

## Vsevolod Balytsky and the Holodomor of 1932–33

*Yuri Shapoval*

Writing the history of any catastrophe requires, first of all, an analysis of the activities of those involved in bringing it about. The history of the Holodomor should be approached in the same way. In this regard, we must discuss not only the systemic determinants but also the people who transformed these determinants into a wholly concrete, horrible reality. Above all, this means the leaders of communized Ukraine, and particularly those who were then in charge of the secret police. Vsevolod Balytsky is among the first in this merciless cohort.

However, for a rather extended period of time Balytsky was a kind of *persona non grata* in studies about the Cheka, GPU, and NKVD; and the first publications devoted to him began appearing only in 1989.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas much has been written about Stalin's "iron commanders" of the secret police at the all-Union level—Genrikh Yagoda,<sup>2</sup> Nikolai Yezhov,<sup>3</sup> Lavrentii Beria,<sup>4</sup> Ivan Serov,<sup>5</sup> and others—the

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<sup>1</sup> Some information about Balytsky appeared in an article about the fate of the members and candidates of the CC AUCP(B) who were elected at the Seventeenth Party Congress. See "O sud'be chlenov i kandidatov v chleny TsK VKP(b), izbrannogo XVII s"ezdom partii," *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, no. 12 (1989): 88. See also V. Chysnikov, "Kerivnyky orhaniv derzhavnoi bezpeky Radians'koï Ukraïny (1918–1953 rr.): Materialy do biohrafichnoho dovidnyka," *Z arkhiviv VUChK–GPU–NKVD–KGB*, nos. 2–4 (2000): 365. Between 1992 and 2003 Vadym Zolotar'ov and I wrote several articles about Vsevolod Balytsky. See V. Zolotar'ov and Iu. Shapoval, "Gil'iotyna Ukraïny," *Literaturna Ukraïna*, nos. 36, 37 (1992); idem, "V. A. Balyts'kyi: Na shliakhu do pravdy pro n'oho," *Ukraïns'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, no. 6 (1993): 50–63; nos. 7–8: 53–69; idem, *Vsevolod Balyts'kyi: Osoba, chas, otochennia* (Kyiv: Stylos, 2002); J. Schapoval [Iurii Shapoval], "Wsewolod A. Balitzkij: Ein Volkskommissar," in *Stalinscher Terror: 1934–41: Eine Forschungsbilanz*, ed. W. Hedeler (Berlin: Basis Druck Verlag, 2002), pp. 85–108; idem, "Vsevolod Balickij, bourreau et victime," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 44, nos. 2–3 (April–September 2003): 369–401; idem, "Vsevolod Balyts'kyi: Dolia spetssluzhby kriz' doliu ii kerivnyka," in *Radians'ki orhany derzhavnoi bezpeky v Ukraïni (1918–1991 rr.): Istorii, struktura, funktsii; Materialy kruhloho stolu, 19 hrudnia 2013 r., m. Kyïv*, comp. O. H. Bazhan and R. Iu. Podkur (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukraïny, 2014), pp. 378–422.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Ia. Sukhotin, "Pervyi enkavedeshnik: Zhizn' i smert' Genrikha Iagody," *Chas pik*, no. 117 (1996); *Genrikh Iagoda: Narkom vnutrennikh del SSSR, General'nyi komissar gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti: Sbornik dokumentov*, comp. V. K. Vinogradov et al. (Kazan, 1997); M. Il'inskii, *Narkom Iagoda* (Moscow: IaUZA, EKSMO, 2005), and other works.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., A. Polianskii, "Kak lomali 'zheleznogo narkoma,'" *Sekretnoe dos'e*, no. 2 (1998): 68–77; idem, *Ezhov: Istoriiia "zheleznogo" stalinskogo narkoma* (Moscow: VECHÉ, 2003); B. B. Briukhanov and E. N. Shoshkov, *Opravdaniiu ne podlezhit: Ezhov i ezhovshchina* (St. Petersburg, 1998); Marc Jansen [and Nikita Petrov], *Stalin's Loyal Executioner: People's Commissar Nikolai Ezhov, 1895–1940* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2002); N. Petrov and M. Iansen [Jansen], *"Stalinskii pitomets": Nikolai Ezhov* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2008). A. Pavliukov, *Ezhov: Biografiia* (Moscow: Zakharov, 2007), and other works.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., *Beriia: Konets kar'ery*, comp. V. Nekrasov (Moscow, 1991); Amy W. Knight, *Beria: Stalin's First Lieutenant* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); V. Naumov and A. Korotkov, "Lavrentii Beriia—laskovyi palach," *Moskovskie novosti*, no. 36 (1994); idem, "Beriia—tainyi i iavnyi," *Stolichnye novosti*, no. 19 (1998); O. V. Khlevniuk,

creation of a collective “portrait” of those who headed the Soviet secret police in the Ukrainian SSR [UkrSSR] and determined its objectives as well as its concrete activities is still taking place.<sup>6</sup>

The author of an article mentioning Balytsky by name notes that “it is very difficult to provide an unambiguous assessment of his political activities.”<sup>7</sup> There have been attempts to depict him as a figure who “resisted Yezhov’s orders in connection with exposing ‘enemies of the people.’”<sup>8</sup> According to other authors, Balytsky was a leader who surrounded himself with devoted people, led a riotous life, and embezzled money from secret police funds.<sup>9</sup>

It is clear that Balytsky was not an absolute communist fanatic, despite the fact that he spent his entire life safeguarding the ideas of communism. He was not some petty embezzler of state funds, even though he capitalized on the opportunities offered by his official position. He was not a “Chekist Casanova” (the history of the Cheka–GPU–NKVD offers worse examples), but neither was he a puritan. He was not a banal intriguer, even though he arranged to eavesdrop on conversations between high-ranking Soviet Ukrainian officials.

Who, then, was Vsevolod Balytsky, whom Mykola Skrypnyk, People’s Commissar for Education in the UkrSSR, called the “guillotine of Ukraine”? On the face of it, that description is wholly adequate. One confirmation of this characterization is Balytsky’s activities on the eve of and during the Holodomor (when, according to incomplete calculations, nearly four million people starved to death in Soviet Ukraine).

### Special plenipotentiary

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“Berii: Predely istoricheskoi ‘reabilitatsii,’” *Svobodnaia mysl'*, no. 2 (1995): 103–10; N. Rubin, *Lavrentii Beria: Mif i real'nost'* (Moscow; Smolensk: Olimp-Rusich, 1998); A. V. Sukhomlinov, *Kto vy, Lavrentii Beria? Neizvestnye stranitsy ugolovnogo dela* (Moscow: Detektiv-Press, 2003), and other works.

<sup>5</sup> See N. V. Petrov, “Pervyi predsedatel' KGB general Ivan Serov,” *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 5 (1997): 23–43; idem, *Pervyi predsedatel' KGB Ivan Serov* (Moscow: Materik, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> This process is ongoing and Zolotar'ov and I are engaged in it. See, e.g., Iu. Shapoval, V. Prystaiko, and V. Zolotar'ov, *ChK–GPU–NKVD v Ukraïni: Osoby, fakty, dokumenty* (Kyiv: Abrys, 1997); V. A. Zolotar'ov, *Oleksandr Uspens'kyi: Osoba, chas, otochennia* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2004); *Ukraïna v dobu “velykoho teroru” (1936–1938 rr.)*, comp. Iu. Shapoval et al. (Kyiv: Lybid', 2009).

