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The Ruling Stratum in the Ukrainian SSR during the Holodomor of 1932–33

In recent times a large body of literature has been published about the initiators of the Holodomor, that is, those who engineered the famine-genocide that took place in Ukraine in 1932–33. The general public is familiar with their names. However, there are far fewer scholarly works devoted to the activities of the immediate executors of Stalin's directives during the greatest national catastrophe in Ukrainian history—the Communist Party and Soviet *nomenklatura* (party appointees) of the Ukrainian SSR, which constituted the nucleus of the Kremlin's colonial administration in the republic. Stalin's intention to punish the Ukrainian peasants for their resistance to the policy of all-out collectivization by means of a terror-famine depended both on the top ranks of the Soviet Ukrainian leadership and on the utterly compliant local apparatus of power in the republic. Was this apparatus capable of starving the Ukrainian peasants into submission?

The state grain-procurement campaigns of 1932 and 1933, the main goal of which was to confiscate grain from the Ukrainian peasantry, were directed by Stanislav Kosior, general secretary of the Central Committee, Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine (CC CP[B]U), Vlas Chubar, head of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR, and Hryhorii Petrovsky, head of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (VUTsVK). In possession of information about the actual state of affairs in Ukrainian agriculture, the leaders of Soviet Ukraine took certain steps to convince the Kremlin leadership that the grain-procurement plans issued from above were unrealistic. This was not the first time that such a situation had arisen, but in previous years Stalin had never expressed an intent to punish the Ukrainian peasants, who

were loath to join collective farms, by means of famine. In the summer of 1932, however, the party and state leadership of the Ukrainian SSR was forced to choose between carrying out the plan or stepping down. The latter was not an option for high-ranking members of the Soviet nomenklatura because unsubmitive political figures were condemned to political oblivion. The Ukrainian leaders therefore opted for the first choice, however regrettable—to carry out the plan—for in the communist system, which functioned according to the principles of “democratic centralism,” if Moscow insisted on something, Kharkiv had to submit. Thus, the supreme republican leadership, powerless to resist the dictate from the Moscow center, became the executor of the Kremlin’s policy, whose implementation cost the Ukrainian nation many millions of victims.

In order to compel Ukraine to fulfill the excessively high grain-procurement plans, Stalin resorted to intimidating the local Communist Party leadership by means of a tried-and-true method—a purge of the ranks of the CP(B)U. The removal of Ukrainian officials took place in two stages: in January 1932, when selective expulsions took place in local organizations in several Ukrainian districts (*okruhy*), and in June 1933, when an all-out purge of the CP(B)U was launched.

As is generally known, party purges conducted on the eve of large-scale experiments were an integral element of Bolshevik traditions established by Lenin. For example, upon initiating the policy of all-out collectivization in 1929, Stalin launched a purge that was supposed to be a general review of party ranks once the new chief had vanquished all opposition to his policy of building socialism in one country at top speed. At the time, 13,000 communists and candidate members of the CP(B)U were removed from 34 districts of the Ukrainian SSR.

According to Stalin, in 1932–33 it became necessary to continue the work begun in the Ukrainian SSR in 1929–30 and purge the CP(B)U not only of concealed oppositionists but also of those functionaries who were implementing the policy of Ukrainization. The experience of earlier purges had shown that they allowed the Moscow center to keep not only rank-and-file party members but also the top leaders of the CP(B)U in a state of constant apprehension. Having obtained their high positions thanks to the Kremlin’s favor, those in the top echelon not only completely supported Stalin’s policy of accelerated socialist construction in the USSR but also gave no indication of even hypothetical readiness to oppose the center’s directives. Therefore in 1932, when Moscow produced yet another excessively high grain-procurement plan for Ukraine, it encountered only indecisive efforts on the part of the republican leadership to obtain an inconsequential reduction. Petrovsky and Chubar emphasized this particular point in their letters to Stalin and Molotov dated 10 June 1932.

