.*, ed. O. V. Khlevniuk et al. (Moscow: Rossiiskaia politicheskaia èntsiklopediia (ROSSPÈN), 2001), p. 164.

²² RGASPI, f. 81, op. 3, spr. 99, ark. 62–63.

likelihood, Kaganovich, who knew Kosior from joint activity in Kyiv before the revolution,²³ conveyed Stalin's impressions to him and also informed him of Stalin's serious dissatisfaction with the Ukrainian leadership. Nevertheless, in response to Chubar's requests, Ukraine was given additional food aid. The decision of the CC AUCP(B) on the matter, adopted on 16 June, obliged Chubar personally to ensure the distribution of the provided grain "strictly for the specified purpose."²⁴ A request from the republic's leadership on 17 June 1932 for an additional 600,000 poods (9,600 thousand tonnes) of grain²⁵ further irritated Stalin. On 18 June, sensing the mood of the leading local functionaries, he wrote in a subsequent letter to Kaganovich of the need to assign personal responsibility for the state of agriculture and grain procurements to the first secretaries of the republican, territorial, and provincial (*oblast*) party committees of Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and other main agricultural regions of the USSR.²⁶

In further correspondence, Stalin expressed the opinion that Kosior, Chubar, and other Ukrainian leaders were incapable of governing the republic, which had a double subtext. The political responsibility for the famine in Ukraine was placed on the leaders of the CC CP(B)U who had not managed the grain-procurement plans or the provision of food in Ukraine. This meant that the CC AUCP(B) Politburo should remove "the guilty" from their positions. But the problem lay elsewhere: was it possible, under the famine conditions engulfing the principal grain-producing regions of the USSR, to create such reserves and use them effectively to supply the towns and the Red Army?

At a meeting of the CC AUCP(B) Politburo on 20 June 1932, the deputy head of the Procurement Committee, Mikhail Chernov, presented a grain-procurement plan for June–August. It was resolved to supply Ukraine with grain from the republic's procurements: in other words, all grain harvested from June to August was to be designated for the needs of the

²³ L. Kaganovich, *Pamiatnye zapiski rabochego, kommunista-bol'shevika, profsoiuznogo, partiinogo i sovetko-gosudarstvennogo rabotnika* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2003), p. 81.

²⁴ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, spr. 12, ark. 180–81.

²⁵ *Holod 1932-1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, p. 183.

²⁶ RGASPI, f. 81, op. 3, spr. 99, ark. 67–68.

industrial centers and the army in the Ukrainian SSR.²⁷ This decision left the nearly 30-million-strong population of the republic without foodstuffs for three to four weeks. Considering the processes of milling and delivering the grain, baking bread, and husking other granular cereals, the large cities, the army, and the punitive agencies could have received provisions in several days, or even weeks. But what were other categories of the population to eat when the crops were ripening, but there was practically no free trade in grain or foodstuffs? If peasants could save themselves from death by hunger with plant seedlings that sprouted in May–June 1932 and leftover potatoes, beets, and carrots found on the farm, the urban population was seemingly doomed.

On 2 July Stalin wrote a letter to Kaganovich and Molotov suggesting the removal of Chubar and Kosior from their positions.²⁸ His expressions testified to his loss of confidence in the Ukrainian leadership, especially Chubar. From the perspective of the center of power in the Kremlin, the subcenter of power²⁹ in Kharkiv had lost its ability to comply with instructions and manage the socioeconomic processes in the republic. Consequently, in Stalin’s opinion, the leaders of the Ukrainian SSR were responsible not only for the famine in the republic but also for political errors (resulting from activity or, rather, inactivity) detrimental to the USSR.

With the primary goal of realizing Stalin’s directives on the organization of grain procurements—“to break the spirit of the workers and isolate the whining and corrupt diplomats (without regard for individuals),”³⁰—the CC AUCP(B) Politburo decided to send Molotov and Kaganovich to the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference (6–9 July 1932).³¹ On 6 July, at a meeting of the CC CP(B)U Politburo attended by Molotov and Kaganovich, Kosior was assigned

²⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 889, ark. 15; op. 162, spr. 12, ark. 192; *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraini: ochyma istoriykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, pp. 186–87.

²⁸ *Stalin i Kaganovich. Perepiska*, p. 210.

²⁹ The term “subcenter of power” was used to describe the vertical and horizontal party and government structures that had “grown together” and functioned on the principle of so-called democratic centralism. The dictatorship of the “Communist Party oligarchy” and of Stalin as an individual was concealed behind the façade of this structure. The center of power (the Kremlin) was the political leadership of Soviet Russia and the USSR, while the subcenter consisted of the leaders of the CP(B)U and the Ukrainian SSR who participated in developing the decisions made in the Kremlin and carrying them out in Ukraine.

³⁰ *Stalin i Kaganovich. Perepiska*, p. 210.

³¹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 891, ark. 10.

to edit the draft resolution of the party conference. The decision of the CC CP(B)U Politburo “On the grain-procurement plan,” on account of which Moscow’s representatives had traveled to Kharkiv, was of central political significance. It read: “To deem appropriate the grain-procurement plan established by the CC AUCP(B) for the agricultural sector in the amount of 356 million poods [5,696,000 tonnes] and adopt it for unconditional fulfillment.”³²

The decision was something of a political victory for Molotov and Kaganovich, but it did not come easily. If one carefully analyzes the remarks delivered by the Ukrainian Politburo members Mykola Skrypnyk, Hryhorii Petrovsky, and Vlas Chubar, as well as some county party secretaries at the conference, the general view of the Ukrainian officials becomes apparent: the grain-procurement plan was unrealistic and had to be reduced.³³ In a letter to Stalin dated 6 July 1932, Molotov and Kaganovich described the discussion of the procurement plan at the meeting of the CC CP(B)U Politburo and the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference: “We categorically rejected a review of the plan, demanding the mobilization of party forces to deal with losses and the squandering of grain....”³⁴ It was noted in the resolution that the conference adopted for unconditional fulfillment the grain-procurement plan established for the republic, demanding that the higher and local party and government apparatus of Ukraine “mercilessly expose opportunists, capitulators, and whiners.”³⁵ Thus Molotov and Kaganovich managed to achieve their main goal: the largest Communist Party in a national republic of the USSR, with almost half a million members, was officially validating the course taken by Stalin and his henchmen for the realization of the new grain-procurement campaign.

The Kremlin leaders well understood that they were condemning millions of people to death. The logic of their actions might be explained as follows: should grain procurements be rejected, that would negatively impact wheat exports, the influx of hard currency, the purchase of

³² See *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, p. 194.

³³ See *Partiino-radians'ke kerivnytsvo USRR pid chas Holodomoru 1932–1933 rr.: Vozhdi. Pratsivnyky, Aktyvisty. Zbirnyk dokumentiv ta materialiv*, comp. V. Vasyl'iev, N. Vert, and S. Kokin (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukraïny NAN Ukraïny, 2013), pp. 33–57.

³⁴ *Stalin i Kaganovich. Perepiska*, p. 219.

³⁵ *Komunistychna partiia Ukraïny v rezoliutsiiakh i rishenniakh z'izdiv, konferentsii i plenumiv TsK*, 2 vols., ed. V. I. Iurchuk et al. (Kyiv: Politydav Ukraïny, 1976), vol 1, 1918–1941, pp. 750–52.

equipment for factories being built and, finally, the so-called “tempo of socialist construction.” It would then have become necessary to recognize the fallibility of the policy of the “great leap” taken by Stalin and his henchmen, which would have resulted in their complete discreditation and an end to all their life aspirations.

Stalin knew well and took into account the extent of dissatisfaction with his policies in society and in the Communist Party itself (confirmed by the case of Martemian Riutin).³⁶ Along with the group of leaders who supported him, he understood that if they decided not to implement those policies, they might find it impossible to maintain their hold on power in the party and the country. In other words, given the deep socioeconomic crisis born of their irresponsible policy, opportunities for Stalin’s cohort to change course or tactics were severely limited. Those individuals preferred to continue to the end, condemning millions to death. After all, the ultimate goal of their policy was the creation of a “communal state” (following Vladimir Lenin), for which it was necessary to create artificial non-market economic relations and rebuild the structure of society (in accordance with the Bolshevik Marxist world view characteristic of Stalin and his comrades-in-arms). According to these ideological factors, the state was to play the leading role in imposing a collective farm system, fulfilling the policy of grain procurement, and waging mass repressive actions against various segments of the population.

