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**The Price of Stalin's "Revolution from Above":
Anticipation of War among the Ukrainian Peasantry**

On the whole, the Soviet industrialization program, as defined by the ideological postulate on the inevitability of armed conflict between capitalism and socialism and implemented at the cost of the merciless plundering of the countryside, produced the results anticipated by the Stalinist leadership: the Soviet Union made a great industrial leap forward, marked first and foremost by the successful buildup of its military-industrial complex and the modernization of its armed forces.¹ However, the Bolshevik state's rapid development of its "steel muscle" led directly to the deaths of millions of people—the Soviet state's most valuable human resources—and the manifestation of an unprecedented level of disloyalty to the Bolshevik government on the part of a significant proportion of the Soviet population, particularly in Ukraine, not seen since the civil wars fought between 1917 and the early 1920s. The main purpose of this article is to establish a close correlation between the Stalinist "revolution from above," the Holodomor tragedy, and the growth of anti-Soviet moods in Ukrainian society in the context of its attitude to a potential war. The questions determining the intention of this article may be formulated more concretely as follows: How did the population of the Ukrainian SSR imagine a possible war? What was the degree of psychological preparedness for war? And, finally, the main question: To what extent did political attitudes in Ukrainian society prevalent during the unfolding of the Stalinist "revolution from above" correspond to the strategic requirement of maintaining the masses' loyalty to the Soviet government on an adequate level as a prerequisite for the battle-readiness of the armed forces and the solidity of the home front?

Soviet foreign-policy strategy during the first decade after the end of the First World War resembled the two-faced Roman god Janus. On the one hand, the Bolshevik state not only officially declared its sympathy for the idea of world revolution (the policy of "uniting the workers of all countries in a World Socialist Soviet Republic" was enshrined in the Constitution of the USSR of 1924 and reflected in political symbols, particularly the state emblem, the upper field of which was emblazoned with a five-pointed red star suspended over the globe, and the lower part with the militant Marxist slogan "Workers of the world, unite!") but also introduced concrete measures to "advance" the world revolutionary process. These measures ranged from coordinating the subversive activities of the "international revolutionary headquarters," the Comintern, to actively supporting the former colonial countries of the East, on which, after the failures in Europe, special hopes were placed with regard to the preparation of a world revolutionary explosion. On the other hand, the Soviet Union's unsuccessful attempts to launch a "frontal attack" on the world capitalist fortress—the defeat of the Red Army in Poland in 1920, the unfulfilled hopes for the outbreak of revolution in Germany in 1923, as well as the ruinous consequences of lengthy wars and the economic methods of war communism, entailing the complete decline of Soviet industry and agriculture and the USSR's palpable backwardness in economic development and military technology as compared to the world's capitalist states—and, finally, the Soviet authorities' obvious weakness in the former national borderlands prompted the Bolshevik leadership to explore the prospects of another "peaceful breathing

¹ For a detailed analysis of the influence of military interests on the defensive orientation of Soviet industry, see L. Samuel'son, *Krasnyi koloss: Stanovlenie voenno-promyshlennogo kompleksa SSSR, 1921–1941* (Moscow, 2001).

space” in order to gather its strength for future armed conflicts. This was the gist of the idea that Stalin expressed publicly in late December 1924: the possibility of the victory of socialism in one country² and the gradual modification of official Soviet propaganda from a revolutionary offensive orientation to a defensive one. Clearly, this did not go unremarked by the governments of the capitalist countries, quite a few of which had begun preparing to grant diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union, content to turn a blind eye both to the reign of political terror in that country and to the desperate attempts of governments-in-exile, including that of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (UNR), to hinder the international legitimization of Bolshevism.

While declaring its sympathy for the cause of peace, the Soviet Union (like most countries at the time) was preparing for war, feverishly seeking opportunities to modernize its economy rapidly, above all by developing a comprehensive military-industrial complex. At first, particular hopes in this regard were invested in Weimar Germany, with which the USSR secretly cooperated in the military sphere throughout the 1920s, in violation of the Treaty of Versailles. But the Germans did not justify the Bolsheviks’ expectations as generous investors in the Soviet economy, limiting themselves to using the proletarian state as a base for testing new types of weapons and training military specialists.³ Fully realizing that in conditions of capitalist encirclement it was pointless to seek other potential investors in Soviet military industry, the Bolshevik leadership decided to create, within a short period of time, an effective system of military-industrial mobilization, mainly on the basis of domestic resources, involving above all the “petty-bourgeois stratum” of society—the peasants, who were producing practically the only “Soviet product” convertible on the world market at the time—grain. The direct dependence of the USSR’s defense capacity on accelerated industrialization was also insistently noted by Soviet military strategists. For example, in his “Speech on Defense” in early 1927, Mikhail Tukhachevsky, commander in chief of the Red Army, declared forthrightly: “At the present time, neither the USSR nor the Red Army is ready for war... Our capacity to wage a protracted war will begin to increase only a number of years after the industrialization of the country attains new and greater achievements.”⁴

Unyielding pressure on the countryside, which began escalating in early 1928, was preceded by large-scale psychological preparation: throughout 1927, Soviet propaganda aggressively exaggerated the notion of an impending threat of war against the USSR by a coalition of capitalist states. Indeed, the year 1927 was marked by certain international complications pertaining to the Soviet Union. In April of that year, the Bolshevik leadership was yet again disillusioned with regard to prospects of global revolution, this time as a result of the Kuomintang’s victory over the Chinese communists. In May, following the discovery that members of the Soviet trade delegation in London were engaged in subversive activities, the government of Joseph Austen Chamberlain accused Moscow of interfering in the internal affairs of Great Britain and initiated a conference of the foreign ministers of Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and Japan, held in June 1927 in Geneva (during a session of the League of

² *Pravda*, 20 December 1924.

³ For a detailed discussion of this, see Iu. L. D’iakov and T. S. Bushueva, *Fashistskii mech kovalsia v SSSR: Krasnaia Armia i reikhsver. Tainoe sotrudnichestvo, 1922–1933. Neizvestnye dokumenty* (Moscow, 1992); O. T. Shevchenko, “Viis’kovo-tekhniche spivrobotnytstvo Chervonoï armii i reikhsvera (1922–1933)” (Candidate of Historical Sciences dissertation, Kyiv, 2003).

⁴ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv (hereafter RGVA), fond 33988, op. 2, d. 671, fol. 140.

Nations), at which it proposed joint efforts against “Comintern propaganda.” Although the Intelligence Directorate of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army considered the prospect of military attack on the USSR in 1927 unlikely,⁵ the Soviet political leadership went all out in promoting a “war psychosis” in the country, seeking every which way to “expose” the subversive intentions of the capitalists and contrasting them with the Soviet Union’s peace-loving initiatives, such as the thoroughly populist (for the time) draft of an international convention on general, complete, and immediate disarmament. This broadly conceived propaganda campaign had an utterly pragmatic thrust: it not only morally prepared Soviet society for another round of “belt-tightening” in the form of increased expenditures on industrialization and development of the defense industry but also anticipatorily and more deeply probed the degree of the masses’ loyalty to the Soviet authorities and their psychological readiness to make certain sacrifices for the sake of preserving peace.