<sup>7</sup> “U istokov: Stranitsy istorii organov gosbezopasnosti Ukrainy,” *Vechernii Kiev*, 10 January 1989.

<sup>8</sup> V. M. Vinogradskii and I. K. Iakimenko, “Polkovnik Shovkunenko rasskazyvaet,” *Kommunist Ukrainy*, no. 1 (1990): 78. See also “Na storozhi bezpeky Vitchyzny: Vidpovidi Holovy Komitetu derzhavnoi bezpeky Ukraïns'koi RSR heneral-maiora M. M. Holushka na zapytannia redaktsii hazety ‘Radians'ka Ukraïna,’” *Radians'ka Ukraïna*, 9 August 1988.

<sup>9</sup> S. Skotnikov and V. Tvorinskii, “Ekhu ‘sdaiut’ vlastelina,” *Zerkalo nedeli*, 2[8] June 1996.

Having occupied leading Cheka positions since 1918 in Ukraine, and headed the GPU in that republic from 1923 to 1931, in July 1931 Vsevolod Balytsky was appointed deputy head of the OGPU of the USSR. For a short time he was based in Moscow. In November 1931 a document produced by the General Consulate of Germany in Kharkiv (then-capital of Ukraine) noted: “The state police, as the Party’s strong arm and simultaneously an organ of government, was headed in Ukraine until now by the energetic Balytsky, who this year was sent to Moscow to take up a post as one of [OGPU Chief Viacheslav] Menzhinsky’s deputies. His successor is [Stanislav] Redens, a native of Galicia, hitherto little noted. This year the GPU, with no less fervor than in previous years, has continued to safeguard the security of the state, with methods that it considers tried and true; above all, to pursue and punish mercilessly all suspected coup attempts.”<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, in a letter to Lazar Kaganovich dated August 1932, Stalin expressed dissatisfaction with Redens and suggested that Balytsky be dispatched to the Ukrainian SSR, to head the GPU there or be assigned as a plenipotentiary of the OGPU, while keeping him in his post as deputy head of the OGPU.<sup>11</sup> But Stalin’s instruction was implemented only gradually.

The worsening economic situation in Ukraine, and Stalin’s desire to establish strict control over the actions of the Soviet Ukrainian leaders (whom the Kremlin leader generally regarded as not very reliable, along with the entire Communist Party of the UkrSSR), paved the way for Balytsky’s return to Ukraine. On 25 November 1932, the Politburo of the CC AUCP(B) appointed him as the OGPU’s special plenipotentiary in Ukraine (while remaining deputy head of the OGPU), and the entire apparatus of the GPU UkrSSR was placed under his control for a period of six months. Balytsky was obliged to report on the work of the republic’s GPU organs every twenty days.<sup>12</sup> Thus, there were two “main Chekists”<sup>13</sup> in Ukraine: the GPU UkrSSR was formally headed by Redens, but he was in fact under Balytsky’s control. It is entirely likely that Balytsky received special instructions and recommendations on this matter from Stalin. Possible corroboration of this may be found in Stalin’s visitors’ book, which reveals that Balytsky had conversed with him on 15 and 24 November.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Cited in *Der ukrainische Hunger-Holocaust*, ed. D. Zlepko (Sonnenbühl: Verlag Helmut Wild, 1988), p. 54.

<sup>11</sup> See *Stalin i Kaganovich: Perepiska, 1931–1936 gg.*, comp. O. V. Khlevniuk et al. (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2001), p. 274.

<sup>12</sup> See *Lubianka: Stalin i VChK–GPU–OGPU–NKVD, ianvar' 1922–dekabr' 1936*, comp. V. N. Khaustov et al. (Moscow: MFD, 2003), p. 340; V. Iu. Vasyli'iev, *Politychne kerivnytstvo URSR i SRSR: Dynamika vidnosyn tseñtr–subtseñtr vlady (1917–1938)* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii NAN Ukraïny, 2014), p. 251.

<sup>13</sup> The term *Chekist* is also commonly used to refer to members of all the Soviet secret police organizations that succeeded the Cheka, including the GPU/OGPU—Ed.

<sup>14</sup> See *Na prieme u Stalina: Tetradi (zhurnaly) zapisei lits, priniatykh I. V. Stalinym (1924–1953 gg.): Spravochnik*, ed. A. A. Chernobaev (Moscow: Novyi khronograph, 2008), pp. 79–80.

On 1 December 1932, the Politburo of the CC CP(B)U passed a resolution “On Com[rade] Balytsky” by voice vote: “In view of Com[rade] Balytsky’s long-term assignment to Ukraine to intensify the work of the GPU, to submit a motion to the Plenum of the CC (by voice vote) to elect Com[rade] Balytsky as a member of the Politburo of the CC CP(B)U.”<sup>15</sup> (Redens was only a candidate member of the Politburo.) The Moscow newspaper *Izvestiia*, subsequently commenting on his assignment, wrote that Balytsky “is being sent to Ukraine again, in these days of brutal kulak resistance to collectivization, in order to help millions of collective farm members to vanquish kulak sabotage and give the young collective farms of Ukraine the opportunity to grow and flourish peacefully.”<sup>16</sup>

In the fall of 1932, the CC CP(B)U advised the GPU UkrSSR “to conduct a mass operation in order to inflict a decisive blow on the class enemy,” so as to expose “counterrevolutionary centers that are organizing sabotage and disruption of grain procurements and other economic and political measures.” On 18 November 1932 the Politburo of the CC CP(B)U approved a resolution concerning the liquidation of “counterrevolutionary nests” and the destruction of “kulak groups” in Bila Tserkva, Borzna, Mena, Pavlohrad, and Uman counties, and the arrests of “up to 300...malicious accountants and clerks at collective farms that are disrupting the fulfillment of the grain procurement plan,” as well as “ideologues and organizers of kulak sabotage” in the cities.<sup>17</sup> To implement this resolution, the heads of oblast departments of the GPU held a meeting the very next day.

However, the special operations plan drafted by the GPU UkrSSR did not satisfy Balytsky. After arriving in Kharkiv in late 1932, he suggested in a statement that in Soviet Ukraine there was “organized sabotage of grain procurements and fall sowing, organized mass thefts on collective and state farms, terror aimed at the most stalwart and staunch communists and activists in the countryside, the deployment [to Soviet Ukraine] of dozens of Petliurite emissaries, and the dissemination of Petliurite leaflets.” He inferred the “certain existence in Ukraine of an organized counterrevolutionary insurgent underground associated with foreign countries and foreign intelligence services, mainly the Polish general staff.”<sup>18</sup>

On 26 November 1932, the Soviet Ukrainian press published an order approved by the People’s Commissar of Justice and the Prosecutor-General of the Ukrainian SSR, which emphasized that

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<sup>15</sup> Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads'kykh ob'iednan' Ukraïny (hereafter cited as TsDAHOU), f. 1, op. 1, spr. 535, ark. 109.

<sup>16</sup> *Izvestiia*, 27 November 1935.