On 20 July 1932, Stalin sent a letter to Kaganovich and Molotov about drafting a law to protect socialist ownership. In the letter he gave the OGPU USSR a directive to assume strict control over the countryside, all “active proselytizers opposed to the new collective farm order, active proselytizers promoting the idea of leaving the collective farm—to remove them and send

³⁶ Martemian Riutin had been a Bolshevik Party member since 1914. In 1930, when he was a candidate for membership in the CC AUCP(B), he distributed an appeal among party officials titled “To All Members of the CC AUCP(B)” in which he accused Stalin of usurping power. He developed an ideological platform titled “Stalin and the Crisis of Proletarian Dictatorship” that was disseminated in circles of the party apparatus. Riutin claimed that Stalin was a traitor to Leninist ideals and demanded that Stalin be banned from holding power in the Communist Party. He was arrested in 1932 and accused of establishing a counterrevolutionary organization, the Union of Marxist-Leninists, to combat the Soviet government. In the case developed on Stalin’s initiative by an OGPU USSR team in 1932–33, more than thirty individuals were held criminally liable in extrajudicial proceedings, including the former high-ranking party officials Lev Kamenev and Grigorii Zinoviev. In 1937, Riutin was again accused and sentenced to execution. See *Reabilitatsiia: Politicheskie protsessy 30–50-ykh godov*, gen. ed. A. N. Iakovlev (Moscow: Politizdat, 1991), pp. 92–104.

them to a concentration camp.” A similar fate awaited second-hand dealers and profiteers. The leaders of the state security agencies were ordered immediately to activate an intelligence/information network for the detailed exposure of the “hostile element” and study of attitudes among the peasantry. As far as Stalin was concerned, the Chekists could begin a widespread repressive action against the social categories noted above by the end of August 1932.³⁷

Kaganovich wrote to Stalin on 24 July 1932 that, after the meeting of the CC AUCP(B) Politburo, the leaders of the OGPU with Viacheslav Menzhynsky at the helm were summoned. During the meeting with members of the Politburo, the leaders of the OGPU USSR were read the excerpt from Stalin’s letter concerning the primary objectives of the Chekists. In response, they promised that in the near future they would develop an appropriate plan of action and inform Stalin accordingly.³⁸

On 7 August 1932, a law was adopted on the protection of public property.³⁹ Popularly known as the “Five Stalks Law,” it provided for execution, along with the confiscation of all assets, for theft of collective farm or cooperative property, or, given mitigating circumstances, imprisonment for a minimum of ten years, also with the confiscation of all assets. Amnesty in such legal cases was forbidden. It should be noted that the law was diligently drafted in July 1932 at the initiative of Stalin, who incorporated his own amendments and additions.⁴⁰ In all likelihood Stalin was aware, upon familiarizing himself with the letters from Chubar and Petrovsky, that hungry peasants were being driven to steal grain from the fields. Thus his initiative was not a reaction to the situation but an anticipation of peasant actions. He therefore proposed to criminalize such actions in legislation: the peasants were to die of hunger but were not to touch the grain in the fields.

³⁷ *Stalin i Kaganovich. Perepiska*, pp. 235–36.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

³⁹ *Pravda*, 8 August 1932.

⁴⁰ *Stalin i Kaganovich. Perepiska*, pp. 245–46, 249, 260.

Along with the strengthening of repressive policies, Stalin, dissatisfied with the “political maturity” and organizational capabilities of the Soviet Ukrainian leadership, attempted to enforce stricter controls over its activities. On 11 August he wrote Kaganovich a letter in which he stated that “We may lose Ukraine,” alleging that a widespread Polish intelligence network was active in the republic, while “Petliurites” in the CC CP(B)U might oppose the political line. The leadership of the CP(B)U, in his opinion, did not see the danger. In conjunction with this assessment of the situation, Stalin suggested appointing Kaganovich as secretary general of the CC CP(B)U, while leaving him in the position of secretary of the CC AUCP(B). He also deemed it expedient to appoint Vsevolod Balytsky as head of the GPU Ukrainian SSR, while leaving him in the position of deputy head of the OGPU USSR. In addition, Stalin suggested replacing Chubar as head of the CPC Ukrainian SSR with one of the leaders of the central agricultural administrations and transferring Chubar to the post of Molotov’s deputy in the CPC USSR. Kosior was to assume the post of secretary of the CC AUCP(B). Further in the letter, Stalin outlined the strategic objectives of the Soviet leadership with respect to Ukraine: “...Our goal must be to transform Ukraine as quickly as possible into a true bastion of the USSR, a truly exemplary republic. No expense should be spared. Without these and similar measures (the economic and political reinforcement of Ukraine, its border counties first and foremost, etc.), I repeat, we may lose Ukraine.”⁴¹

It is difficult to assess the likelihood of an active widespread revolt by Ukrainian peasants, with the support of elements of the local leadership, against the central authorities. More than likely, the people, weakened by hunger, were not physically capable of action. Stalin recalled how the forces of the GPU Ukrainian SSR had suppressed mass, specifically armed, anti-collectivization actions by peasants in early 1930. The incursion of Polish armies into Ukraine in case of a peasant uprising was also unlikely. In my opinion, the rationale behind Stalin’s political accusations against the leadership of the Ukrainian SSR was above all

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 273–75.

preemptive in nature, with the goal of establishing stricter controls over the higher-ranking officials of the Ukrainian SSR and the party and government functionaries at the provincial and county levels, as well as preventing manifestations of their dissatisfaction.

After several days, Kaganovich received a new letter from Stalin reiterating that the only appropriate replacement for Kosior would be Kaganovich, but it would be inexpedient to send him to Ukraine immediately: “We would weaken the Secretariat of the CC.... As for Chubar, we can leave him be for now and see how he works out.”⁴² In my opinion, Stalin rejected the idea of sending Kaganovich to Ukraine so as to maintain control over the party’s vertical chain of command in the USSR, which formed the skeleton of all other authorities and management structures of the communist regime. Given the crisis situation, Kaganovich, who was personally devoted to Stalin, was needed in the Kremlin no less than Molotov, who headed the government vertical chain of command. Stalin doubtless understood the depth of the socioeconomic crisis and the potential scale of the new famine looming in Ukraine. However, seeing no new political figures capable of implementing his political line in the Ukrainian SSR, he decided to leave the higher-ranking political leadership of the republic in place, while “reinforcing” the functionaries of the lower administrative ranks.

On 16 September, the CC AUCP(B) Politburo appointed Ivan Akulov (previously first deputy head of the OGPU USSR) first secretary of the Donetsk provincial party committee and Sarkis Sarkisov (previously head of the All-Union Grain-Procurement Association) secretary of the Donetsk provincial party committee responsible for supply. Within a month, Akulov was elected a member of the Politburo and Organizational Bureau of the CC CP(B)U, as well as secretary of the CC CP(B)U responsible for the Donbas.⁴³

With these appointments, Stalin began the realization of his plans to reinforce the leadership of Ukraine with people loyal to his course of action. On 1 October, the Politburo of

⁴² RGASPI, f. 81, op. 3, spr. 99, ark. 145–51, 170–71.