The “war scare” of 1927 showed, on the contrary, that the Ukrainian public was psychologically exhausted by previous wars and wanted to maintain peace. The latter desire was also indirectly attested by a short-lived equilibrium in Soviet Ukraine between the authorities and the population, although it was maintained only by the achievements of the liberal reforms implemented in the 1920s. In fact, at this time loyalty to the Bolshevik government—at least on the part of the prevailing mass of the Ukrainian peasantry—was mainly forced and based on the following principle: “We have become accustomed, life has become better, one can manage.”⁶ The extent to which this peaceful coexistence was conditional and the degree to which the antiwar mood expressed by the Ukrainian population was situational became clear with the beginning of Stalin’s “revolution from above.” This process not only brought to the surface profound feelings of non-acceptance of the existing political regime and steadfast hostility toward it but also fostered the transformation of the idea of a future war into a genuine *idée fixe* for a significant part of the population, above all the peasantry, which began pinning its hopes for the fall of communist rule precisely and exclusively on war.

The extraordinary measures implemented in the countryside in the winter of 1928—massive grain requisitions, along with the pressing exploitation of agricultural tax arrears, insurance collections, seed loans, and the launch of financial campaigns in the form of self-taxation and bond sales to improve agriculture—gave rise in and of themselves to the Ukrainian peasantry’s firm conviction that war was imminent. Observing the plenipotentiary party emissaries, thousands of whom had inundated the Ukrainian countryside, where they in fact supplanted Soviet government bodies, and noting the endless state grain deliveries, the peasants assumed that war was about to break out and that the Soviet authorities—Moscow—were either trying to buy off the capitalist countries with “grain gold” or rushing to establish food reserves at the expense of Ukraine, which they would undoubtedly have to evacuate. In the mass consciousness of this period, the country most likely to attack the USSR was “bourgeois, landowning Poland,” relations with which, especially after Józef Piłsudski’s seizure of power, remained tense, and which official Soviet propaganda portrayed as a bellicose and, above all, an implacable enemy of the Soviet order. An added irritant for both the Soviet leadership and its foes was unquestionably the presence on Polish territory of the émigré UNR government, headed

⁵ RGVA, fond 33988, op. 3, d. 126, fol. 26.

⁶ Tsentral’nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads’kykh ob’iednan’ Ukraïny (hereafter TsDAHOUkraïny), fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2532, fol. 5.

by Andrii Livytsky, which had cooperated militarily with the Poles in the struggle against Bolshevism.

Starting in the summer of 1928, the worsening sociopolitical situation in the Ukrainian republic—famine in the southern regions, which were stricken by drought and grain requisitions, as well as the rise of active resistance to the authorities, including numerous incidents in which Soviet activists were beaten, ongoing “women’s work stoppages” (*volynky*) in the countryside, and starving people demonstrating near empty shops in cities—further exacerbated the feeling that war was imminent. With lightning speed, fantastic rumors that Poland had declared war on the USSR began circulating throughout Ukraine’s rural regions, sparking widespread fear and panic buying of provisions. The general situation was described in a letter to the newspaper *Radians'ke selo* (Soviet Village) by a resident of the village of Mykhailivka, Kryve Ozero county, Pervomaisk district: “‘War! War!’ shouted our peasants for two whole days and flocked to the cooperative for groceries. The KNS [Committee of Poor Peasants] took an active part in this. In two days they cleared out the cooperative, each taking two or three poods of salt and a half-pood of gas [kerosene], so that it would suffice for the whole war. Everyone is crying, and reports arrive as if by telegraph: ‘The Poles are already in Velykyi Bobryk!’ ‘Bobryk has already been taken!’ ‘They are advancing directly on Mykhailivka!’ No one knows what to do—flee or stay.”⁷

The letter writer’s comment about the peasants’ intentions to abandon their homes was an obvious exaggeration: distraught and embittered by the endless state grain requisitions and the escalation of repressions against the Ukrainian peasantry, the poor peasants in particular, who were the first to feel the pangs of starvation in 1928, not only had no intention of abandoning their farms but waited practically on tenterhooks for the Poles to arrive, associating them with the prospect of throwing off the “Soviet iron yoke.”⁸ Among the recorded comments made by peasants in 1928 were the following: “In two months the Poles will arrive in Ukraine, and that will be the end of grain requisitions”⁹; “We have no grain because the authorities are shipping it to Moscow, and they are shipping it out because they know that they will soon lose Ukraine. Well, never mind, the time is coming for them to take to their heels.”¹⁰ Peasant expectations that Ukrainian political sovereignty would be restored in the course of Poland’s war against the USSR were also a distinctive feature of reports drawn up by Soviet special services and political bodies. In a letter written in July 1928 to *Krest'ianskaia gazeta* (Peasant Newspaper), a village correspondent (*sil'kor*) based in Ivankviv county, Volyn district, recounted that local kulaks (Ukr. *kurkuli*) walking past a church would doff their caps and pray for Andrii Livytsky “to make haste to Ukraine.”¹¹ In early August, the villages of the Shepetivka district were rife with rumors that the Poles were willing to proclaim Ukraine independent.¹² At the same time, a rumor began circulating in the town of Liubar, Berdychiv district, according to which Warsaw was planning to convene an important session of the Polish parliament after which the Bolsheviks were supposed to leave Ukrainian territory without a fight. Ukraine was to be proclaimed an

⁷ Derzhavnyi arkhiv Kharkivs'koï oblasti (hereafter DAKhO), fond 5, op. 1, spr. 43, fol. 80.

⁸ DAKhO, fond 5, op. 1, spr. 43, fol. 79.

⁹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2775, fol. 115.

¹⁰ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2987, fol. 61.

¹¹ DAKhO, fond 5, op. 1, spr. 43, fol. 81.

¹² Derzhavnyi arkhiv Zaporiz'koï oblasti (hereafter DAZO), fond 1, op. 1, spr. 834, fol. 18; TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2824, fol. 95.

independent state headed by President Andrii Livytsky, and the commander in chief of the armed forces would be Otaman Symon Petliura, who in fact had not been killed.¹³ According to reports of the district party committee, the peasants of Lubny district pointedly questioned state grain-requisition officials: “Will Ukraine be fighting against Russia soon?” They also made challenging declarations, such as: “Let the Poles be in Ukraine; they are no worse than the *katsapy* [derogatory term for Russians].”¹⁴ According to information from party agencies, in the summer and autumn of 1928 “Petliurite-style” agitation associated with rumors of war was recorded in the districts of Berdychiv, Bila Tserkva, Vinnytsia, Dnipropetrovsk, Kyiv, Lubny, Mariupil, Melitopil, Mohyliv-Podilskyi, Poltava, Kherson, and Shepetivka.¹⁵ The topic of Polish warfare against the USSR and “Poland’s desire to liberate the Ukrainians from the Bolshevik yoke” also surfaced in Ukrainian villages in the winter and spring of 1929.¹⁶ Similar attitudes were observed in the cities, mostly among workers with close links to the countryside and part of the “nationalistic” intelligentsia that was under the most vigilant surveillance of the United State Political Directorate (OGPU). In July 1928 Vsevolod Balytsky sent Lazar Kaganovich, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine (CC CP[B]U), a lengthy memorandum titled “On the Intensification of the Ukrainian Counterrevolution,” in which he stated: “One may consider as established the circumstance that the degree of activity of internal chauvinist elements corresponds directly to the complexity and acuteness of the USSR’s international status. They proceed from the fundamental thesis that the breakup of the USSR is inevitable, and with this catastrophe Ukraine will be able to gain independence.”¹⁷