<sup>17</sup> *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: Ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, comp. R. Ia. Pyrih et al. (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo politychnoi literatury Ukraïny, 1990, pp. 260–61.

<sup>18</sup> Arkhiv Upravlinnia vnutrishnikh sprav Kharkivs'koï oblasti, f. 48, op. 1, ser. 1, t. 3, ark. 3.

repressive measures were a powerful means of overcoming class resistance to grain requisitions. Ruthless expedients were permitted against kulaks and all “class enemies” who were disrupting or hindering the successful “struggle for grain.” As mentioned earlier, at this very time a “mass operation” launched by the GPU was taking place in the countryside, encompassing 243 counties of the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>19</sup>

Pursuing his theory about the existence of a peasant conspiracy in Soviet Ukraine (where, as of 20 November 1932, 766 agricultural employees had been arrested, including heads of collective farms, directors of state farms, and middle managers),<sup>20</sup> on 5 December 1932 Balytsky issued Operations Order No. 1 of the GPU UkrSSR. To his subordinates he assigned the “basic primary task of immediately breaking through, exposing, and destroying the counterrevolutionary insurgent underground and inflicting a decisive blow on all counterrevolutionary, kulak-Petliurite elements that are actively counteracting and disrupting the basic measures taken by Soviet authorities and the Party in the countryside.”<sup>21</sup> Several days later, Balytsky gave the order to apply decisive measures aimed at halting the mass flight of peasants from the UkrSSR in search of bread, and to enlist the GPU in the search for concealed seed stocks.<sup>22</sup>

In order to implement the directives issued by Balytsky, a special “Shock Operations” group was formed under the leadership of Karl Karlson, deputy head of the GPU UkrSSR.<sup>23</sup> The Chekists soon reported that they had uncovered and liquidated a powerful “counterrevolutionary insurgent and wrecking organization” whose influence encompassed 133 counties in Soviet Ukraine; with up to 3,000 members and centers located at 114 collective farms, 102 Machine and Tractor Stations (MTS), and 67 county centers in Soviet Ukraine. This organization was allegedly planning an uprising for the spring of 1933.<sup>24</sup>

Balytsky reported on his work methods during this period as follows:

In the four months since the start of the state grain procurements up to 15 November, 11,000 people were arrested in connection with grain procurement matters. In the one-month period from 15 November to 15 December, 16,000 were arrested, including 435 Party members and 2,260

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<sup>19</sup> Haluzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv Sluzhby bezpeky Ukraïny (hereafter cited as HDA SBU), Kyiv, f. 16, op. 25 (1951), spr. 3, ark. 73.

<sup>20</sup> See Shapoval and Zolotar'ov, *Vsevolod Balyts'kyi*, p. 189.

<sup>21</sup> HDA SBU, Kyiv, f. 16, op. 25 (1951), spr. 3, ark. 73.

<sup>22</sup> *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv*, pp. 336, 342.

<sup>23</sup> See Shapoval and Zolotar'ov, *Vsevolod Balyts'kyi*, p. 190.

<sup>24</sup> Arkhiv Upravleniia FSB Rossiiskoi Federatsii po Omskoi oblasti, d. 199347, l. 58.

people from collective farm management, including 409 heads of collective farms and 441 accountants and clerks, as well as 107 heads of village soviets. Troika tribunals sentenced 108 to be shot, and another 100 are still being reviewed. In the last two ten-day periods, 700,000 poods of grain have been found in pits and hidden cellars (7,000 pits and 100 cellars). Independent farmers [*odnoosibnyky*] are hiding it with the help of collective farm members, especially at collective farms that have fulfilled the grain procurements....

In the last two–three days we have applied a new form of influence in Kharkiv oblast. A uniformed OGPU official comes to a collective farm and has a conversation about submitting grain with the head and members of the administration. The exchange is insistent. As a result, within two days the Red Farmer collective farm increased the grain delivery from 58 percent of the plan to 96 percent, and the New Life collective farm from 54 to 80 percent, etc. We are thinking about expanding this to other oblasts.<sup>25</sup>

One can only imagine the nature of that “insistent exchange,” which undoubtedly included threats, pressure, and blackmail. Between November 1932 and January 1933 alone, the GPU UkrSSR liquidated 1,208 “counterrevolutionary” collective farm groups.<sup>26</sup> Inspections encompassed state farms, the Zagotzerno [grain procurement organization], the system of consumer cooperatives, and others. Thus, in upholding the government’s harsh line on grain requisitions, the Chekists, headed by Balytsky, employed particular methods to ensure it was implemented. Nevertheless, these measures did not improve the situation with grain requisitions in Soviet Ukraine. The plan for the Ukrainian SSR was reduced, but even so, it was not fulfilled.<sup>27</sup> This sparked a new wave of dissatisfaction in Moscow.

On 19 December 1932, the CC AUCP(B) and the USSR Council of People’s Commissars [Sovnarkom] revisited the question of grain requisitions in the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>28</sup> They declared the situation unsatisfactory and ordered Lazar Kaganovich and Pavel Postyshev, in their capacity as special plenipotentiaries of the CC AUCP(B) and the Sovnarkom, to “rectify” it. Balytsky was in very close contact with these two individuals, and he was even good friends with Postyshev. In their desire to squeeze as much grain out of Soviet Ukraine as possible, all three advocated the use of heavy-handed, repressive methods.

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<sup>25</sup> Cited in Iu. Shapoval, *Ukraina XX stolittia: Osoby ta podii v konteksti vazhkoï istorii* (Kyiv: Heneza, 2001), pp. 68–69.

<sup>26</sup> See Shapoval and Zolotar'ov, *Vsevolod Balyts'kyi*, p. 193.

<sup>27</sup> [As of 1 December 1932, 63.1% of the plan had been fulfilled.] See S. V. Kul'chyts'kyi, *1933: Tragediia holodu* (Kyiv, 1989), p. 33.

<sup>28</sup> See *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv*, p. 295.

A telegram that Kaganovich sent to Stalin on 21 December 1932 shows clearly the management style they espoused to restore order ([telegram text cited in, and translated from, the original Russian]):

On the evening of 20 and [morning of] 21 December, at a meeting of the Politburo of the CC CP(B)U, a number of practical measures were outlined to intensify grain procurements. Since a significant proportion of plenipotentiaries [in Ukraine] are sitting this one out, covering up their inactivity as well as, occasionally, the downright perfidy of county employees, we have sent a resolute warning to all plenipotentiaries, dismissed the ten worst, and raised the question of their Party membership with the CCC [Central Control Commission]. Of the ten who were dismissed, seven had been appointed by the CC CP(B)U and three by oblast [Party executive] committees.

Thirty-eight key counties of Ukraine have been tasked with submitting 32 million more poods of grain, over 40 percent of the remaining grain quota for the republic, not including the *garnets*.<sup>29</sup> Fifty more high-capacity counties should deliver approximately 30 percent of the remaining grain quota. Of the 38 key counties, 21 are in Dnipropetrovsk oblast and 15 are in Odesa oblast. We are concentrating our attention on these counties. We have selected an additional 40 [Party] management employees as plenipotentiaries in the key counties, and about one hundred strong military men and laborers from Kharkiv to assist them. At the same time, we are also putting pressure on counties where there is still a little left to deliver.