⁴³ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 900, ark. 34; A. S. Blinov, *Ivan Akulov* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1967), pp. 70–71; R. W. Davies, *Crisis and Progress in the Soviet Economy, 1931–1933* (London: Palgrave, 1996), p. 381.

the CC AUCP(B) resolved to appoint as second secretary of the CC CP(B)U the firm and energetic first secretary of the Central Volga territorial committee of the AUCP(B), Mendel Khataevich.⁴⁴ On 9 and 15 October, three first secretaries of provincial party committees were confirmed: Vasilii Stroganov in Dnipropetrovsk, Vladimir Cherniavsky in Vinnytsia, and Pavel Markitan in Chernihiv. To strengthen control over the apparatus of the GPU Ukrainian SSR, on 25 November 1932 the CC AUCP(B) Politburo appointed Vsevolod Balytsky (deputy head of the OGPU USSR) as plenipotentiary of the OGPU USSR in Ukraine, giving him direct authority over the entire GPU Ukraine apparatus for a six-month period. Balytsky was obligated to report every twenty days on the work of the GPU Ukraine organs.⁴⁵

During the first weeks of October, grain-procurement rates in Ukraine dropped sharply, and members of the CC CP(B)U Politburo traveled to the provinces, while Khataevich coordinated grain procurements in Kharkiv. As a result, a precedent was set: the secretary of the CC CP(B)U appointed by the Kremlin began directing the work of the first secretary of the CC CP(B)U. By 25 October, the general plan in Ukraine was 39 percent fulfilled, while the monthly objective was 22 percent fulfilled.⁴⁶ In the North Caucasus, by 20 October only 18 percent of the monthly target had been fulfilled.⁴⁷ Alarmed, on 22 October the CC AUCP(B) Politburo decided to dispatch a group of all-Union leaders headed by Molotov to Ukraine and another, headed by Kaganovich, to the North Caucasus.⁴⁸ Thus, the leader of the government chain of command, Molotov, and of the party chain of command, Kaganovich (Stalin was officially on leave), were to hasten the establishment of state grain reserves by ensuring their procurement in two regions of the USSR. The actions of those groups, which referred to themselves as commissions, demonstrated that the leadership of the AUCP(B) with Stalin at the helm had gone over to

⁴⁴ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 902, ark. 9.

⁴⁵ *Lubianka. Stalin i VChK-GPU-OGPU-NKVD. Arkhiv Stalina. Dokumenty vysshykh organov partiinoi i gosudarstvennoi vlasti. Ianvar' 1922–dekabr' 1936 g.*, comp. V. N. Khaustov et al. (Moscow: MFD, 2003), p. 340.

⁴⁶ TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 237, ark. 81, 84–85, 92, 120; TsDAVOVU, f. 318, op. 1, spr. 9, ark. 67.

⁴⁷ Ivnitiskii, “Golod 1932–1933: kto vinovat?,” p. 340.

⁴⁸ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 904, ark. 11.

actions of mass repression against the population; hence their activity can in no way be classified as grain procurement per se.

On 29 October, Molotov's commission arrived in Kharkiv.⁴⁹ From that point on, decisions of the republican leadership were made with the direct participation of or according to directives from members of the commission. In this context, we can draw the conclusion that the Kremlin assumed direct management of the republic, circumventing the subcenter of power. On the same day, a meeting of the CC CP(B)U Politburo was held with the participation of the first secretaries of the Ukrainian provincial party committees. All provincial officials expressed support for reducing the grain-procurement plans. Molotov agreed to cut back the Ukrainian plan by 60–70 million poods (960,000–1,120 thousand tonnes) but categorically insisted on raising the remaining 165–175 million poods (2,706–2,870 thousand tonnes). In addition, he subjected the Ukrainian leadership to harsh criticism, accusing its members of inability to fulfill the grain-procurement plan.⁵⁰

On 30 October, the CC AUCP(B) Politburo accepted Molotov's proposal and cut back the Ukrainian grain-procurement plan by 70 million poods (1,120 thousand tonnes).⁵¹ The Ukrainian leaders returned to the provinces, attempting to procure the requisite grain. Molotov himself, in a telegram to Stalin, requested the dispatch from Moscow to Ukraine of 50–70 experienced communists to work on procurement for a month. In addition, the head of the Soviet government wrote that, at his directive, the sale of certain manufactured goods to collective and individual farms was being halted.⁵²

On 1 November Molotov traveled to Odesa province, and then to Dnipropetrovsk province, to better understand the local situation. Judging from the telegrams accompanying the work of his commission, early November saw the introduction of a widespread ban on the sale of

⁴⁹ *Komandyry velykoho holodu*, p. 228.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 228–29.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁵² RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, spr. 141, ark. 7.

manufactured goods in Ukraine.⁵³ On 5 November, Molotov demanded that provincial and county leaders conduct an inventory of grain near the threshing machines with the assistance of special troikas and auditors who were to track the threshing.⁵⁴ A directive was also issued to investigate the distribution of additional grain advances on collective farms.⁵⁵

But it was repressive measures that became the principal method of grain procurement. In the directive of 5 November issued to secretaries of provincial party committees, Molotov and Khataevich demanded “merciless punishment of criminal elements in collective farm management on the basis of the well-known decree on protecting communal property.”⁵⁶ Meanwhile, the CC CP(B)U required judicial bodies to give priority to grain-procurement cases “generally with hearings by circuit courts on the spot and the application of harsh repressive measures.”⁵⁷ In every province, no fewer than 5–10 mobile judicial groups were created for that purpose. On 6 November, Molotov departed for Moscow.⁵⁸ On 8 November, Kosior warned all provincial and county party leaders on behalf of the CC CP(B)U that if they did not ensure a rapid improvement of grain deliveries, resolute action would be taken with regard to the counties. This was a direct threat to party officials.⁵⁹ On 9 November, a directive arrived from the CC AUCP(B) about the confiscation of all goods from counties that were not fulfilling the plan.⁶⁰ On 11 November, the CC CP(B)U Politburo decided to end the sale of manufactured goods to individual farmers who refused to turn over their grain to the state.⁶¹ The plan was to post lists with the names of those individuals in stores and markets. They were charged all applicable fines and payments. Those who were “sabotaging the grain procurements” and those found with grain buried in pits were to be resettled outside the county, and the most active deported from the province. It was proposed that kulaks who refused to give up their grain be

⁵³ *Komandyry velykoho holodu*, p. 231.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 233–34.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 235–37.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

⁵⁷ RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, spr. 141, ark. 12–16, 18; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 237, ark. 177.

⁵⁸ Telegram dispatched from the city of Serpukhov, Moscow province.

⁵⁹ TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 16, spr. 9, ark. 47.

⁶⁰ TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 237, ark. 193.

⁶¹ TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 237, ark. 187.

arrested and their property sold. They, too, were to be resettled outside the province. An additional 80 cadets from the Poltava military academy and 120 individuals from Kharkiv were dispatched to the grain stockpiles.⁶²

On 18 November Molotov returned to Kharkiv and took part in a meeting of the CC CP(B)U Politburo.⁶³ Evidently, Stalin was very annoyed with the progress of grain procurements, so Molotov immediately took a very hard line. At the Politburo session that he attended, a resolution was adopted “On measures to strengthen grain procurements.” In accordance with it, six hundred communist functionaries from industrial centers were dispatched in brigades of three or four to villages where “kulak sabotage and lack of organization in party activity had become particularly acute.” These brigades were in fact allowed to conduct searches of peasant homesteads, confiscating not only grain but all foodstuffs. All in-kind reserves on collective farms were transferred to the grain-procurement reserve. It was forbidden to provide any advances in kind to collective farms that had not fulfilled the grain-procurement plan. Grain “stolen from collective and state farms” was systematically confiscated, and fines in kind were imposed in a quantity equal to a fifteen-month quota of meat procurements. It was also decided, “on the basis of the decree of 7 August, to charge storekeepers, bookkeepers, accountants, superintendents, and weighers who conceal grain from inventory and compile false inventory data with the goal of abetting theft and embezzlement as thieves of state and communal property....” To overcome opposition to grain procurements, which was unambiguously attributed to “kulaks,” the CC CP(B)U resolved to blacklist collective farms that did not fulfill their plans. Run-of-the-mill communists were subjected to a purge in the party organizations of Snihurivka and Frunzivka counties of Odesa province, as well as Solonianska, Vasylkivka, and Velyka Lepetykha counties of Dnipropetrovsk province. Moreover, those purged were to be

⁶² TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 237, ark. 178, 187–88, 193–94; op. 16, spr. 9, ark. 46.