Naturally, Stalin’s innovations in the agricultural sphere dealt a painful blow not only to Ukrainians but also to Greeks, Jews, Germans, Poles, and other national minorities in the republic. However, unlike Ukrainian peasants, a significant majority of whom associated possible changes in their situation with a future war and a change of government in Ukraine itself, the national minorities, such as the Germans, who were united, according to the security organs, in a “single national-clerical front,”¹⁸ showed a desire to emigrate. “The Germans in Russia are outcasts; we need to go to America”; “It is better to be a good farmer in America than a bad one in Russia and be called a kulak”—such were the discussions that took place among the colonists.¹⁹ Anti-Soviet attitudes were also recorded in the Jewish milieu among petty tradesmen, artisans, and traders, who expressed the following sentiments: “This is a government that affords no one a living. So far they have been putting pressure on us, but now they have also grabbed the peasants by the throat. Better to sit in the pale of settlement and eat white bread than chew on rocks beyond the pale”; “Open up the borders to us; we see no other way out for ourselves.”²⁰ In the context of assessments of the risk of war, the Soviet government was considerably alarmed by attitudes among the Poles, especially in border districts. The Poles had kept to themselves even before, furtively expressing their sorrow at the “historical injustice” of finding themselves

¹³ Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter GARF), fond 5446, op. 1, d. 1644, fol. 111.

¹⁴ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2824, fol. 96; DAZO, fond 1, op. 1, spr. 834, fol. 18.

¹⁵ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2824, fol. 96; DAZO, fond 1, op. 1, spr. 834, fol. 18.

¹⁶ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2989, fols. 32, 79.

¹⁷ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii (hereafter RGASPI), fond 81, op. 3, d. 127, fol. 264.

¹⁸ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2688, fol. 52.

¹⁹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2688, fol. 77.

²⁰ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2642, fol. 91; TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2784, fol. 56.

in the Ukrainian SSR. Now that pressure on the countryside was increasing and repressive measures intensifying, the Poles no longer concealed their aspiration “to be in Poland.” Military maneuvers in the Volyn district in the summer of 1928 were regarded by residents of the surrounding villages as a harbinger of war. The State Political Directorate (GPU) reported that “malicious pleasure at the prospect of an impending change of government was noted in nearly every village of the Polish county.”²¹ The completion of the maneuvers, which did not, after all, turn into warfare, somewhat dampened the excitement among the Poles, but their mood remained one of anticipation.²² The anti-Soviet attitude among a considerable part of the Polish population was also in evidence in the spring and summer of 1929 during a campaign to nominate delegates to a congress of diaspora Poles slated to take place in Poland. In a special report sent to the CC CP(B)U on 29 July 1929, the GPU of the Ukrainian SSR reported that Poles in the Volyn district were saying that the “Polish border must extend to Kyiv,” insisting that their elected delegates “authorize the Polish president to retake Ukraine and Belarus and annex them to the Polish state,” and proposing that “local Poles be transferred from Ukraine [to Poland], and Ukrainians from there to the USSR.” In the Kamianets district, hopes were being voiced that Poland would “make war on the Soviet government,” and in the Kyiv district Poles were discussing the prospects of annexing Ukraine to Poland; they were also demanding that the delegates “travel directly to Warsaw and recount there how the Soviet authorities are oppressing us and request that we be taken under Polish protection.” In the Uman district, Poles were categorically stressing that “the Soviet authorities are persecuting us. Our fatherland can only be Poland, not the Soviet Union.”²³

The worsening morale and psychological climate in Ukraine and the sharply vacillating moods of a considerable part of the population—from the earlier fear of war to the desire and even anticipation of war—were amply reflected in the moods observed in regular and large units of the Ukrainian Military District (UVO) deployed in the Ukrainian lands. A flood of desperate letters from the families of Red Army soldiers, as a rule sharply negative in their political tone, which began arriving in late January 1928 and never stopped, agitated the Red Army troops. Initially, during political activities and meetings, and most often in conversations among themselves, peasant members of the Red Army, and later, with the reduction of food deliveries to cities and increased production pressure on enterprises, soldiers from the working class expressed indignation at the existing situation and clearly revealed their defeatist attitudes, making no secret of their intention to turn their bayonets against the Soviet government once the war began. In May 1928, a special unit of the UVO noted the following discussions among the Red Army’s peasant troops: “In the event of war, the forests will be overflowing with bandits” (80th Infantry Division); “As soon as the war breaks out, all these organizations will fall apart, and the peasantry will go to fight for its rights” (44th Infantry Division); “In the event of war, we will turn our bayonets against those who are flaying the skin off the peasants” (51st Infantry Division); “As soon as the war breaks out, we will throw down our rifles and scatter to our homes” (Communications Company of the 17th Infantry Corps); and others.²⁴ In January 1929, political agencies reported “politically hostile” conversations in a newly reinforced unit: “If there

²¹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2688, fol. 87.

²² Ibid.

²³ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2988, fols. 38–44.

²⁴ RGVA, fond 25899, op. 2, d. 430, fol. 538.

is war, then we will not go to fight. Let the communists go.”²⁵ The breadth of anti-Soviet statements among UVO troops was quite significant. Furthermore, the Soviet security organs noted a rapid growth trend: whereas in December 1928, 881 negative statements were recorded in the district’s regular and large units, there were 1,142²⁶ in January 1929, 1,444 in March, and 1,542 in May. In June 1929, with the onset of “state grain deliveries in keeping with the new methods,” which entailed the introduction of the practice of levying fivefold fines (*kratyruvannia*) and the auctioning of farms owned by non-payers, 2,742²⁷ negative statements were recorded.

The next stage of pressure that the Stalinist leadership exerted on the countryside coincided with the worsening situation around the Chinese Eastern Railway, which was under joint Soviet-Chinese administration according to the terms of the agreement concluded in 1924. The Bolsheviks’ strategic calculations regarding the railway lay in the sphere of the revolutionary prospects that the Soviet leadership associated with communist China throughout the 1920s. However, after the victory of the Kuomintang in 1927 the situation in this region changed radically. The Chiang Kai-shek government, whose attitude to the land of the Bolsheviks was none too friendly, began to adopt active measures in order to rid its territory of the undesirable Soviet presence, in particular urging the USSR to surrender its partial ownership of the railway. In the summer of 1929, Chinese and White émigré detachments carried out sudden attacks on Soviet trade and cultural institutions along the whole course of the Chinese Eastern Railway. In connection with these events, the government of the USSR issued an appropriate note, and the Soviet press launched a public campaign condemning the “imperialists’ brazen escapades.” In complete concordance with the scenario developed by various propaganda structures, industrial enterprises and republican institutions held large and well-attended rallies and meetings featuring speeches and the passage of “politically honed” protest resolutions drawn up beforehand, the adoption of increased work commitments, collective sign-ups for the third industrialization loan, the enrollment of volunteers for the “Chinese front,” and the like. Similar measures were introduced in regular and large units of the UVO. Reporting on the reaction to the Chinese events, the political leadership of the Military District was pleased to note a militant mood among part of the command personnel and Red Army troops, who declared fervently: “We should not tolerate these bandits’ attacks; the time has already come to repulse [them] even at the price of war” (5th Aviation Brigade); “They are spitting in our face, but we are not responding appropriately” (Kyiv Communications School)²⁸; “We have to beat the hell out of the vermin! Give us Shanghai! Give us Mukden! We must hit them so hard that nothing remains of them” (22nd Aircraft Depot).²⁹ Individual soldiers, clearly in thrall to the propaganda-fueled illusions of world revolution and the international working class’s unstinting support for the USSR, made bold predictions: “The Chinese people will be with us and not with the generals”; “Even though a war will be a heavy burden on us, it will be bad for them, for, as we see from the newspapers, working-class strikes are taking place everywhere”³⁰; “If there is a war, then there will definitely be a world revolution,” etc.³¹ The political and secret-police organs also did not fail to note