Since there is a great danger that Kyiv and Vinnytsia oblasts will reduce the pace and drag out fulfilling the remaining 7–8 percent of the plan, we have sent them a categorical directive to complete the plan within the next few days. We have sent an even more resolute telegram to the Donetsk oblast [Party] committee.

Things are going extremely badly with Kharkiv oblast. The Kharkiv people have not mobilized to fulfill the plan. The independent farmers in the oblast are supposed to deliver around six million more poods. One gets the impression that the oblast committee has taken a pass on this task. We had to have a stern conversation with [CC CP(B)U secretary and first secretary of the Kharkiv oblast Party committee, Roman] Terekhov, and suggested that he tackle the grain procurements more energetically, especially among the independent farmers.

At our insistence, two CC CP(B)U resolutions dated 29 November and 15 December were rescinded; in our opinion, they provide grounds for local organizations to hold back grain

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<sup>29</sup> Historically, the *harnets* (Pol. *garniec*) was a basic unit of dry volume measuring approx. 3 litres. The *garnets* toll (or *mirchuk*) entailed a payment in kind (up to 10%, presumably 1 *harnets* per centner) for milling grain and making groats, as well as for processing oilseeds. With the imposition of Soviet rule and collectivization, the toll amount was determined by the state, along with grain procurement plans, and fully at its disposal. The foodstuffs were often redistributed as state aid to local populations, particularly in the villages. At the time of the Holodomor, the procedure for collecting and submitting the *garnets* toll was redefined by a law of the USSR CEC and Sovnarkom dated 27 September 1932—*Ed.*

deliveries under the guise of securing and replenishing collective farm stocks, or conducting repeat inspections of state farm inventory. I will explain in detail after my arrival.

Today we decided to arrest and prosecute, with publication in the press, four of the directors of state farms who were most malicious in disrupting grain procurements.

At his own initiative, Kosior is leaving again for Dnipropetrovsk, and Chubar is going to Chernihiv; Khataevich was charged with supervising Kharkiv.

At 4:00 I left for Odesa. Greetings, KAGANOVICH.<sup>30</sup>

By 28 December 1932, Balytsky had already sent a memorandum to Stalin, who gave special attention to this memo, ordering that it be circulated among the leading party and state institutions, as well as among the leaders of the OGPU. The memorandum is striking for the picture it paints of large-scale resistance to the communist regime, especially the claim that in 67 counties of Soviet Ukraine the Chekists had exposed a “widespread Polish-Petliurite insurgent underground.”<sup>31</sup> Balytsky also wrote that collective farms, state farms, MTS, and MTM [Machine and Tractor Shops] were “contaminated by Petliurite, kulak, White Guardist, and anti-Soviet elements” that were opposing the requisitioning measures of the communist regime in rural areas. Neither did the Ukrainian intelligentsia escape notice, being described as “national-chauvinistic” and which allegedly “in a number of cases had ideologically and organizationally formed and headed counterrevolutionary insurgent organizations, now exposed.”<sup>32</sup> Finally, the memo pointed to yet another group, “traitors with Party membership cards,” that is, local leaders who had no desire to carry out blindly the pitiless instructions of the central organs and inflict a de facto famine on their fellow countrymen. Balytsky declared that these individuals were not simply opposing the grain requisitions but were also the “organizers and leaders of counterrevolutionary groups”; he reported that 12,178 people had been arrested in the first twenty days of December.<sup>33</sup>

The note, which contained specific locations and personal names, ended with these words: “The entire Chekist apparatus has been mobilized to provide comprehensive assistance to Party organizations in completing the grain procurements, and a decisive operational blow is being struck against all

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<sup>30</sup> Cited in *Komandyry velykoho holodu: Poїzdky V. Molotova i L. Kahanovycha v Ukraїnu ta na Pivnichnyi Kavkaz, 1932–1933 rr.*, ed. V. Vasyl'iev and Iu. Shapoval (Kyiv: Heneza, 2001), pp. 333–34. [The omission in the first set of square brackets exists in this source; the complete text was verified in *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni: Kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie; Dokumenty i materialy v 5 tomakh, 1927–1939*, ed. V. Danilov et al., vol. 3, Konets 1930–1933 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2001)—Ed.]

<sup>31</sup> Partiino-radians'ke kerivnytstvo 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 Ukraїny NAN Ukraїny, 2013), p. 263.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

saboteurs and their lackeys, speculators, and other counterrevolutionary elements that are resisting the completion of the grain procurement plan.”<sup>34</sup> According to official statistics, in 1932 the GPU organs alone arrested a total of 63,580 people in Soviet Ukraine.<sup>35</sup>

In some counties, the repressive measures affected up to one-third of all collective farm administrations. All the grain, including seed stocks, was shipped out of the villages. Deliveries of goods were suspended and trade banned for collective farms that had been blacklisted by resolutions of the CC CP(B)U and the UkrSSR Sovnarkom. “Hostile elements” were removed and their property was sold off. To “improve leadership by means of court repressions,” commissions were formed in the oblasts, consisting of the first secretary of the oblast Party committee, the head of the oblast control commission, the director of the oblast GPU, and the oblast prosecutor.

Judging by extant documents, it is often very difficult to determine whether the peasant resistance was indeed that highly organized. Obviously, the Chekists sought to present it as such, in order to justify the authorities’ harsh and brutal actions against the peasants, to definitively break their resistance, or even hints at the possibility of such, and to destroy everything that might provide reminders of the era of Ukrainian independence in 1917–20. In connection with this, the historian Gerhard Simon noted accurately: “Along with the ‘war’ against the peasants, a war was being conducted here against Ukrainian national self-awareness.”<sup>36</sup>

A key factor that distinguished the situation in Ukraine radically from what was happening in Russia or Kazakhstan, for example (where losses due to starvation were very significant), were the changes in nationality policy. On 14 December 1932 Stalin and Molotov affixed their signatures to a resolution of the CC AUCP(B) and the Sovnarkom of the USSR in connection with carrying out grain requisitions. This document required, among other things, the “correct implementation of Ukrainization” in Soviet Ukraine, and beyond its borders in regions with compact Ukrainian populations. The resolution also contained a categorical demand to combat Petliurite and other “counterrevolutionary” elements.<sup>37</sup> This, in fact, marked the second vector of the GPU’s actions: hunting for “nationalist counterrevolution” not only in rural areas but also in administrative structures at various levels, among the intelligentsia, and especially in the educational system.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>35</sup> See O. Mozokhin, *Pravo na repressii: Vnesudebnye polnomochiia gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti (1918–1953)* (Zhukovskii and Moscow: Kuchkovo pole, 2006), p. 300.

<sup>36</sup> Gerhard Simon, “Die Große Hungersnot in der Ukraine: Holodomor als Völkermord; Tatsachen und Kontroversen,” *Europäische Rundschau*, no. 1 (2008): 89.

<sup>37</sup> *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv*, pp. 291–94.