⁶³ See *Komandyry velykoho holodu*, p. 238.

resettled as “politically dangerous.” Such measures against communists expelled from the party had never been so broadly applied.⁶⁴

It is very revealing that the fifth point in the minutes of the CC CP(B)U Politburo meeting of 18 November was a decision “On transporting grain in the month of November.” Accordingly, Ukraine, in addition to its export obligations, had until 8 December to deliver 99,000 tonnes of grain and 23,000 tonnes of wheat flour to Moscow, Ivanovo, the Transcaucasus, Gorky, Leningrad, Belarus, and the Crimea. Furthermore, it was planned to move out all stockpiles of commercial and *nepfond* wheat stored in railway depots.⁶⁵ That would leave Ukraine with an insufficient reserve of grain. At the time, 7,159,500 people in Ukraine were dependent on centralized supply.⁶⁶ The grain removed from the republic could have provided them with a regular daily grain ration (1 kg) for two weeks, or a short ration for a longer period. It is quite understandable that historians can come up with different interpretations of such actions by the Kremlin authorities and their subordinates in the republics. But why was it found necessary to remove these grain reserves from the territory of the Ukrainian SSR? I consider it premature to draw a definitive conclusion, since it remains unknown even now whether similar quantities of grain were being removed from other regions of the USSR.

The actions of Molotov and Stalin provoked dissatisfaction among Ukrainian party functionaries. This was sensed by Molotov, who addressed a meeting of Kharkiv party activists on 18 November with an explanation of the rationale for those measures. Two days later, in a telegram to Stalin, Molotov explained that the meeting was necessary “because there are opportunistic vacillations among a considerable segment of the Ukrainian functionaries...”⁶⁷ Molotov’s correspondence with local officials on the issue of grain procurements shows that the head of the Soviet government attempted to provide theoretical justifications for the extreme

⁶⁴ See *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, pp. 250–61; TsDAVOVU, f. 813, op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 32.

⁶⁵ TsDAVOVU, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 237, ark. 197.

⁶⁶ TsDAVOVU, f. 318, op. 1, spr. 647, ark. 8–10, 13. This does not include all individuals on the central distribution list. See n. 9 above. The number of those individuals was constantly increasing.

⁶⁷ RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, spr. 141, ark. 42.

ruthlessness of his actions. In his interpretation, the repressive line taken by the Soviet leadership was a reciprocal reaction to the “new tactics of the class enemies” in the village. Molotov asserted that kulak agents had infiltrated the collective farms through many “cracks and holes,” deftly masquerading as “friends” of the collective farmers. He proposed to aim the “cutting edge of political action” against thieves of the collective farmers’ grain.⁶⁸

In practice, such “action” took the form of a GPU Ukrainian SSR operation that commenced on 20 November and continued until February 1933. Between November 1932 and January 1933, more than 390 “anti-Soviet, counterrevolutionary insurgent, and chauvinist” organizations and groups were liquidated, 37,797 individuals arrested, and more than 12,000 cases reviewed, as a result of which 719 individuals were sentenced to execution by firing squad, 8,003 sent to concentration camps, and 2,533 deported.⁶⁹ Published data reveals that in 1932, 2,728 people were executed in the USSR.⁷⁰ According to statistics compiled by Roman Podkur, between August and December 1932 929 individuals were sentenced to execution in the Ukrainian SSR.⁷¹ Thus, those sentenced to execution in Soviet Ukraine in the course of five months accounted for almost 30 percent of the total number of those executed in the USSR in 1932.

A similar approach to grain procurements was also characteristic of Kaganovich, who headed the commission dispatched to the North Caucasus. A year later, Boris Sheboldaev recounted that Stalin had refused seed assistance to Kuban farmers for the fall sowing and had blamed local officials for their inability to carry out the political line effectively. At a joint plenum of the CC and CCC AUCP(B) in January 1933, Kaganovich said that Stalin had specifically directed the attention of the North Caucasus leadership to the imperative of fighting

⁶⁸ RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, spr. 141, ark. 29–30.

⁶⁹ *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni: prychny ta naslidky*, ed. V. M. Lytvyn et al. (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2003), p. 94.

⁷⁰ *Reabilitatsiia: Kak èto bylo. Mart 1953 – mart 1956 gg. Dokumenty Prezidiuma TsK KPSS i drugie materialy*, 3 vols., comp. A. N. Artizov et al. (Moscow: MFD, 2000), 1: 76–77.

⁷¹ Roman Podkur, review of “*Rozsekrechena pam’iat’: Holodomor 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni v dokumentakh GPU–NKVD* [Declassified Memory: The Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine in GPU–NKVD Documents], comp. V. Borysenko, S. Kokin, O. Stasiuk, and Yu. Shapoval (Kyiv: Stylos, 2007), 604 pp.,” *Holodomor Studies* 2, no. 1 (Winter–Spring 2010): 150.

the class enemy that was sabotaging the grain procurements and sowing. The remarks delivered at the plenum by Sheboldaev and Kaganovich were carefully analyzed by the Japanese scholar Nobuo Shimotomai, who published an article in 1983 on the activities of Kaganovich's commission in the North Caucasus.⁷² Shimotomai based his work on published sources accessible at the time. Documents that have become available in recent years confirm his conclusions about Kaganovich's extremely ruthless repressive actions in the region.⁷³

Returning to events in Ukraine, we note that after the departure of Molotov's commission, the rate of grain procurements fell dramatically. At the beginning of December 1932, Kosior informed Stalin that in November and five days of December, in conjunction with grain procurements, the GPU Ukrainian SSR had arrested 1,230 people, including 340 heads of collective farms, 750 members of administrations, 140 accountants, 140 brigadiers, 265 superintendents and weighers, and 195 other collective farm workers. Three hundred twenty-seven communists had been tried for "sabotage" of grain procurements. By resolution of the CC CP(B)U and the CPC Ukrainian SSR, six villages had been blacklisted, and resolutions of provincial executive committees had added as many as four hundred collective farms to the list.⁷⁴ The growing tempest of repressive measures in the republic was accompanied by the general removal of collective farm stockpiles, especially seedstocks. The threat was that no seed would be left for the spring planting of 1933. As a result, the CC CP(B)U resolved on 29 November that the confiscation of all collective farm stockpiles would not be permitted.⁷⁵ The decision provoked serious dissatisfaction in the Kremlin.

At the same time, the so-called "Orikhiv case" came to the surface. Stalin had received information from the OGPU that leaders of Orikhiv county in Dnipropetrovsk province had allowed the collective farms to fill up the sowing and reserve stockpiles prior to fulfilling grain

⁷² Nobuo Shimotomai, "A Note on the Kuban Affair (1932–1933): The Crisis of Kolkhoz Agriculture in the North Caucasus," *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 1 (1983): 46.

⁷³ For a scholarly analysis of documents on the activities of the commission headed by Kaganovich in the North Caucasus, see *Komandyry velykoho holodu*.

⁷⁴ *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: ochyma istoriykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, p. 283.

⁷⁵ TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 238, ark. 32.

procurements. Stalin was extremely angry, and on 7 December he sent all party organs a circular referring to the Orikhiv leaders as frauds and thieves who were successfully carrying out kulak policies. The document included a directive to arrest them and sentence them to imprisonment of five to ten years.⁷⁶

On 10 December, at a meeting of the CC AUCP(B) Politburo, speeches on grain procurement were delivered by representatives of the CC CP(B)U, the North Caucasus territorial committee, and the Western provincial committee of the party. Stanislav Kosior, Boris Sheboldaev, Mikhail Chernov, and Valerian Kuibyshev addressed the meeting.⁷⁷ Stalin subjected the Ukrainian leaders to harsh criticism, accusing them not only of being incapable or unwilling to fulfill the grain-procurement plans but also of taking an erroneous political line, “spinelessness,” and lack of zeal in the struggle against “saboteurs.” Stalin particularly attacked Mykola Skrypnyk for his “non-Bolshevik” Ukrainization policy and association with “nationalist elements.” These accusations against Skrypnyk were no accident.⁷⁸

A ten-man commission of the CC AUCP(B) Politburo, notably including the Ukrainian leaders Stanislav Kosior and Vasilii Stroganov, was struck to develop a draft resolution on grain procurements. On 14 December, a resolution “On grain procurements in Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and the Western province” was adopted by polling the Politburo.⁷⁹ The CC AUCP(B) and CPC USSR indicated that the fiercest enemies of the party, the working class, and the collective farmers were “saboteurs of grain procurements with party memberships in their pockets.” They would face judicial repression: five- to ten-year sentences in concentration camps or execution by firing squad. Sixteen arrested county functionaries from Ukraine, including five from Orikhiv county, were tried and sentenced to five to ten years’ imprisonment in

⁷⁶ For documents of Soviet state security agencies concerning the Orikhiv affair, see *Orikhivs'ka sprava. 1932. Dokumenty i materialy*, comp. V. Tkachenko (Dnipropetrovsk: IMA-press, 2010), p. 312; *Partiino-radians'ke kerivnytstvo USRR pid chas Holodomoru 1932–1933 rr.*, pp. 143-209.