²⁵ RGVA, fond 9, op. 28, d. 134, fol. 12.

²⁶ RGVA, fond 9, op. 28, d. 115, fol. 26.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ RGVA, fond 9, op. 28, d. 115, fol. 151.

²⁹ RGVA, fond 25899, op. 2, d. 443, fol. 166.

³⁰ RGVA, fond 25899, op. 2, d. 443, fol. 167.

³¹ RGVA, fond 9, op. 28, d. 109, fol. 6.

expressions of fear stemming from the technical weakness of the USSR and the superiority of its potential enemy (“We shout a lot, we boast of our superiority, but won’t it turn out that in the event of war, China will give us a beating like the one we got from Japan in 1905?”).³² Most importantly, the Soviet authorities noted that Red Army soldiers and younger commanders whose families had been caught in the vice of state grain deliveries carried out according to the “new methods” were increasingly engaging in conversations about their lack of desire to defend the Soviet government, their intentions to surrender, threats against communists and Komsomol members in connection with a possible war, and so on.³³ Despite the official clichés in political reports about the “perfectly healthy condition of the troops,” evidence of dissatisfaction in the barracks was significant during this period. This is attested both by the aforementioned but by no means complete statistics of anti-Soviet demonstrations in the district and by detailed informational GPU reports on the deteriorating situation in the Ukrainian countryside, still the main source of Red Army personnel for regular and large units of the UVO.

News of armed skirmishes along the Chinese Eastern Railway began arriving in Ukraine’s rural regions just as the new harvest was being brought in and the local authorities, in keeping with the new regulations, were trying to squeeze out the maximum from the peasants, who were already coping with an excessively high annual state grain-requisition plan, and not hesitating to sell the property of so-called “debtors.” The peasants, who continued to nurture hopes that the Bolsheviks, having yielded to Poland and her ally, Romania, would abandon Ukrainian territory in the nearest future, actively resisted the removal of grain and gave one another clear-cut advice: “We have to take care with the grain. Don’t rush the threshing; the vermin will not take unthreshed grain”³⁴; “We should let the enemy onto our territory without a shot”³⁵; etc. Such hopes, and even ardent desire for war, were clearly reflected in statements by Ukrainian farmers such as those recorded by the GPU in the village of Shymanivka, Sobolivka county, Tulchyn district: “How long are they going to keep robbing us? God, when will there finally be a war? Our patience is running out; soon we will lose it altogether.”³⁶

In September 1929, when the Soviet press began reporting on the growing armed conflict on the Chinese Eastern Railway, the peasants sighed with relief: the war had started. This certainty, as well as the hope that in this war the Soviet Union would surely be defeated, grew with every passing day. The peasants did not believe the bravado of newspaper reports about the Red troops’ successful actions in the East, preferring information from the grapevine. In early October 1929, the following persistent rumors began circulating throughout the villages of Berezivka county, Odesa district: “The Soviet authorities are concealing the true state of affairs”; “The war is going full blast. Soviet troops are being defeated. Chinese troops have occupied the territory of Siberia. There are many wounded from the front. And steamships are arriving at the Solovets Islands, bringing the most renowned figures as prisoners. They will be needed to organize the apparatus after the fall of the Bolsheviks”; “All the grain is being shipped abroad; however, according to the latest news, it is not being accepted there, for this grain was seized by force, against the peasants’ wishes”; “Grain stocks are being shipped to the RSFSR, for Ukraine

³² RGVA, fond 25899, op. 2, d. 443, fol. 167.

³³ RGVA, fond 9, op. 28, d. 109, fol. 6.

³⁴ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2989, fol. 136.

³⁵ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2989, fol. 143.

³⁶ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2989, fol. 160.

will be occupied in the first instance.”³⁷ In mid-October, the following typical conversations were recorded in the village of Novo-Vasylivka in the Mariupil district: “The Chinese are marching full speed ahead. They cover a hundred versts, destroy the communists, establish their rule, and go on another hundred versts, while the Bolsheviks merely protest.”³⁸ By this point, the secret-police organs had considerably intensified their monitoring of political attitudes in Ukraine and found themselves obliged to acknowledge the continuing growth of agitation of a “defeatist-chauvinistic persuasion,” combined in some districts, in contrast to the earlier period, with “veiled appeals for organized resistance,”³⁹ while in other districts it was overtly linked to insurgent trends.⁴⁰ In this connection, extraordinarily revealing declarations were recorded in the village of Kuniie in Svynsk county, Izium district: “Everyone is waiting for war. If it does not happen, then an uprising will break out because we cannot go on living like this.”⁴¹

This prediction was soon realized in full measure. In the winter of 1930, when the signing of the Khabarovsk Protocol between the USSR and China made it clear that war was being staved off, and the Stalin regime began deporting tens of thousands of kulaks and their families to the Far North and undertook the forced collectivization of agriculture, Ukraine exploded in a wave of peasant revolts. According to a memorandum prepared by the Secret Political Department of the OGPU, in the winter–spring of 1930, 3,570 mass peasant uprisings were recorded in the republic. A record number of 2,945 protests was registered in March.⁴² As in other grain-producing regions of the USSR, the peasant uprisings in Ukraine had an anti-Soviet and anticommunist orientation. The specific character of those disturbances was the close interweaving of social and national motifs. According to data collected by the GPU, Ukrainian peasants shouting slogans such as “Down with Soviet rule!” and “Down with collectivization!” also frequently voiced purely “nationalistic slogans,” for example, “Long live the UNR!” and “Long live independent Ukraine!” In various districts, the Chekists noted incidents in which huge crowds of peasants pointedly sang the national hymn, “Ukraine Has Not Yet Perished,” and demonstratively announced their involvement in the “Union for the Liberation of Ukraine,” which had been “uncovered” by the GPU, and so on.