Vsevolod Balytsky was also involved in the “second enserfment” of the peasantry, which took place in late 1932. On 15 November the Politburo of the CC AUCP(B) approved a decision “On the passport system and ridding cities of superfluous elements,” which noted:

[for the purpose of] “ridding Moscow and Leningrad and other large urban centers of the USSR of superfluous elements not connected with production or institutions, as well as of kulak, criminal, and other anti-civic elements that are hiding in cities, it is deemed necessary:

- 1) To introduce a single passport [internal identification] system for the USSR, with cancellation of all other types of identification...;
- 2) To organize, first of all in Moscow and Leningrad, a population record-keeping and registration apparatus, the regulation of departures and entries....<sup>38</sup>

A commission headed by Balytsky was created to develop concrete measures of a legislative, organizational, and practical character. On 23 November 1932 Balytsky sent Stalin a letter containing the following draft resolutions of the USSR Central Executive Committee [CEC] and the Sovnarkom: 1) On the introduction of a single passport system in union cities throughout the USSR; 2) On a proposed record-keeping and registration system for the population of the USSR; 3) On the Sovnarkom instruction “On record-keeping and registration of the population (residence permit), and regulation of departure and entry into the cities of Moscow, Leningrad, and Kharkiv.”<sup>39</sup> These drafts came into force soon afterwards, on 27 December 1932, when the USSR CEC and Sovnarkom adopted a joint resolution, followed on 31 December by a corresponding resolution adopted by the UkrSSR CEC and Sovnarkom.

On 28 April 1933, the Sovnarkom promulgated a resolution on the issuance of internal identification documents called “passports” to Soviet citizens covering the entire territory of the USSR. Published the next day in *Izvestiia*, the resolution entailed issuing passports to Soviet citizens residing “in cities, population points that are county centers, in worker towns, new settlements or suburbs, at industrial enterprises, reserved railway zones, and on state farms and population points where MTS are situated.” The resolution specified particularly that “passports are not issued to citizens who reside permanently in rural locales.”<sup>40</sup> Population records in these locales were maintained by village residence lists and by town councils, under the control of county-level police precincts. With the aid of the “passport” regime, the Stalinist system doomed peasants to be tied to their places of residence, even if this meant that they would succumb to death by starvation.

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<sup>38</sup> See “Izmenenie pasportnoi sistemy nosiat printsipial'no vazhnyi kharakter,” *Istochnik*, no. 6 (1997): 104.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104–5.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

### **Final return from Moscow**

On 1 January 1933 the Politburo of the CC AUCP(B) approved a decision “On grain procurements in Ukraine” that stated: “Propose to the CC CP(B)U and the UkrSSR Sovnarkom to widely inform collective farm workers and toiling independent farmers through village councils and collective farms that: (a) those among them who voluntarily deliver to the state grain that was previously pilfered and concealed will not be subject to repressive measures; and (b) the severest measures for recovery stipulated by the resolution of the USSR CEC and Sovnarkom dated 7 August 1932 (on protecting the property of state enterprises, collective farms, and cooperative societies and enforcing public socialist ownership) will be taken against collective farms, collective farm workers, and independent farmers who stubbornly persist in hiding grain that has been pilfered and concealed from the record.”<sup>41</sup>

At the same time, the CC CP(B)U’s proposal to deport 700 peasant households from 20–25 counties that were behind on delivering grain quotas was approved. The UkrSSR GPU was charged with organizing the deportation to the North of 700 “malicious elements and kulaks,” without their families. The CC CP(B)U was to compile a list of fifty expelled party members to be immediately dispatched to labor camps. On 3 January the Politburo of the CC AUCP(B) adopted a new proposal of the CC CP(B)U concerning the additional deportation to the North of 400 households from Kharkiv oblast and 40 expelled party members.<sup>42</sup> The use of repressive measures in Ukraine was thus intensified. Nevertheless, these measures did not produce the results desired by the Stalinist leadership. It became necessary to reduce the grain quotas, but this was done when a large-scale famine was already underway. An additional problem now came to the fore: peasants were fleeing en masse into the cities or abandoning Soviet Ukraine for other areas of the USSR in search of bread. The following detail is telling: by no means were all of the Russian oblasts bordering on Soviet Ukraine affected by famine. This explains why Ukrainian peasants suffering from starvation (that is, those who managed to cross the established border) would go there to barter or purchase bread.

On 22 January 1933, Stalin and Molotov sent party and Soviet organs a directive titled “On turning back the mass exodus of starving peasants from Ukraine and the North Caucasus.” The document emphasized that these migration processes, which had begun among the peasants as a result of

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<sup>41</sup> *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv*, p. 308.

<sup>42</sup> See Vasyli'iev, *Politychne kerivnytstvo*, p. 276.

the famine, were organized by “enemies of Soviet rule, SRs, and agents of Poland for the purpose of agitating, ‘through the peasants’ in northern regions of the USSR, against collective farms and against Soviet rule in general.” In connection with this, government agencies and the GPU of the UkrSSR and the North Caucasus were ordered not to permit the mass exodus of peasants to other regions. Corresponding instructions were issued to the transport divisions of the OGPU.<sup>43</sup>

Following the central authority’s lead, on 23 January 1933 the CC CP(B)U and the UkrSSR Sovnarkom issued a ban forbidding peasants to cross the borders of Soviet Ukraine without permission.<sup>44</sup> Balytsky signed the corresponding directive to the UkrSSR’s GPU organs. Railway stations stopped selling train tickets altogether, and GPU transport divisions were charged with turning back fleeing peasants. Practically simultaneously, in February it was decided to purge railway transport organizations of “anti-Soviet elements.”

In the fall and winter of 1932–33, so-called “food blockades” were operating on Soviet Ukraine’s borders, organized and manned by internal troops and police. They hindered the peasants’ exodus, and with it, the spread of information about the famine. At the same time, these blockades thwarted food imports, meaning that private individuals were forbidden to bring food into Ukraine from Russia or Belarus without official permission. The regime thus turned Soviet Ukraine virtually into a starving ghetto.

According to OGPU data, as of 22 April 1933 these operations had led to 258,401 people being detained, of whom 230,633 were returned to their places of residence, 8,743 were prosecuted, 6,196 were sent to “filtration camps,” 2,823 were deported to Siberia, 725 were deported to concentration camps in Kazakhstan, and 9,282 were released. In Ukraine, 37,924 people were detained, 34,433 of whom were sent back to their places of residence, 300 were prosecuted, 579 were deported to Kazakhstan, and 2,612 were released.<sup>45</sup>

On 24 January 1933 the CC AUCP(B) adopted a special resolution that harshly condemned the Ukrainian Communist Party organization for not fulfilling the grain requisition plan. This document stipulated serious personnel changes, the most significant of which was the appointment of Postyshev as second secretary of the CC CP(B)U; he retained his post as secretary of the CC AUCP(B).<sup>46</sup> Postyshev

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<sup>43</sup> *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni: Kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie; Dokumenty i materialy v 5 tomakh, 1927–1939*, ed. V. Danilov et al., vol. 3, Konets 1930–1933 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2001), pp. 634–35; TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 16, spr. 9, ark. 115–16.

<sup>44</sup> See *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv*, pp. 341–42.

<sup>45</sup> See Vasyli'iev, *Politychne kerivnytstvo*, p. 283.