⁷⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 910, ark. 3.

⁷⁸ In February and June 1933, Secretary of the CC CP(B)U Panas Liubchenko noted this in letters denouncing Mykola Skrypnyk that he sent to Stalin, Kaganovich, and Molotov. See RGASPI, f. 81, op. 3, spr. 130, ark. 76–84, 94–130.

⁷⁹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 910, ark. 3; spr. 911, ark. 11.

concentration camps. All communists expelled from the party for “sabotaging” grain procurements and sowing were deported to northern provinces along with the kulaks.⁸⁰

These extremely harsh measures were accompanied by accusations of errors in nationality policy. It was affirmed that “mechanical” Ukrainization, which failed to take account of specific regional conditions, eased the task of bourgeois nationalist elements and Petliurites who were establishing counterrevolutionary centers and organizations. The “non-Bolshevik Ukrainization” of nearly half the counties of the North Caucasus had provided a legal basis for resistance by kulaks, officers, Cossack reemigrants, and members of the Kuban Council to the measures of the Soviet authorities.⁸¹

Thus, the senior party and government leadership of the USSR preferred to assess social resistance to grain procurements as the activity of “counterrevolutionaries” and the anti-Soviet organizations created by them. This is a typical example of the deceptive political mendacity characteristic of dictatorial regimes. In Ukraine, it was proposed to expel Petliurite and bourgeois nationalist elements from party and government organizations, as well as to ensure systematic party supervision and control over Ukrainization. In the North Caucasus, all administrative activity, the publication of newspapers and magazines, and school instruction was converted to the Russian language “as being more understandable to the Kuban people.”

On 15 December, a new resolution of the CC AUCP(B) and CPC USSR condemned public statements by “individual Ukrainian comrades” (referring specifically to articles by Mykola Skrypnyk) on the obligatory Ukrainization of a number of counties in the Far Eastern territory, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and the Central Chernozem province. The resolution emphasized that “Such statements can only play into the hands of bourgeois nationalist elements, which, driven out of Ukraine as harmful elements, are making their way into newly Ukrainized

⁸⁰ *Holodomor 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni. Dokumenty i materialy*, pp. 475-77.

⁸¹ The Kuban Council was a political organization of the Kuban Cossack army, established in April 1917, that fought against Soviet rule. On 28 January 1918 it proclaimed an independent Kuban People’s Republic on the lands of the former Kuban province. The council ceased to exist in 1920.

counties and working to sow subversion there.” Party and government bodies in those regions of the USSR were obliged to put an immediate end to further Ukrainization.⁸²

In my opinion, the content of the aforementioned resolutions of the CC AUCP(B) Politburo testifies to the interweaving of the grain-procurement campaign with nationality policy and repressive measures inherent in the political line of the all-Union leadership Ukraine, a point disputed by certain Russian historians.⁸³ Understandably, organized forms of resistance to official policy were not widespread in late 1932. Published documents from the Branch State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (HDA SBU)⁸⁴ attest that there were no actual organizations of “kulaks,” former officers, Cossacks, or “Petliurites.” This does not mean that society did not offer desperate resistance (with the spread of famine, active forms of resistance changed to passive ones) to the criminal policies of the Stalin regime. We note, however, that with their extremely harsh assessments Stalin and his entourage laid the foundation for repressive measures against all who were disgruntled and preemptive grounds for eliminating any hint of opposition. Furthermore, with such resolutions they created their own reality in which they preferred to live, without regard for the value of the lives of millions.

The actions of the Kremlin in the sphere of nationality policy in Ukraine and the curtailment of Ukrainization in particular regions of the USSR require an explanation. For the Soviet leaders, as is well known, the nationality question was subordinate to the class approach. They remembered very well the complex political and armed struggle that they had had to wage against the Ukrainian national movement in 1917–20. The Ukrainization policy had been launched in 1923 to broaden the social base of the communist regime, providing it with

⁸² RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 911, ark. 42–43; *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, p. 283.

⁸³ On 12 December 2009, at a colloquium of Russian and Ukrainian historians on issues of the famine of 1932–33 in the Moscow Library of Ukrainian Literature (now reduced to the status of a county library from which a number of publications have been removed), Viktor Kondrashin, Nikolai Ivnitsky and other scholars came out against the conclusions of Stanislav Kulchytsky and the present author, who participated in the colloquium, with regard to connections between the nationality policy of the Kremlin in Ukraine and the grain-procurement campaign. See S. Kul'chytskyi, “Taimnytsi radians'koho holodu pochatku 30-kh rr.: Zvit iz moskovs'koho kolokviumu,” *Den'*, 12 and 14 January 2010.

⁸⁴ See *Rozsekrechena pam'iat': Holodomor 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni v dokumentakh HPU–NKVD*.

psychological legitimacy and appeal in social consciousness both within the republic and beyond its borders. Along with this, the Kremlin leaders always underscored the obligatory Soviet character (loyalty to the Communist Party and its leader) of all Ukrainian national aspirations. At the same time, the state security organs monitored manifestations of “Ukrainian separatism” and reported them to the CC CP(B)U and CC AUCP(B). Cheka activities were rooted in the demagogic assertion of the Communist Party leadership that “Ukrainian nationalists” wanted to “sell Ukraine to the Poles.” In the latter half of the 1920s and in the 1930s, that assertion was used to discredit the Ukrainian national movement.⁸⁵

Given the socioeconomic and political crisis brewing in Ukraine in late 1932, Stalin preferred to regard social and Communist Party opposition to grain procurements as an issue of “internal Ukrainian counterrevolution” associated with the “Polish subversion” of Józef Piłsudski. On the one hand, this offered a general opportunity to suppress opposition and fulfill grain-procurement plans, implementing large-scale state repressive measures against “class enemies,” a category that included all those who were disgruntled and resisted. On the other hand, political accusations against the Ukrainian leadership allowed for the erosion of its relative autonomy and independence. The national communists responsible for Ukrainization, led by Mykola Skrypnyk, were exposed as guilty abettors of the bourgeois-nationalist elements. Thus the implementation of nationality policy in Ukraine came increasingly under the direct control of the Kremlin. Leaders of the CP(B)U were losing even this aspect of their relative political independence.