The significant scale of the peasant uprisings also sparked hopes in part of Ukrainian society that these revolts would hasten Poland and Romania’s declaration of war on the Soviet Union. In the winter of 1930, rumors of Poland’s military preparations began spreading once again throughout the villages of various Ukrainian districts. For example, in the village of Zlynka in Khmeliv county, Zynovievsk district, peasants shared the following “fresh news” with one another: “All representatives of foreign states have already been recalled from the USSR. War will begin in April.” The following declarations were heard in the village of Nemyryntsi in Starokostiantyniv county, Shepetivka district: “The authorities will certainly be held to account for the looting. Mobilization has already begun abroad. War is inevitable in the springtime.”⁴³ Peasants living in the village of Prusy, Bila Tserkva district, did not mince words: “Once spring

³⁷ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2989, fol. 205.

³⁸ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2989, fol. 219.

³⁹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2989, fol. 160.

⁴⁰ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2989, fol. 241.

⁴¹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 2989, fol. 218.

⁴² *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni: Kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie; Dokumenty i materialy, 1927–1939*, vol. 2, *Noiabr' 1929 –dekabr' 1930* (Moscow, 2000), 803.

⁴³ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 3198, fol. 88.

comes, there will be work for the axes. Poland is arming; with the Poles, we will be driving out the communists.”⁴⁴ In late February 1930, incidents were recorded in a number of border districts in which huge crowds of Ukrainians as well as Poles, carrying crosses and icons, tried to break through the lines of border guards into Poland in order to spur the Poles to decisive action. According to the Chekists’ reports, a fascist swastika appeared on the flags carried by peasant demonstrators heading toward the Polish border from Pluzhne county in Shepetivka district.⁴⁵

The unprecedented scale of the peasant disturbances, the upsurge of large-scale negative political attitudes among the troops stationed on the territory of the Ukrainian SSR, and the active encouragement of rumors about Poland on the part of “anti-Soviet elements” seriously alarmed the Stalinist leadership, forcing it to make immediate plans for a response in the event of a sudden invasion of Soviet territory by Polish troops. Thus, in early 1930 Stalin ordered Mikhail Tukhachevsky, commander of the Leningrad Military District, to plan without delay for the eventuality of a war with Poland.⁴⁶ The possibility of a Polish military incursion “in the event of serious kulak-peasant uprisings in Right-Bank Ukraine and in Belarus” was discussed on 15 March 1930 at a meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) (CC AUCP[B]).⁴⁷ There is no question that the realization of the genuine threat of war and, in the event of its outbreak, hostility on the home front were significant arguments in favor of intensifying the Stalinist leadership’s efforts to renew negotiations with Poland about the possibility of signing a non-aggression treaty, as well as to relax its pressure significantly on the Ukrainian countryside from early March 1930. As preventive measures against the external military threat and the unmistakable domestic crisis, the Soviet government launched a series of sensational trials, above all the “SVU” trial (spring 1930), which, in keeping with a direct order from the Politburo of the CC AUCP(B), were accompanied by a propaganda campaign on the topic of “Ukraine’s independence” and how the nationalists of Ukraine were selling it out to the Poles and others.⁴⁸ Again on the direct orders of the Politburo, the trial of the Prompartiiia (Industrial Party) in the fall of 1930 targeted in the first instance—and mainly—the “interventionist plans of the imperialists.”⁴⁹ On the one hand, the very course of the trial, ably orchestrated by the OGPU, during which the accused—representatives of the technical intelligentsia—confessed their intention “to depose the Soviet government in alliance with the French government” (at the time, the Soviet military and political leadership regarded France as one of the main sponsors of Poland and Romania), was supposed to demonstrate the might of the Soviet government and its ability to nip in the bud any manifestation of organized rebelliousness. This was also the object of the campaign to condemn “enemies,” which was conducted with the help of various slogans proposed by the CC—“We will respond to the sallies of class enemies, foreign interventionists, wreckers, and kulaks with merciless reprisals against agents of military intervention and a large-scale offensive of socialism along the entire front of our economic construction!”; “To the threat of intervention we will respond by strengthening the country’s defense capability!”; “Our response to the class enemy is millions of workers in the ranks of

⁴⁴ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 3189, fol. 148.

⁴⁵ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 3194, fol. 38.

⁴⁶ Samuel’son, *Krasnyi koloss*, 156.

⁴⁷ RGASPI, fond 17, op. 162, d. 8, fol. 114.

⁴⁸ RGASPI, fond 17, op. 162, d. 8, fol. 129.

⁴⁹ RGASPI, fond 17, op. 162, d. 9, fol. 53. See also S. Kul’chyts’kyi, “Radians’ka zovnishnia polityka u mizhvoiennyi period,” in *Politychna istoriia Ukraïny XX stolittia* (Kyiv, 2003), 3:75.

shock workers and the workers' martial rallying around the Bolshevik Party!"⁵⁰ On the other hand, these measures were meant to lend the Bolshevik authorities a false veneer of legitimacy, especially the appearance of general popular support for the "party and government line."

Meanwhile, 1930 was a critical year in relations between society and the Soviet authorities, revealing a profound abyss between them. As described in a secret OGPU note dated 15 March 1931, the unforeseen scale of anti-Soviet manifestations throughout the villages of various regions of the USSR (in the Ukrainian SSR there were 4,098 disturbances involving at least 956,587 participants; in the North Caucasus, the figures were 1,061 and 227,000, respectively; in the Central Chernozem Region, 1,373 and 315,035, respectively; in Western Siberia, 565 and 49,995, respectively; in Moscow oblast, 516 and 117,502, respectively; in Belarus, 508 and 35,985, respectively, etc.) could not have failed to alarm Stalin.⁵¹ The social tensions in the country could be relieved only if the Soviet authorities refrained from introducing further radical reforms in the agrarian sector and slowed down the pace of industrialization. It would appear, however, that the Soviet leadership rated the factor of the population's conditional loyalty as considerably less important than the prospect of establishing the "most powerful military and economic base in the world" within a short period of time, as promised by the creators of the Five-Year Plan for 1928–33.⁵² To be sure, there was a certain logic here: feeling itself capable of forcibly curbing expressions of disloyalty even on the part of a considerable proportion of the population in peacetime, the Stalin regime was fully aware of the precariousness of its position in the event of war and thus vitally interested in protecting itself from such an eventuality. The Soviet military and political elite was convinced that this could be guaranteed only by a show of the USSR's powerful military technology. Thus, the interests of preserving the existing system of power demanded the further acceleration of the pace of military-industrial construction and, in turn, the maintenance of pressure on the countryside, regardless of its desperate resistance.

Meanwhile, starting in late 1931, the Soviet Union faced a clearly apparent military threat, this time from Japan. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria and subsequent occupation of this region, as well as the renewal of skirmishes along the Chinese Eastern Railway, created additional worries for the Soviet leadership. On 27 November 1931, Stalin sent a letter to People's Commissar of Defense Kliment Voroshilov describing the situation in the Far East as "serious and complex," making a pessimistic prediction about Japan's intention in the upcoming year to start a war against the Soviet Union, and insisting on the immediate adoption of "a number of serious deterrent measures of both a military and a non-military nature."⁵³ Of course, Stalin's fears stemmed not only from the government's incompletely drafted plans for the military and technical re-equipment of the USSR but also from the perfectly apparent domestic political difficulties that a Japanese invasion would entail. Indeed, the moral and psychological climate throughout the country was seriously affected by the large-scale deportations of "kulak families," the forced collectivization of agriculture, the harsh repression of peasant disturbances in early 1930, the renewal, after a brief respite, of the earlier repressive measures in the countryside, and the government's inability to relieve tensions in the famished cities. This state

⁵⁰ RGASPI, fond 17, op. 162, d. 9, fols. 81–82.