<sup>46</sup> “Postanova TsK VKP(b) z 24 sichnia 1933 r. ta zavdannia bil'shovykiv Ukraïny,” *Bil'shovyk Ukraïny*, no. 3 (1933): 3.

was ordered by the Stalinist leadership to solve the problem and overcome what were euphemistically termed “economic difficulties” and a “disruption of agriculture” in the Ukrainian SSR. Postyshev, who became the de facto leader of Ukraine until the beginning of 1937 (given the weak standing of Stanislav Kosior, leader of the CC CP(B)U), accused the Ukrainians themselves of organizing the famine—that is, “Ukrainian nationalists” and “Petliurites,” who should be exposed and liquidated. Postyshev’s closest associate in carrying out this mission was Balytsky, who in this resolution was officially appointed head of the GPU UkrSSR.

On 7 February 1933, a Plenum of the CC CP(B)U, specially convened to discuss the above-mentioned resolution from Moscow, emphasized that “from the very beginning of grain procurements, the leading Party organs both in the center and the oblasts and counties were insufficiently vigilant; they overlooked and failed to uncover in a timely manner the maneuvers of the class enemy—the kulaks, the Petliurites, the Makhnovites—who had infiltrated collective farms and occupied management positions in a number of collective farms; they failed to expose kulak duplicity and kulak ruses in the struggle against grain procurements.”<sup>47</sup>

Even though Balytsky had already taken up his duties as head of the GPU in Soviet Ukraine, he was officially confirmed in this post by the Politburo of the CC AUCP(B) only on 17 February, and by the Ukrainian Politburo on 18 February.<sup>48</sup> The Polish intelligence service, commenting on Balytsky’s appointment, emphasized that he was an “absolute Stalinist with a remarkably strong will and iron discipline.”<sup>49</sup> What was Balytsky’s own interpretation of his return to Ukraine? According to the Cheka leader [of GPU Sector 6 in the UkrSSR] Yakiv Vulfovych Pysmenny (a member of Balytsky’s inner circle), it “seriously affected his mood, as once again he felt that he had been insulted undeservedly. Then and later, Balytsky often said that he had ‘grown beyond the Ukrainian scope,’ that he could no longer bear to remain head of the GPU UkrSSR, but they were not allowing him to advance.”<sup>50</sup>

Formally, Balytsky retained his concurrent post as deputy head of the OGPU. However, the same day that he was appointed to head the GPU UkrSSR, his rival, Yakov Agranov, former OGPU plenipotentiary for Moscow oblast, became the new deputy head of the OGPU. For all practical purposes, he took up Balytsky’s duties at the Lubianka.

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<sup>47</sup> *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv*, pp. 371–72.

<sup>48</sup> See TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 281, ark. 194.

<sup>49</sup> *Holodomor 1932–1933: Wielki Głód na Ukrainie w dokumentach polskiej dyplomacji i wywiadu*, ed. Jan Jacek Bruski (Warsaw: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2008), p. 237.

<sup>50</sup> TsDAHOU, f. 263, op. 1, spr. 445886 FP, t. 3, ark. 93.

But Balytsky now had other preoccupations. Above all, he had to ensure that the party line was implemented, and this meant supporting Postyshev as the most influential Party activist in the Ukrainian SSR at that time. According to German diplomats, it was Balytsky who helped Postyshev establish order with an “iron broom,” and in 1933 to become the “central figure in political, economic, and cultural life, gaining such influence that he is, without doubt, the most influential person [in Ukraine], Stalin’s trusted appointee—the Stalin of Ukraine.”<sup>51</sup>

Other Bolshevik functionaries also arrived in Soviet Ukraine. One year later, at the opening of the Twelfth Congress of the CP(B)U held in January 1934, the prominent Politburo member Hryhorii Petrovsky, commenting on this, remarked: “Comrade Stalin’s instructions, a large amount of material assistance to the collective farms from the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party and the government, and the dispatching to us of proven Bolsheviks—Comrades Khataevich, Veger, Popov, Balytsky, and especially Pavel Petrovich Postyshev—helped us to liquidate the lagging and disruptions in agriculture, and to rectify errors and distortions committed in the implementation of Leninist nationality policy.”<sup>52</sup> As the historian Heorhii Papakin has noted appositely, such a concentration of current members of the nomenklatura in Soviet Ukraine was an indicator of the special treatment accorded to the region. Furthermore, the Kremlin leadership was using the UkrSSR as a kind of testing ground, where various types of repressive measures were first introduced in order to confiscate not only grain but all types of food, as well as constant searches of peasant households by so-called “towing brigades,” blacklisting, etc.<sup>53</sup>

After Balytsky returned to Ukraine, important changes took place at the highest levels of the Chekist leadership of the UkrSSR. For example, Izrail Leplevsky was appointed deputy head of the GPU, Mikhail Aleksandrovsky as head of the Secret-Political Sector, and Yakiv Pysmenny as administrative chief. Changes also taking place in the middle-level management of the GPU UkrSSR demonstrated that Balytsky was “assembling his team.” This circumstance did not pass unremarked by his contemporaries. For example, Leonid Slovinsky [Slavinsky, Slowinski], Pysmenny’s predecessor, stated subsequently that after Balytsky returned to Ukraine, “he began to gather around himself a certain group of people who were devoted to him personally and capable of implementing unconditionally any

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<sup>51</sup> Cited in *Der ukrainische Hunger-Holocaust*, p. 229.

<sup>52</sup> *XII z'їzd KP(b)U: 18–23 sichnia 1934 r.; Stenohrafichnyi zvit* (Kharkiv: Partvydav, 1934), p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> For a detailed discussion, see H. Papakin, “*Chorni doshky*”: *Antyselians'ki represii (1932–1933)* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukraїny NAN Ukraїny, 2013), p. 46.

of his instructions and directives.”<sup>54</sup> Indeed, practically all the newly appointed Chekists had worked under Balytsky’s leadership in Soviet Ukraine for many years and were well known to him.

The GPU UkrSSR intensified its operations in early 1933, supported by a resolution issued in January by the Politburo of the CC AUCP(B) mandating the creation of posts of deputy directors of political departments responsible for “political work” at MTS and state farms; these individuals were employees of the GPU. OGPU Order No. 0017 dated 25 January 1933 defined their duties, which included combating “counterrevolutionary manifestations” at MTS and state farms, uncovering “counterrevolutionary and kulak groups,” protecting “socialist property,” and assessing “conditions of political morale and economic production at MTS and state farms.”<sup>55</sup>

On the one hand, deputy heads of political departments at MTS or state farms were subordinate to the directors; on the other, they retained complete independence in terms of their operational work. This stimulated too much terror activity by the Chekists, and the government was compelled to react. On 8 May 1933, in a special instruction sent directly to local authorities, the CC AUCP(B) and the Sovnarkom condemned the “disorganized mass arrests” in rural Ukraine. The document emphasized that the “mass arrests and repressive measures in the countryside were clearly becoming politically harmful and dangerous.”<sup>56</sup>

On 6 February a special resolution of the CC AUCP(B) suspended the grain procurement campaign in the UkrSSR until the end of the sowing season.<sup>57</sup> From the 1932 harvest, 260.7 million poods of grain were shipped out of Ukraine, including 217.9 million poods from collective farms and independent farmsteads. Only two oblasts of Soviet Ukraine (Vinnitsia and Kyiv) managed to fulfill the grain quotas imposed on collective and individual farms (which had been reduced in October 1932).<sup>58</sup>

As the question now was no longer one of confiscating grain, the Soviet Ukrainian GPU shifted its focus somewhat. On 13 February 1933 Balytsky issued Order No. 2 “On new objectives for agent and operative work of organs of the GPU UkrSSR,” which stated that “analysis of closed cases has determined that in the given instance we have encountered a single, thoroughly elaborated plan for the organization of an armed uprising in Ukraine in the spring of 1933 in order to overthrow Soviet rule and establish a capitalist state, the so-called Ukrainian Independent Republic.” At the same time, Balytsky

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<sup>54</sup> HDA SBU, Kyiv, spr. 43787 FP, ark. 40.