The consequences of this centralization of authority soon made themselves apparent. On 16 December, Khataevich asked Stalin to allow the exchange of regular seeds for quality seeds to ensure the spring sowing of 1933. The response from Stalin and Molotov was insistent and threatening: “The CC and CPC point out to you that your proposal to exchange seeds at this time, when grain deliveries are dropping catastrophically in Ukraine, reflects a corrupt liberal

⁸⁵ See RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, spr. 8, ark. 51, 59, 129; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 337, ark. 79; V. Prystaiko and Iu. Shapoval, *Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi: sprava “UNTs” i ostanni roky (1931–1934)* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 1999), pp. 79–80.

attitude to the tasks of the party and government of which it is high time that you rid yourself if you do not wish to risk unpleasantries.”⁸⁶ Stalin’s annoyance with the leadership of the Ukrainian SSR was well illustrated by the resolution of the CC AUCP(B) and the CPC USSR “On grain procurements in Ukraine” adopted on 19 December 1932. It stated that without fundamental change in Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, and Odesa provinces, Ukraine would be unable to fulfill the twice-reduced plan.⁸⁷ Kaganovich and Postyshev⁸⁸ were instructed to go to Ukraine and “sit down in the pivotal provinces” as plenipotentiaries of the CC AUCP(B) and the CPC USSR. Together with Kosior, Chubar, and Khataevich, they were to take all necessary organizational and administrative measures to fulfill the grain-procurement plan.⁸⁹

On 20 December at ten o’clock in the evening, the Kremlin envoys arrived in Kharkiv. A meeting of the CC CP(B)U Politburo was convened immediately and continued until four o’clock in the morning. The brief notes on the presentations made by Kosior, Khataevich, and Roman Terekhov that appear in Kaganovich’s diary of the trip permit the conclusion that the relentless searches ordered by party and government leaders were terrorizing the population of Ukraine.⁹⁰

Repressive measures in the republic took on unprecedented scope. Balytsky reported that in the four months since the beginning of grain procurements (from 1 July to 15 November), 11,000 people had been arrested in grain-procurement cases, and a further 16,000 between 15 November and 15 December. The so-called “troika” alone (a special commission of the CC CP(B)U created on 21 November) had sentenced 108 people to execution, and another hundred cases were under review. As a result of searches over twenty days in December, GPU personnel responsible for grain procurements and local activists had uncovered 7,000 pits and 100 “black” granaries in which they had found 700,000 poods (11,340 tonnes) of grain. At the same time,

⁸⁶ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 912, ark. 44. The text of Khataevich’s telegram has not been found, but the CC AUCP(B) Politburo made reference to it in formulating the question.

⁸⁷ *Holodomor 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni. Dokumenty i materialy*, p. 495.

⁸⁸ Pavel Postyshev was secretary of the CC AUCP(B).

⁸⁹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 912, ark. 54.

⁹⁰ *Komandiry velykoho holodu*, pp. 314–39.

continued Balytsky, the Chekists “had exposed large insurgent groups of Polish origin organized by the government of the UPR [Ukrainian People’s Republic]” and arrested many former members of the Ukrainian Communist Party, liquidated in 1925, as well as members of the CP(B)U, students and instructors of Kyivan institutions of higher learning, and employees of the Ukrainian “Tractor Center.” On the collective farms alone, 589 “groups sabotaging grain delivery and inciting dissent on the collective farms were exposed.”⁹¹

The highlight of the meeting turned out to be the address by Kaganovich, who explained the rationale for his trip by the cutbacks in grain-procurement plans and the need for a “fundamental change” in the attitude of the Ukrainian workers, who allegedly did not want to deliver grain. The GPU Ukrainian SSR was directed not only to expose “counterrevolutionary organizations” but also to wage the ongoing grain campaign. In practice, this meant that the Chekists went to heads of collective farms and threatened them with arrest if they did not deliver grain.⁹²

Having notified Stalin by telegram about the results of the Politburo meeting with regard to increasing grain procurements,⁹³ at five o’clock in the afternoon Kaganovich set off for Odesa province.⁹⁴ On 22 December, in a telegram to Stalin, he requested that the resolution of the CC CP(B)U Politburo of 18 November 1932 be revoked.⁹⁵ Kaganovich required this approval because the resolution had been drafted by Molotov. The policy of confiscating all stockpiles for the benefit of grain procurements left the collective farms without grain reserves. Considering that all food reserves were being taken from the peasants in the form of fines for the non-fulfillment of grain procurements—a result of the barbaric actions of plenipotentiaries and local activists who conducted mass searches—another famine in the Ukrainian village was becoming inevitable. Stalin and Kaganovich knew about the local situation and deliberately approved such actions by lower-ranking functionaries.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 316–17.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 316–19 (on Kaganovich, see pp. 318–19).

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 333–34.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 320.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 335.

On 24 December 1932 at 22:15, for example, a meeting of secretaries of a group of county party committees chaired by Kaganovich was convened in a government railway wagon in Voznesensk. Among those in attendance was the secretary of Arbuzyuka county, I. Kobzar, after whose address the secretary of the CC AUCP(B) stated: “This is reminiscent of the kulak policy with regard to the Red transports—put in a pood and send it off with a red flag.” Stalin’s emissary enjoined the county secretaries to conduct unrelenting searches and take away grain, called those in attendance “idealists with Socialist Revolutionary leanings,” and forced them to sign commitments to deliver assigned quotas of grain without delay.⁹⁶ After the meeting with Kaganovich, on 25 December 1932 Kobzar traveled to Arbuzyuka, accompanied by the new plenipotentiary of the CC CP(B)U, Anatolii Rechytsky.⁹⁷ According to Kobzar’s testimony, the latter “proceeded to lay out his method, saying that we were ‘fussing and bothering with the people.’”⁹⁸ From the end of December 1932 to February 1933, they organized the “extortion of grain” in Arbuzyuka county, cruel treatment and torture of peasants became widespread, and so on.⁹⁹ This occurred throughout the republic, as attested by a considerable number of documents published in Ukraine in recent years.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 326, 328.

⁹⁷ On the basis of biographical research, staff of the Branch State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine established that the actual name of this individual was Anatolii Rechytsky, although in documents of the 1920s and 1930s and personal signatures he figures as Anatolii Richytsky.

⁹⁸ *Partiino-radians'ke kerivnytstvo USRR pid chas Holodomoru 1932–1933 rr.*, p. 345. Kobzar gave this testimony at a show trial in Arbuzyuka on 4 March 1934. The review of the case by a circuit session of the Supreme Court of the Ukrainian SSR was chaired by the GPU Ukrainian SSR first deputy head, Zinovii Katsnelson, in person, an unusual practice for the time. The main defendant (six individuals were being prosecuted) was Anatolii Andriiovych Rechytsky, a former candidate for membership in the CC CP(B)U, a “man of letters” by profession (a biographer of Taras Shevchenko), a translator (the first to translate Marx’s *Capital* into Ukrainian), and a former member of the Ukrainian Communist Party (UKP). In November 1933, he had already been sentenced to imprisonment and ten years in concentration camps on the charge of participating in a mythical “fascist counterrevolutionary nationalist Ukrainian Military Organization.” Also on trial were local leaders from Arbuzyuka county who had carried out grain procurements under his leadership as a “plenipotentiary of the CC CP(B)U” from December 1932 to January 1933. All were charged with “counterrevolutionary provocations and excesses during the grain procurements of 1932–33 with the goal of deliberately stirring up dissatisfaction with Soviet authority among the peasants.” The head of this “campaign,” Rechytsky, was additionally charged with “inciting all this nastiness on the orders of the UVO with particular counterrevolutionary intent.” See *Partiino-radians'ke kerivnytstvo USRR pid chas Holodomoru 1932–1933 rr.*, pp. 22–23.

⁹⁹ Ibid., chap. 3, “Sprava Rechyts'koho,” pp. 289–404.

On 26 December, the CC AUCP(B) Politburo approved the proposals of Kaganovich and Balytsky to deport 500 peasant families from Odesa province.¹⁰⁰ On 27 December, Kaganovich returned to Odesa, where he convened another meeting of the provincial party committee. Resolutions were adopted to deport 500 families of “saboteurs” of grain procurements, as well as 500 heads of peasant families. Fifty communists expelled from the party were sent to a concentration camp. Five hundred peasant families were deprived of their homesteads, and their assets were sold off. Several show trials were planned, with the publication of sentences in the county and provincial press. The secretary of the Zhovtneve county committee was expelled from the party, while the remaining county party secretaries were warned that should they not obtain markedly better results in two or three days, a similar fate would await them. To expedite the delivery of grain from the more distant villages of the province, thirty-two remote grain depots were opened.¹⁰¹ On 29 December, in Kharkiv, Kaganovich took part in a meeting of the CC CP(B)U Politburo, firmly demanding that the Ukrainian leaders fulfill the grain-procurement plan by 15 January 1933. The meeting concluded with a decision to sell off the assets and confiscate the private plots and buildings of “the individual farmers who were the most spiteful saboteurs of grain deliveries” throughout Kharkiv province, numbering 1,000 homesteads, as well as 500 families in Dnipropetrovsk province; moreover, 700 peasant families were to be deported from Dnipropetrovsk province. On the evening of 29 December 1932, Kaganovich left Kharkiv for Moscow.¹⁰² At the same time, the CC CP(B)U Politburo proposed that the Kharkiv provincial party committee sell off the assets and confiscate the private plots and buildings of 1,000 homesteads, and that the Dnipropetrovsk provincial party committee do likewise with 500 homesteads.¹⁰³ Between 31 December 1932 and 1 January 1933, at the request of the CC

¹⁰⁰ *Holodomor 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni. Dokumenty i materialy*, p. 525.