⁵¹ *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni*, 2:803.

⁵² Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv èkonomiki (hereafter RGAE), fond 4372, op. 91, d. 736, fol. 65.

⁵³ RGASPI, fond 74, op. 2, d. 38, fols. 48–53.

of affairs was particularly acute in the Ukrainian SSR, especially among regular and large units of the Red Army stationed on its territory, even though the military command and secret-police agencies were constantly adopting decisive measures to “restore them to health.”

According to the now traditional scheme, official announcements about the actions of Japanese troops in Manchuria became a signal for the Ukrainian Military District to launch various political campaigns of “condemnation” and “support.” As expected, political workers reported the “generally healthy reaction” of army personnel to international events and presented data on the holding of meetings, gatherings, and discussions, the submission of applications to join the party and the Komsomol, and militant declarations made by “ideologically aware” Red Army soldiers and commanders: “The Japanese are approaching the KVZhD [Chinese Eastern Railway]—this means that we must be prepared to defend it”⁵⁴; “Our government trusts all kinds of scum, and it may turn out that those same Chinese generals, together with the Japanese ones, will attack us,” etc.⁵⁵ However, the deliberately optimistic tone of these political reports did little to mask the “unhealthy” moods in army barracks, which translated into a fear of Japan’s military superiority, critical comments about the Bolshevik leadership’s foreign policy—particularly in statements to the effect that in directing the activities of the Comintern and actively supporting the Chinese communists by sending instructors and weapons, the USSR was in fact itself provoking a war⁵⁶—and into the dissemination of defeatist attitudes closely associated with the “temporary complications” in rural regions. The Soviet political agencies’ characterization of such reactions as isolated instances was all too discordant with the alarming trend, observed by the secret police, of constantly increasing negative political manifestations among Soviet troops, above all in territorial army divisions with close links to the countryside. The latter is strikingly demonstrated by data on the 25th Infantry Division: in the course of 1930, the Chekists recorded 823 “kulak sallies” (approximately 70 per month) during the period from 1 January to 1 May 1931 and 576 incidents between 1 May and 1 November 1931 (approximately 130 per month—a nearly twofold increase).⁵⁷

Given the clearly unreliable home front and the inadequate level of the country’s military-industrial mobilization, the desire to avoid the threat of a two-front war in the East and West forced the Stalinist leadership to pay too high a price for the possibility of reconciliation at least with its western neighbors in January–July 1931. The Soviet Union succeeded in concluding preliminary non-aggression agreements with Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Poland, although for this Moscow was in fact forced to recognize the inviolability of the postwar borders.⁵⁸ Spring 1931 marked the beginning of the Soviet Union’s negotiations with France, which culminated in the signing of a non-aggression pact on 29 November 1932; by this point, similar agreements had been signed with Finland (21 January 1932), Estonia (4 May 1932), and Poland (25 July 1932).⁵⁹

⁵⁴ RGVA, fond 9, op. 29, d. 67, fol. 164.

⁵⁵ RGVA, fond 9, op. 29, d. 32, fol. 401.

⁵⁶ RGVA, fond 9, op. 29, d. 67, fol. 164.

⁵⁷ RGVA, fond 9, op. 36, d. 86, fol. 150.

⁵⁸ O. Ken, *Mobilizatsionnoe planirovanie i politicheskie resheniia (konets 1920 –seredina 1930-kh gg.)* (St. Petersburg, 2002), 218.

⁵⁹ O. Ken and A. Rupasov, *Politbiuro TsK VKP(b) i otnosheniia SSSR s zapadnymi sosednimi gosudarstvami (konets 1920–1930-kh gg.): Problemy; Dokumenty; Opyt kommentariia*, pt. 1, *dekabr' 1928 –iiun' 1934 g.* (St. Petersburg, 2000), 620–21.

The pact-signing campaign of 1931–32 clearly attested to a definite easing of tensions in the international arena. However, Soviet propaganda did not direct attention to this circumstance, as the thesis concerning the easing of the threat of war contradicted the official notion of the need for an unfettered buildup of the country's military-industrial might by means of domestic resources, ostensibly as a forced response to the aggressive intentions of the "capitalist neighbors." Instead, the Stalinist leadership took full advantage of the lull in the international arena to continue spurring industrialization, including the defense industry, whose expenditures reached their peak precisely in 1932.⁶⁰ The natural result of the maximum "belt-tightening" strategy imposed on society was the acute diminution of food supplies in the grain-producing districts of the country and, accordingly, an avalanche-like increase of manifestations of disloyalty on the part of the population, especially with regard to attitudes toward a future war.

In the winter and spring of 1932, the lack of food began to become particularly acute in Ukraine's urban centers, particularly in smaller towns, whose residents mostly occupied the lowest rungs in the complex hierarchy of food provisioning through the ration-card system. In this period, the situation was becoming increasingly tragic in the countryside, where cases of starvation edema and death from starvation began to take on a mass character. The sense of an impending catastrophic famine sparked resistance to the government among Ukrainian peasants, and although this resistance was not as widespread as it had been in early 1930, it was still unexpectedly significant as far as the Soviet authorities were concerned. According to far from complete data supplied by the OGPU's Secret Political Department, during the first seven months of 1932, 923 mass peasant disturbances featuring "arrant counterrevolutionary slogans" took place in the Ukrainian SSR (a total of 1,630 throughout the USSR).⁶¹ Despite the large-scale repressions against the "kulaks" in previous years, the countryside continued to generate "counterrevolutionary activists" and "counterrevolutionary groupings" that "developed plans of action, orienting themselves on war in the very near future, intending in the event of war to raise organized armed uprisings against Soviet rule."⁶²

The fact that the population of Ukraine, above all the peasantry, was impatiently anticipating war, perceiving it as the only hope of salvation from the prospect of death by starvation, was attested not only by special OGPU reports but also by the constant stream of letters to the supreme authorities and to Stalin personally. In May 1932, the peasants of Dolyna county wrote: "Comrade leaders of the people! To what a pass have you brought the country and the people? Are you not aware that the peasantry is starving to death, swelling up.... The peasants, one and all, are weeping, cursing the Soviet authorities. They are crying: 'If only the war would start sooner.' And the newspapers are full of fantasy: the workers' material status is improving, collective farmers are filled with enthusiasm, etc. Why say this? The bourgeoisie

⁶⁰ In 1932, the military industry and armaments received a colossal injection of capital: that year, investments in the military industry increased by 58 percent, and military-industrial output rose by 67 percent. Orders for military technology placed by the People's Commissariat of Military and Naval Affairs (NKVMD) increased 2.5 times as compared to 1931 and for the first time comprised half the entire budget of the military department. In the course of 1932, the NKVMD's estimate of expenses, established at 2,868,000 rubles, was increased by additional extraordinary appropriations, reaching a total of 4,308,000 rubles, as a result of which the NKVMD's share of the Soviet Union's budget increased to 15.3 percent. See Ken, *Mobilizatsionnoe planirovanie*, 219.