<sup>55</sup> See Vladimir N. Khaustov, “Razvitie sovetskikh organov gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti, 1917–1953 gg.,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 42, nos. 2–4 (April–December 2001): 366.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>57</sup> Holod 1932–1933 rokiv, p. 349.

<sup>58</sup> TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 237, ark. 145; TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 281, ark. 201.

assigned the GPU UkrSSR the “immediate fundamental and chief objective...of ensuring the [success of the] spring sowing.”<sup>59</sup> He demanded that the heads of GPU oblast divisions “complete and prepare cases on the local insurgent periphery within a ten-day deadline...that are to be handed over to the Judicial Troika of the GPU UkrSSR. In these cases, leave only those indicted individuals whose testimonies can help uncover additional links with other organizations, expose new participants, key centers, and connections that lead abroad. All these arrested individuals should be concentrated at oblast headquarters.”<sup>60</sup> The order also contained very specific instructions to the heads of local GPU organs.

For the implementation of this order, district divisions of the GPU were relieved of “unpromising cases,” and oblast-level GPU operatives were sent to assist them. At the same time, special operations agents were dispatched to districts in which “insurgents and spies” were allegedly operating, GPU economic department staff were sent to industrialized districts with large state farms, and secret political agents were dispatched to all other counties. On Balytsky’s orders, decisive measures were also applied in order to prevent the mass exodus of Ukrainian peasants abroad in search of bread.

Soon afterwards, Balytsky reported that under the leadership of Solomon Mazo, head of the Economic Directorate of the GPU UkrSSR, a “counterrevolutionary organization in Ukraine’s agricultural sector, linked to analogous counterrevolutionary organizations in Moscow, other parts of the Union, and abroad,” had been smashed, and that the Chekists in Ukraine had uncovered a large espionage network that had infiltrated intelligence organs, industrial enterprises, transportation, and defense construction facilities. Ukrainian specialists arrested in Moscow were lumped together with a Union-wide “counterrevolutionary organization in the agricultural sector,” and in March 1933 they were shot.<sup>61</sup>

On 10 March 1933 the Politburo of the CC AUCP(B) approved a resolution “To grant the troika comprising C[omrades] Balytsky, Karlson, and Leplevsky the right to examine insurgency and counterrevolution cases in Ukraine, with application of the supreme measure of social protection [death penalty].”<sup>62</sup> Together with Postyshev, Balytsky traveled to famine-struck districts of Soviet Ukraine, where he implemented decisive and harsh measures. This allowed him to say later to members of his

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<sup>59</sup> Cited in *Rozsekrechena pam’iat’: Holodomor 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni v dokumentakh GPU–NKVD* (Kyiv: Stylos, 2007), pp. 512–13.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 514–15.

<sup>61</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Iu. I. Shapoval, *Ukraïna 20–50-kh rokiv: Storinky nenapysanoi istorii* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1993), pp. 106–7.

<sup>62</sup> *Stalinskoe Politbiuro v 30-e gody; Sbornik dokumentov*, comp. O. V. Khlevniuk, A. V. Kvashonkin et al. (Moscow: AIRO-XX, 1995), p. 63.

inner circle that he and Postyshev had been sent to save Ukraine, which, in his (Balytsky's) absence, had been brought to the point of annihilation.<sup>63</sup> Balytsky's department also had to deal with yet another horrific and inevitable consequence of the famine—homeless children, whose numbers rose drastically in 1933. For example, in May of that year Oleksandr Bronievyi (Faktorovych), head of the oblast commission for the alleviation of child homelessness and deputy chief of the Kharkiv oblast GPU, wrote in a memorandum that every day 400–500 children of various ages were being registered at the railway station.<sup>64</sup> These children were actually fleeing from their starving villages to the city, where it was possible to get food and obtain at least some kind of medical care.

One of Balytsky's main tasks as head of the GPU in Soviet Ukraine was maintaining a veil of secrecy around the very fact of the massive famine and its fatal consequences. For example, a resolution of the Politburo of the CC CP(B)U dated 13 March 1933 noted the following: "Order Com[rade] Balytsky to apply measures that make it impossible for news about the famine in the village of Staroshvedske to become known abroad."<sup>65</sup>

As the Holodomor raged on, Balytsky showed constant concern for the welfare of his departmental staff. In particular, in April 1933 he sent a memorandum to Stanislav Kosior, informing him that "auxiliary farms exist for the purpose of creating our own food storehouse to improve the living conditions of GPU personnel and the oblast police precincts," and then he requested seed grain assistance (3.5 centners of oats, 1.8 centners of barley, etc.).<sup>66</sup> Balytsky's comment is characteristic: "In the event of a favorable decision by the CC, I will handle the issue in Moscow."<sup>67</sup> Kosior's resolution stated: "Support before the CC AUCP(B) the request of the GPU UkrSSR concerning the allocation of seed grain aid to auxiliary farms and state farms."<sup>68</sup> And the following spring, the GPU UkrSSR was assisted by the CC CP(B)U. According to a decision dated 23 April 1934, from storehouses in the republic the following were issued to GPU-run state farms to resow their winter crops, which had frozen: 900 poods of millet, 600 poods of buckwheat, 300 poods of corn, and 120 poods of sunflower seed.<sup>69</sup> Here it must be noted that throughout the Holodomor, even during the months marked by the

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<sup>63</sup> HDA SBU, Odesa, spr. 25468, t. 1, ark. 48.

<sup>64</sup> TsDAHOU, f. 7, op. 1, spr. 1019, ark. 27.

<sup>65</sup> TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 16, spr. 9, ark. 190.

<sup>66</sup> TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 16, spr. 9, ark. 319.

<sup>67</sup> TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 16, spr. 9, ark. 319.

<sup>68</sup> TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 16, spr. 9, ark. 319.

<sup>69</sup> See Shapoval and Zolotar'ov, *Vsevolod Balyts'kyi*, p. 203.

highest mortality rates, neither Balytsky himself nor his subordinates experienced any problems in obtaining food.