¹⁰¹ *Komandyry velykoho holodu*, p. 332.

¹⁰² RGASPI, f. 81, op. 3, spr. 215, ark. 1–3, 5–8, 10–17, 23–33; spr. 232, ark. 42, 45–48, 53–53^v, 56, 62; f. 17, op. 162, spr. 14, ark. 43; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 238, ark. 179–81.

¹⁰³ *Holodomor 1932–33 rokiv v Ukraïni. Dokumenty i materialy*, p. 529.

CP(B)U Politburo, Stalin approved the deportation of 300 “kulak” families from Chernihiv province and 700 families from Dnipropetrovsk province.¹⁰⁴

On 1 January 1933, the CC AUCP(B) Politburo adopted a resolution “On grain procurements in Ukraine” that provided for the “harsh measures” against collective farms and peasants that did not voluntarily turn over “previously stolen and hidden bread” to the state.¹⁰⁵ In January 1933, repressive measures became progressively more widespread and brutal.

Near the end of January 1933 it became clear that Ukraine was again failing to fulfill its grain-procurement plan. On 24 January, the CC AUCP(B) Politburo resolved to appoint Pavel Postyshev, then a secretary of the CC AUCP(B), as second secretary of the CC CP(B)U and first secretary of the Kharkiv provincial party committee, and Mendel Khataevich as first secretary of the Dnipropetrovsk provincial party committee, while leaving him as one of the secretaries of the CC CP(B)U.¹⁰⁶ In this way, Stalin took the situation in Ukraine under his personal control. As further events demonstrated, Postyshev, who remained a secretary of the AUCP(B), would control all actions not only of the Ukrainian leadership but also of the first secretary of the CC CP(B)U, Stanislav Kosior, who was also a member of the CC AUCP(B) Politburo.

Stalin’s directive to convert Ukraine into a “true Soviet bastion” was being realized with the aid of economic, administrative, and repressive measures. On 6 February 1933, when the famine in Ukraine took on catastrophic proportions, the AUCP(B) Politburo resolved to stop grain procurements in the republic from the harvest of 1932.¹⁰⁷

During the spring sowing (March–June 1933), the AUCP(B) and CPC USSR provided Ukraine with 559,090 tonnes of grain: 371,640 tonnes of seed, 84,760 tonnes of food aid, and 102,690 tonnes of fodder.¹⁰⁸ For the most part, this grain had been taken from peasants in the previous months of grain procurement and kept in state storehouses and depots on Ukrainian territory. With respect to food aid, it was smaller in volume than the republic’s monthly

¹⁰⁴ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, spr. 14, ark. 44.

¹⁰⁵ *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, pp. 308–9.

¹⁰⁶ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 914, ark. 13.

¹⁰⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, spr. 915, ark. 16.

¹⁰⁸ TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 405, ark. 5–6, 123.

requirement of grain for individuals who relied on centralized supply. The Soviet leadership abruptly increased the delivery of farm equipment to Ukraine. In 1933, the number of tractors in the republic increased by 15,000, and combines by 2,500. At year's end, 48,500 tractors, 4,500 combines, and close to 9,000 trucks were working Ukrainian fields.¹⁰⁹

During the spring sowing and the autumn harvest, the Ukrainian leadership initiated a new wave of collectivization. People were no longer being forced to join the collective farms. However, given that collective farmers working the fields received at least a meager food ration from the state, while private farmers were left to fend for themselves, the rate of collectivization increased throughout 1933. At the beginning of 1934 in Ukraine, 85.5 percent of all arable land was collectivized, while 73 percent of village farmsteads belonged to 24,191 collective farms.¹¹⁰

Favorable climate conditions in 1933 enabled the reaping of one of the best harvests of the whole decade of the 1930s. According to assessments by republican agencies, the gross yield of grain crops in Ukraine was 22,264 thousand tonnes, an increase of 70 percent over 1932. The total volume of state grain procurements was calculated at 5,890.9 thousand tonnes, or 26 percent of the gross yield. They left 16,373 thousand tonnes of grain in the Ukrainian village,¹¹¹ as a result of which the widespread famine slowly came to an end (although documents in Ukrainian provincial archives reveal that people were still swelling and dying of hunger in 1934 and 1935).

Postyshev, as Stalin's deputy, made significant changes in the ranks of the republic's administrative structures. Quite a few officials who had been relieved of their positions, including many from Western Ukraine, were subject to repressive measures. At the plenum of the CC CP(B)U in June 1933, Postyshev accused those individuals of imposing the "nationalist culture, the chauvinist, bourgeois culture of the Dontsovs, Yefremovs, and Hrushevskys" while

¹⁰⁹ TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 420, ark. 5.

¹¹⁰ TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 436, ark. 110.

¹¹¹ TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 436, ark. 124.

hiding behind the “broad back” of Mykola Skrypnyk.¹¹² The political persecution of Skrypnyk drove him to suicide.¹¹³

To overcome the dissatisfaction and opposition of lower-ranking party and government personnel, a “purge” of the CP(B)U was declared. By 15 October 1933, 120,000 communists had undergone it, of whom some 27,500 (23 percent) were “purged” as “class enemy elements.” During ten months of 1933, the CC CP(B)U sent 233 new functionaries to the provincial committees. A total of 1,340 were dispatched to work in the county administrations, and 278 new county committee secretaries were appointed (70 percent of the total). Many more authoritative party functionaries came to be stationed directly on the collective farms. A total of 15,929 individuals were sent from provincial and county centers to collective farm centers; of these, 3,592 were given permanent employment as heads of collective farms, secretaries of party centers, and party organizers on collective farms.¹¹⁴

At the beginning of the year a new network was created in the republic, parallel to the county party committees, in the form of a controlling administrative structure—political departments of the MTS. Kaganovich and Postyshev personally appointed the heads of the political departments, most of whom were military political functionaries. Also introduced was the post of deputy head of the political department of the MTS, to be appointed from the ranks of the GPU. Their basic task became that of “purging class enemy elements.” The scope of repressive measures that they implemented in 1933 was tremendous.¹¹⁵

Thus, in 1933 the actions of the Soviet leadership were determined by several interrelated processes occurring in Ukrainian society. First, the republic was being consumed by a

¹¹² TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 413, ark. 43.

¹¹³ On 7 July 1933, the CC CP(B)U Politburo proposed to Skrypnyk “for the last time” that he “write a letter admitting his errors with full and resolute criticism for publication in the press, basing it on the thesis advanced by Comrade Postyshev.” After this, Skrypnyk left the room where the Politburo was meeting and shot himself. See TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 284, ark. 24, 34, 38.

¹¹⁴ TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 422, ark. 13; spr. 436, ark. 287.

¹¹⁵ Materials prepared by departments of the CC CP(B)U for the Twelfth Congress of the CP(B)U (18–23 January 1934) contain statistics on the number of general dismissals from work and instances of political persecution carried out by political workers and “Chekists” from the MTS. For this data, see *Komandyry velykoho holodu*, pp. 71–72.

widespread famine that resulted in the deaths of 3.5 to 4.5 million people.¹¹⁶ We add to this statistic the considerable number of deaths from famine of Ukrainians in the RSFSR, particularly in the Kuban region. Understandably, despite the problems of demographic statistics, methods must be sought to scientifically calculate Ukrainian population losses in regions of Russia.