⁶¹ *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni*, 3:440–41.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 443.

knows anyway that the collective farmers and independent farmers are cursing the Soviet authorities, groaning because of them, and waiting for war and intervention to save them. They are waiting for war as an escape from misfortunes because people swollen with hunger are lying next to fences.”⁶³ Throughout 1932, the growth of defeatist moods directly associated with “domestic complications and the political dissatisfaction of the peasant masses” was also noted in reports drafted by political bodies and special departments of the UVO.⁶⁴ Interesting observations of the psychological state of Red Army soldiers and their attitude to a future war were recorded in the diary of a docent at the Kyiv Institute of Professional Education, D. Donenko, who spent several months in the summer of 1932 with the 67th Infantry Regiment stationed near Kyiv. “3 August... There is no real devotion to the government, especially among the Red Army masses. They are waiting for war in order to fight against Soviet rule. That is what Red Army soldiers told me during tactical exercises on 25–26 August.... There was an antiwar meeting on 1 August. The division commander gave a speech. The Red Army soldiers stood and did not listen—to them, all this is alien and deceitful. Just a lot of ‘resounding words’ and nothing more. But they would like a war, as it is desired by the whole mass of the people, who, lacking the strength and ability to resolve the sociopolitical problem of our day on their own, expect to resolve it with the onset of war.... 30 August 1932... I worked in a company with men born in the years 1906, 1907, 1908.... Social composition: workers and peasants, collective farmers and independent farmers. Into the army they brought deep indignation, their hatred of Soviet rule and its measures.... The political and moral state is beneath all criticism, and combat-readiness is dangerous: at the proper moment, weapons in the hands of such Red Army soldiers will immediately be turned against Soviet rule, against the army.”⁶⁵ The next call-up, which took place in the fall of 1932, replenished the ranks of the Red Army with young men from the countryside, some of whom did not conceal their intention to wreak vengeance, with the onset of war, on the Soviet authorities for organizing the famine. In October 1932, the following conversations were recorded in Red Army units of the 30th Infantry Division: “If there were to be a war, then I would not wait for the enemy but would shred all that scum like cabbage”; “If there is a war, then most of us will turn our weapons in the opposite direction.”⁶⁶ The extent to which manifestations of negative political moods were widespread among the troops may be judged at the very least by the fact that in the 25th Infantry Division alone, 1,038 comments were recorded between January and April 1932, and between May and October of the same year there were 1,198.⁶⁷ In 1932 the Chekists recorded a total of 313,762 negative comments in the Red Army,⁶⁸ but there is no doubt that these data represent only the tip of the iceberg.

The rapid growth of rebelliousness on the part of a significant proportion of the population attested to the second systemic crisis of the Stalin regime in Ukraine, which began in early 1930. A piquant feature of this period, compared to the previous one, was the sharp rise of objections to Moscow’s extreme policies toward Ukraine among a significant number of local

⁶³ Derzhavnyi arkhiv Dnipropetrovs'koï oblasti (hereafter DADO), fond 19, op. 1, spr. 490, fols. 16–17.

⁶⁴ RGVA, fond 9, op. 36, d. 426, fol. 107.

⁶⁵ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 5242, fol. 25.

⁶⁶ RGVA, fond 25899, op. 2, d. 538, fol. 340.

⁶⁷ RGVA, fond 9, op. 36, d. 86, fol. 182.

⁶⁸ RGVA, fond 9, op. 29, d. 178, fol. 65.

communists.⁶⁹ Stalin's assessment of the dangerous situation emerging in this strategically important Soviet region was perfectly correct. On 11 August 1932, he sent a letter to Kaganovich in which he admitted frankly that, in the event of a war, the Bolshevik government in Ukraine had no one on whom to rely. "Things in Ukraine are extremely bad. If we do not begin straightening out the situation in Ukraine, we may lose Ukraine. Keep in mind that Piłsudski is not daydreaming, and his network of agents in Ukraine is many times stronger than Redens or Kosior think. Keep in mind, too, that the Communist Party of Ukraine (500,000 members, ha-ha) has quite a few (yes, quite a few) rotten elements, active and latent adherents of Petliura, and, finally, direct agents of Piłsudski. As soon as things get worse, these elements will waste no time opening a front inside (and outside) the party, against the party...."⁷⁰

It is quite possible that the goal of the harsh measures implemented by the Bolshevik center in Ukraine during the next few months, which in fact pushed the republic into the abyss of the Holodomor—the merciless expropriation of all food from the countryside, the forcible “confinement” of Ukrainian farmers within the borders of the ongoing disaster, and the concealment from the international community of the fact that millions of people were starving to death—was not only to force the peasants to reconcile themselves once and for all to the new collective-farm system but also to “purge” the clearly problematic region of the numerous “fifth column” that, beyond all doubt, would loudly have proclaimed its existence with the outbreak of an anti-Soviet war. By the spring and summer of 1933, the political temperature of the Ukrainian countryside had dropped “naturally” to zero: for a certain period, all thought of resisting the Soviet government, every preoccupation except one—food—was pushed out of people's starvation-distorted minds. Nevertheless, anticipation of war and feelings of despair and hatred of the Soviet government were still present wherever glimmers of rational thought remained. This spiritual condition was reflected in a brief, brutal letter that an unidentified individual sent in the summer of 1933 to the Ukrainian leader Hryhorii Petrovsky. “F__k your mother, you're all w[hores]! You will live no more than 2–5 years anyway.... There will be war, and if not, we will rise up.”

In characterizing the specific features of negative political attitudes in the Red Army in 1933, the Soviet security police organs noted a completely new phenomenon: the growing popularity of the ideas of fascism and the figure of Adolf Hitler among the “counterrevolutionary element.” The Chekists recorded the following statements made by individual soldiers: “The young Germans have done away with their communists. Hitler is no fool; he will get to our communists soon. He will destroy this contagion along with its roots” (Moscow Military District, MVO); “Hitler's measures concerning the burning of Bolshevik junk [books] are perfectly right and logical.... We should do that here as well.... Hitler is a clever lad” (Baltic Fleet); “I am glad that the German government has arrested Thälmann and other communists” (Red Flag Army of the Caucasus). At the same time, clandestine groupings were uncovered in various military districts, such as the “Rus' Fascist Party” in the MVO, the “Group of Gilded Youth” in the

⁶⁹ For a detailed discussion of the position of the Communist Party and nomenklatura of the Ukrainian SSR during the Holodomor of 1932–33, see M. Doroshko, *Kompartiino-derzhavna nomenklatura USRR u 20–30-ti roky XX stolittia: sotsioistorychnyi analiz: Monohrafiia* (Kyiv, 2004).

⁷⁰ *Stalin i Kaganovich: Perepiska 1931–1936 gg.*, comp. O. Khlevniuk et al. (Moscow, 2001), 273–74. This document was first discovered and publicized by the American historian Terry Martin.

Leningrad Military District (LVO), and others whose members were basing their plans on the probability of war between Nazi Germany and the USSR.

The spread of pro-Nazi sympathies from 1933 on was noted not only in the ranks of the Red Army but also among part of the civilian population, particularly German colonists. The invariable cause underlying these qualitatively new expressions of anti-Soviet feeling was, first and foremost, Hitler's avowed anticommunism, and the singular factor that provoked their overt manifestation was the so-called "Hitler relief" to the starving, which, as early as the fall of 1933, encompassed practically all German national districts in the Ukrainian SSR, becoming exceptionally broad in scope, as Communist Party organs themselves admitted.