During the spring sowing (March–June 1933), the CC AUCP(B) and the Sovnarkom gave the UkrSSR 559,090 metric tons (34,131,475.3 poods) of grain, consisting of 371,640 tons (22,678,977.7 poods) of seed, 84,760 tons (5,174,451.0 poods) of food relief, and 102,690 tons (6,269,046.4 poods) of forage.<sup>70</sup> For the most part, this grain had been confiscated from the peasants in the preceding months of grain requisitions and stored in state granaries and warehouses on the territory of Soviet Ukraine. On 19 March 1933, Balytsky issued a special GPU UkrSSR circular on measures pertaining to the food “difficulties” (*zatrudnennia*); this particular euphemism was still being used even in secret documents, although everyone knew that it referred to the famine. The circular contained an instruction to establish troikas in all districts (comprising the secretary of the district Party committee, the secretary of the district executive committee, and the district GPU chief) for the distribution of food relief, as well as “for finding food locally.”<sup>71</sup> To this end, Balytsky had his subordinates focus on hunting down “counterrevolutionary elements” that were allegedly exploiting the “food difficulties” for their own purposes. Exposed enemies were to be arrested and sentenced forthwith. The circular emphasized: “Heads of GPU organs are to establish firm revolutionary order in districts affected by the [food] difficulties.”<sup>72</sup>

The amount of food relief was less than the Ukrainian SSR’s monthly grain allotment for those reliant on central provisions. But the delivered seed grain made it possible to sow nearly two million more hectares of land in the spring of 1933 than in 1932. At the same time, the Soviet government markedly increased deliveries of agricultural machinery to Soviet Ukraine. In 1933 the number of tractors increased by 15,000 and the number of combines by 2,500. By the end of the year, 48,500 tractors, 4,500 combines, and nearly 9,000 trucks were working the Ukrainian fields.<sup>73</sup>

Having engineered the Holodomor, the Soviet regime sought to “rectify” the situation in the countryside, although Ukrainian villages would continue to hunger long afterward. But what had been done by the Chekists, and personally by Vsevolod Balytsky, could not be “rectified.” In 1933, 124,463 persons were arrested in Soviet Ukraine, 1,462 of whom were sentenced to be shot by the state security

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<sup>70</sup> See Vasyli'iev, *Politychne kerivnytstvo*, p. 284.

<sup>71</sup> Cited in *Sovetskaia derevnia glazami VChK–OGPU–NKVD, 1918–1939: Dokumenty i materialy v 4 tomakh*, ed. A. Berelovich and V. Danilov, vol. 3, bk. 2, 1932–1934 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2009), p. 350.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351.

<sup>73</sup> See Vasyli'iev, *Politychne kerivnytstvo*, p. 285.

organs and courts of the People's Commissariat of Justice.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, the repressions continued when the Bolsheviks began to destroy the "Skrypnyk regime," including People's Commissar of Education Mykola Skrypnyk himself, as well as Ukrainian officials and intellectuals. Balytsky was involved in all of this.

In late 1933, Balytsky applied to Postyshev about conferring the Order of the Red Banner on a group of Chekists. The letter addressed to the second secretary of the CC CP(B)U noted in particular that "in the last year, the organs of the GPU UkrSSR struck a decisive blow against the counterrevolution, which was carrying out widespread destructive work in Ukraine.... The largest counterrevolutionary organizations have been liquidated: (1) the Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO); (2) the Polish Military Organization (POW); (3) the Organization of Ukrainian SRs; (4) the insurgency in the agricultural sector, etc."<sup>75</sup>

These were the most prominent cases, in a manner of speaking, but there were countless others. In his speech at the Twelfth Congress of the CP(B)U, Balytsky also mentioned the "successes" of the Chekists:

In 1933 a decisive blow was struck at the Ukrainian nationalist counterrevolution. This blow was manifested primarily in the blow struck at local anti-Soviet groups, including kulak and Petliurite elements in the countryside that were organizing sabotage and subversion in the agricultural sector.

In addition, a decisive blow, a decisive rout of key centers was carried out, above all of the so-called military organization, concerning which much has already been said and which spearheaded the insurgent, espionage, and diversionary activity. The same type of blow was struck at the organization of sabotage in the agricultural economy.

Along with this, a bloc of so-called Ukrainian nationalist parties was uncovered: the UCP [Ukrainian Communist Party], Borotbists, SRs, SDs, UVO, and other separate groups that were direct secret agents of the international counterrevolution, first and foremost of German and Polish fascism.<sup>76</sup>

It is no wonder that Vsevolod Balytsky was elected a member of the CC AUCP(B) at the Seventeenth Congress of the AUCP(B), which took place in Moscow in early 1934. This honor was conferred by the supreme Party leadership on another Chekist, Genrikh Yagoda, and Terentii Deribas,

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 291.

<sup>75</sup> TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 2886, ark. 87–88.

<sup>76</sup> TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 429, ark. 152.

the OGPU plenipotentiary for the Far-Eastern Territory, was nominated as a candidate member of the Central Committee. All this supposedly attested to Balytsky's considerable prestige not only as a Chekist but also as a Party member. But that only seemed to be the case.

In the spring of 1937 Balytsky, then People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the Ukrainian SSR, was assigned to the Far East to head the NKVD Directorate for the Far Eastern Territory. But he was not allowed to take up his duties, and on 19 June he was dismissed from the position. On 25 June 1937, during the Plenum of the CC AUCP(B), he was removed from the Central Committee and expelled from the Party "for betraying the Party and the Fatherland, and for active counterrevolutionary activity." His case was then handed over to the NKVD, and no later than 7 July 1937, Balytsky was arrested in his service train car (pursuant to Order No. 15, undated, signed by Nikolai Yezhov) and sent to Moscow.<sup>77</sup>

Under interrogation, Balytsky confessed to being recruited in late 1935 by Red Army commander (Kyiv Military District) Iona Yakir to take part in a fascist military plot. Yakir had allegedly brought him into the Ukrainian headquarters of that conspiracy, which was preparing an armed uprising with the goal of separating Ukraine from the USSR and restoring capitalism. Balytsky was also accused of sabotaging the struggle against the counterrevolution. While under arrest, he wrote letters to Yezhov and Stalin. In his letter to Stalin, he noted: "I have no feelings of pity for the [anti-Soviet peasant class] enemy; I myself frequently and capably applied the strongest forms of repression."<sup>78</sup>

On 25 November 1937, a commission comprised of the USSR People's Commissar for Internal Affairs, the Prosecutor-General of the USSR, and the head of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union found Balytsky guilty of participating in an "anti-Soviet fascist military conspiracy," and sentenced him to be executed. He was shot on 27 November at Yagoda's former *dacha*, which had been turned into an NKVD "special facility," namely, a mass execution site.<sup>79</sup> Today it is a cemetery near Kommunarka town, on the outskirts of Moscow.

In conclusion, it is well worth emphasizing the need for and rewarding prospects of further research into the life and work of specific individuals in the Soviet Communist establishment of the 1920s and 1930s. This "human paradigm" is extremely important for understanding global models and

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<sup>77</sup> See Shapoval, "Vsevolod Balyts'kyi: Dolia spetssluzhby," p. 410.

<sup>78</sup> Cited in V. Khaustov and L. Samuel'son, *Stalin, NKVD i repressii 1936–1938 gg.* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2008), p. 127.

<sup>79</sup> See Shapoval, "Vsevolod Balyts'kyi: Dolia spetssluzhby," p. 411.

general trends, as well as for obtaining a more realistic grasp of the causes, course, and consequences of the Holodomor of 1932–33 in Soviet Ukraine.

*Translated from the Ukrainian by Marta D. Olynyk*