Second, there was a strengthening of the political structure, the cornerstone of which became the collective farm system, which remained in existence until the 1990s.

Third, there was a true “cadre revolution.” Communists dispatched from various cities of the USSR and from the Red Army established direct control over the situation in the Ukrainian village.¹¹⁷

Fourth, “political verifications” and repressive “purges” encompassed all levels of the republic’s administrative structures, becoming particularly widespread on collective farms, state farms, and within the MTS. They were experienced by more than half a million people, with hundreds of thousands classified as “class enemy elements.” Generally speaking, 1933 was a decisive year in the “Sovietization” of Ukraine, the strengthening of the Stalinist political system in the republic, and the intensification of repressive measures by the totalitarian regime.

We note in passing that an analysis of documents of the supreme political and administrative bodies of the USSR and Ukrainian SSR reveals incontestably that Stalin and a group of his henchmen exploited the famine, provoked by the policies of collectivization and dekulakization, for political aims.

First, the complex of measures implemented in the Ukrainian village by the leadership of the Communist Party to confiscate grain and foodstuffs was intended not only to create large state reserves of grain but also to break the resistance of Ukrainian society to the political line. Objective study of the rationale behind these actions makes it clear that under conditions of death

¹¹⁶ A significant number of academic assessments of direct losses are now available. Almost all scholars from various countries of the world accept the horrific statistics.

¹¹⁷ Reference is to officials of political departments of MTS—former military, government, and party functionaries dispatched to Ukraine from various regions of the USSR. Additional research is needed to establish their numbers.

by starvation, Stalin and his comrades carried out mass repressive actions against Ukrainians in the Ukrainian SSR and the USSR.

Second, a characteristic feature of the political system was the increasing role of Stalin, who, beginning in late 1929 and early 1930, defined the priorities of the political line. The antidemocratic governing authority, which was then developing into a tyranny (if not a despotism), allowed the “chief” to lay the blame for errors in the execution of policy on his henchmen or lower-ranking administrative managers throughout the country, particularly the Soviet Ukrainian leadership. Even a schematic reconstruction of Stalin’s logic makes it clear that he attempted to “absolve” himself of all responsibility for the political line implemented in Ukraine, blaming Ukrainian officials for political blunders and inability to manage the republic. It followed logically that individual leaders of the Ukrainian SSR needed to be replaced and a clearer structure of control over the management of Ukraine established. This meant that under conditions of deep socioeconomic crisis engendered by the policies of collectivization and dekulakization, Stalin provoked a crisis in relations between the center of power in the Kremlin and the subcenter of power in Kharkiv in order to effect changes in the Soviet administrative system.

The essence of any political crisis lies in the conflict of motives and interests of people, as well as the participating structures. We can assume that Stalin intentionally concentrated the levers of management of the Ukrainian SSR in his own hands, overpowering the subcenter of authority with the goal of maintaining and strengthening personal control.

In the context of Stalin’s logic, let us highlight several characteristics of his political actions. In Ukraine, repressive measures against the population were implemented personally by the comrades of Stalin closest to him: grain-procurement commissions worked under the leadership of Molotov, Kaganovich, and Postyshev. This does not mean that the administrative structures of the Ukrainian SSR, beginning with the republican level and ending with the rural party centers and village councils, did not participate in the repressions. For our purpose,

however, the direct participation of the supreme political leaders of the USSR in those actions is particularly significant: they not only issued commands but took part personally, in one form or another, in the annihilation of people.

In addition, the appointment of Postyshev as second secretary of the CC CP(B)U and his subsequent actions pertaining to control over the actions of the Soviet Ukrainian leaders, particularly Kosior, who was a member of the CC AUCP(B) Politburo, set an unprecedented example in the Soviet administrative system of the day. The second secretary of the republic's Communist Party was personally responsible to Stalin for the situation in the republic. This is convincing testimony that Stalin assumed personal control over the administration of Ukraine. Further evidence of this is to be found in the accusations of Stalin and the CC AUCP(B) Politburo against Mykola Skrypnyk for pursuing an erroneous nationality policy. After Kaganovich's departure from Ukraine in 1928, it was precisely Skrypnyk who was given authority to interpret and implement nationality policy in Ukraine. From late 1932 on, however, Stalin took personal control of that policy. It was not for nothing that Kosior and Postyshev sent all resolutions of CC CP(B)U plenums concerning nationality policy to Stalin and Kaganovich for editing.¹¹⁸

The above-mentioned features of the politics of managing the CP(B)U at the institutional level reflected the process whereby the governing authority of the subcenter of power of the Communist Party in the Ukrainian SSR was destroyed, transforming the Ukrainian SSR into a Union republic whose leadership had extremely limited governing functions. Power became concentrated to an even greater degree in the CC AUCP(B) Politburo and, in the inner workings of that governing center, in the hands of Stalin, who turned into a dictator.

Facts known today demonstrate that the actions of Stalin and his cohort in Ukraine from late 1932 to early 1933 were unusually brutal and extremely repressive. It may well be that the Kremlin used Ukraine as an example to demonstrate to the party and government administrative

¹¹⁸ See RGASPI, f. 81, op. 3, spr. 130, ark. 85–93; spr. 131, ark. 10–11.

structure of the entire USSR and society at large what awaited them in case of insubordination and opposition to the political line.

Clearly, further research into the famine of 1932–33 in various regions of the Russian Federation will make it possible to gain a clearer understanding of specific features of the policies of the all-Union leaders in Ukraine and, generally, in the vast territories of the USSR. For the present, we note that the famine in Ukraine and the Kuban region, with its millions of victims, was accompanied in late 1932 and early 1933 by the arrests of tens of thousands of people, deportations of thousands to concentration camps, executions by firing squad of more than 700 individuals, political purges of administrative structures, and the persecution of the Ukrainian intelligentsia,¹¹⁹ the Ukrainian church,¹²⁰ and so on. In general, in 1932 the organs of the GPU Ukrainian SSR arrested 74,849 people in Ukraine and sentenced nearly 1,000 to execution (statistics differ). In 1933, 124,463 people were arrested, of whom 1,462 were sentenced to execution by firing squad by the state security agencies and courts of the People's Commissariat of Justice.¹²¹ The explanation of such actions solely by the dimensions of Ukraine within the USSR and the particular brutality of the leaders of the Ukrainian SSR and the GPU of the republic, as individual Russian historians have done, strikes one as unconvincing.¹²² Hundreds of thousands imprisoned and thousands executed by firing squad while millions were dying in the Holodomor—such a policy had a genocidal character and was a crime against humanity.

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¹¹⁹ V. I. Prystaiko and Iu. I. Shapoval, *Sprava "Spilky vyzvolennia Ukraïny": nevidomi dokumenty i fakty* (Kyiv: Intel, 1995); idem, *Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi i HPU-NKVD. Trachhne desiatylittia: 1924–1934* (Kyiv: Ukraïna, 1996).

¹²⁰ See "Politychni represii proty sviashchenykyv Ukraïns'koï Avtokefal'noï pravoslavnoï tserkvy (1919-1938). Za dokumentamy Haluzevoho derzhavnogo arkhivu Sluzhby bezpeky Ukraïny," *Z arkhivu VUChK-HPU-NKVD-KHB*, 2005, nos. 1–2 (24/25), no. 1: 1–229; no. 2: 230–344.

¹²¹ V. M. Nikol's'kyi, *Represyyna diial'nist' orhaniv derzhavnoï bezpeky SRSR v Ukraïni (kinets' 1920-kh – 1950-ti rr.). Istoryko-statystychno doslidzhennia: Monohrafiia* (Donetsk, 2003), pp. 119, 389.

¹²² Such statements were heard in the course of discussions at the international academic conference on "The History of Stalinism: Conclusions and Research Problems" held in Moscow on 5–7 December 2008. Unfortunately, conference discussions were not reflected in the published materials. See *Istoriia stalinizma: itogi i problemy izucheniia. Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii. Moskva, 5–7 dekabria 2008 g.* (Moscow: ROSSPĖN, Fond "Prezidentskii tsentr B. N. El'tsina," 2011).

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