It should be noted that Hitler's coming to power in January 1933 and his proclaimed strategy of extirpating communism throughout the world raised something of an alarm in Moscow. For a time, however, Stalin did not regard the National Socialists as serious actors in the political arena and continued to nurture hopes of prolonging the fruitful Soviet-German cooperation established in the previous decade.⁷¹ Clearly, it is this circumstance that accounts for the Soviet leadership's initially indulgent attitude to the very idea of the Germans engaging in philanthropy on Soviet territory, notwithstanding the stringent information blockade on the subject of the famine and the ban on international humanitarian assistance.

It soon became clear, however, that this "magnanimous concession" to the Soviets' erstwhile secret partners was leading to grave political complications for the Stalin regime. According to secret-police organs, the assistance provided to Soviet Germans by the government bodies and numerous civic committees of Germany promptly took on the character of a "blatant fascist political campaign."⁷² The Soviet government was considerably irked by the activities of the German consulates in Kyiv and Odesa, besieged by hordes of colonists pleading to be liberated from the Bolshevik yoke. Neither did the Chekists fail to note that consulate employees were having quiet talks with individual colonists about the inevitability of war between Germany and the USSR. Letters sent by Ukrainian Germans to their families in Germany were filled with complaints about their miserable life under the Soviets and blatant pro-Nazi sympathies. One correspondent stated: "We have no fatherland here; everything has been taken from us; we are being persecuted everywhere. Help, save us from the famine."⁷³ The author of another letter declared: "Talk to Hitler. Our hearts gravitate to him; the entire Russian [*sic*] peasantry without exception worships him." Here and there in the German colonies, anti-Soviet moods were in the air: in an effort to avoid missing important news from Nazi Germany, local schoolteachers organized collective listening to the radio for pupils and their parents, during which they heard speeches of German leaders, or collective reading of the fascist press obtained from the German consulates. Protesting against Soviet government terror, Soviet German peasants frequently refused to work and wrote declarations en masse about leaving the collective farms. Against this background, the "counterrevolutionary sallies" of colonists' children seemed almost natural: for

⁷¹ Among the distinguished guests standing on the podium set up next to the Mausoleum during the military parade that took place on Red Square on 1 May 1933 were Otto Hartmann, the German military attaché in the USSR, and a number of directors of German defense firms who had been invited by Voroshilov (RGVA, fond 33987, op. 3, d. 458, fol. 35, cited in D'iakov and Bushueva, *Fashistskii mech kovalsia v SSSR*, 316).

⁷² TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 6426, fol. 7.

⁷³ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 6426, fol. 2.

example, on the wall of the Hallstatt school in Karl-Libknekht county, schoolchildren scrawled “Long live Hitler!” Pupils of the Oleksandrivka school in Pulyn county offered the following eloquent reason for refusing the hot breakfasts offered by the authorities: “We do not need Bolshevik bread. Hitler helps us enough.”⁷⁴

A logical extension of the domestic political complications surrounding the question of “Hitler relief” was the anti-Soviet campaign, unprecedented in scope, that was launched in Germany itself.⁷⁵ Its key features were publications in the German press, bursting with information about the horrific famine unleashed by the Bolsheviks; photography exhibits featuring pictures of starving people, “starvation letters,” and food surrogates; huge demonstrations to protest the communists’ persecution of the Germans’ “blood brothers”; and the “personal baiting” of Soviet diplomats, including the foreign minister, Maksim Litvinov, and the like. In a speech delivered in the fall of 1933, Hitler mentioned the many thousands of Soviet Germans who had starved to death, which forced the Soviet side to issue an official protest condemning this “insulting assessment of the domestic situation” in the USSR.⁷⁶

To be sure, the starvation of Soviet Germans was by no means the only topic whose amplification increasingly reinforced Stalin’s conviction that the nearly decade-long secret Soviet-German alliance was fading into the past. The fact that Nazi Germany was becoming one of the most powerful strategic enemies of the USSR and the circumstance that in a future war with the Third Reich the “Ukrainian card”— a losing proposition a priori for the Bolsheviks— might well be played were also confirmed by frequent declarations on the part of Hitler and his associates about the importance of Ukraine in the context of future German policy in the East. Further indications to this effect were the visible intensification of activity by Ukrainian émigré organizations such as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, headed by Yevhen Konovalets, whose leaders nurtured hopes of German assistance in furthering the cause of Ukrainian liberation,⁷⁷ as well as the sympathies uncovered by the GPU (the reorientation of national circles on Germany as the main source of assistance) and, finally, the Stalin regime’s realization of potential disloyalty on the part of the Ukrainian population, whose protests had diminished significantly as a result of the horrific Holodomor, but only outwardly, for they had passed into hidden forms that were safer for their bearers.

The Stalinist leadership treated the emergence of the new foreign threat with the utmost gravity. Moscow’s active drift toward the Western democracies was a direct response to the growing aggression of Nazi Germany. In early July 1933, the USSR signed separate non-aggression pacts with Afghanistan, Estonia, Latvia, Persia, Poland, Romania, and Turkey,⁷⁸

⁷⁴ TsDAHO Ukraïny, fond 1, op. 20, spr. 5426, fol. 20.

⁷⁵ In a speech delivered on 31 December 1933, the plenipotentiary representative of the USSR in Germany declared: “A campaign about the so-called ‘famine’ in the USSR, which continues to this day, has been going on since July 1933. In its sweep and breadth, this campaign is unprecedented in the history of anti-Soviet campaigns” (D’iakov and Bushueva, *Fashistskii mech kovalsia v SSSR*, 340–41).

⁷⁶ *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR*, 21 vols. (Moscow, 1957–77), 16: 148–49.

⁷⁷ For a discussion of Hitler’s attitude to the “Ukrainian question” and the policies of Ukrainian émigré organizations, first and foremost the OUN, concerning a German-Ukrainian alliance and the foreign-policy guidelines of the Ukrainian emigration, see A. Kentii, *Narysy istorii Orhanizatsii ukrains'kykh natsionalistiv: 1929–1941 rr.* (Kyiv, 1998).

⁷⁸ Ken and Rupasov, *Politbiuro TsK VKP(b)*, 243.

thereby publicly confirming its desire to preserve the European status quo: in November 1933, diplomatic relations were established between the Soviet Union and the USA;⁷⁹ in April–May 1934, a series of agreements was signed to extend the validity of the non-aggression pacts concluded with Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, and Poland.⁸⁰ In November 1934, the Soviet Union finally joined the League of Nations with the direct assistance of France.

In keeping with the now traditional pattern, the liberalization of Soviet foreign-policy strategies was accompanied by escalating terror within the USSR itself. Post-Holodomor Ukraine thus took on the status of a territory subject to a “clean-up” after a “successfully completed military operation.”

Translated from the Ukrainian by Marta D. Olynyk

⁷⁹Ken, *Mobilizatsionnoe planirovanie*, 243.

⁸⁰Ken and Rupasov, *Politbiuro TsK VKP(b)*, 622.