The Soviet Ukrainian leaders’ appeal to the Kremlin rulers was based on the actual state of affairs in the Ukrainian countryside, of which they were well informed from various sources, including reports from local leaders. For example, while on an inspection visit to the Kyiv region, the first secretary of the Kyiv oblast (province) party committee, Mykola Demchenko, wrote a letter to Kosior, the head of the CP(B)U, informing him about the deaths by starvation of children of collective farm members. Demchenko reported that the farmers attributed responsibility for those deaths to the party, which had “fleeced and duped” them, for “there had been food to eat as long as there were still landowners.”¹ He added that the leitmotif of all

¹ *Holodomor 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni: Dokumenty i materialy*, comp. Ruslan Pyrih (Kyiv, 2007), p. 115.

speeches delivered at collective farm meetings was the rhetorical question, “How is it that we are grain growers and still had a harvest, but we must suffer from starvation and die?”²

In a letter to Molotov and Stalin, Petrovsky noted that at times “criticism of the situation that has arisen becomes too deep and broad: Why did they create an artificial famine? After all, we had a harvest. Why was the sowing seed taken away? That did not happen even under the old regime. Why should Ukrainians...have to go to non-grain-producing lands for grain?”³ Petrovsky continues: “Because of the general famine, the villagers have spontaneously set out for the Dno station in the Central Chernozem Region, for Belarus and the North Caucasus. Here and there, two-thirds of all the men abandon their village and travel for grain because at the Dno st[ation] grain costs 30–40 rubles a pood, and here it is 100–140 rubles a pood.”⁴

In a letter to Molotov and Stalin dated 10 June 1932 Vlas Chubar, the head of the Soviet Ukrainian government, wrote that “cases of malnutrition and starvation were noted already in December and January both among independent farmers (especially among those whose farmsteads had been completely sold off, including petty belongings, for having failed to carry out grain-procurement tasks) and among collective farm members.... Since March and April, those who are malnourished and starving have swelled up and starved to death; dozens and hundreds have accumulated in every village.”⁵

The famine in the Kyiv region and problems of food supply in the city of Kyiv are described in a letter written on 18 June 1932 by Havrylo Tkachenko, a student at the Kyiv Piscicultural Technical College, to Stanislav Kosior, general secretary of the CC CP(B)U. This

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 198.

⁴ Ibid., p. 199.

⁵ Ibid., p. 201.

member of the Young Communist League, who by his own account “had persistently and endlessly conducted explanatory work...to show that the party and its goal [the building of socialism] is correct and realizable,” posed the following question to the leader of the CP(B)U:

To hell with this kind of socialism if humanity is becoming pauperized with every passing day. In Kyiv, any numbers of peasants sit on street corners with their whole families, begging and crying for a piece of bread; they have already swelled up from starvation. And who are they? Members of collective farms who have hundreds of labor days. In all the student cafeterias, where slogan after slogan is glued [to the walls], ‘Let’s struggle for qualitative and quantitative indices of public catering,’ students are constantly fed this kind of lunch: H₂O [water] and a few herbs; if only there were a potato, and there is no fat either, and you get 20–25 grams of bread with this.

For the second course there is gruel or soya, so when you take it with water, as it is, then you have 100 grams, also without any fat. ‘There you go, Havrylo, live on that!’ That’s the way it is in Kyiv cafeteria no. 2–3 of the SZK⁶ and elsewhere. If only they would give enough soya to eat: that’s what practically every student says right now. He gets 40–30 rubles a month and various deductions from them, so he obtains a net sum of 15–20 rubles. So live off that for the month when the student cooperative (restricted access) charges the following prices: 400 grams of bread, 2 rubles; 100 grams of fat, 3 [rubles]–3 rubles 50 kopecks; butter, 2 rubles 85 kopecks; eggs, 60 kopecks each, and so on. Whenever any soya shortcakes appear somewhere, the kind that earlier even a dog wouldn’t eat, there is now a lineup of 500 people. Student after student is contracting

⁶ Students’kyi zakrytyi kooperatyv

tuberculosis; right now five people from our technical college have gone into hospital, where they have been left: they are spitting blood.

Everyone is living like this—students, workers, peasants, and others—and I don't know why people are dying of hunger, and nomatter how many conversations of all kinds overflow with words, no action is taken.

Probably the CC does not see this or does not imagine [the seriousness of the situation]. This year one can expect nothing better but something even worse, for apparently there will be large-scale crop failure, while even greater grain-procurement plans have been dumped on the collective farms.

Now tell me, esteemed Stanislav Vikentiiovich: Are these the paths to socialism? These are the paths to the dung-heap and perdition. Is this any way to build socialism?... Will we have a healthy generation in our country? It will be sick, feeble, and weak, and even at that, only 50 percent will be left alive.

...In my opinion, all this hinges on the bungling of the leadership.”⁷

Stalin's reaction to the catastrophic food situation in the Ukrainian SSR and the appeal from the republican leaders requesting a reduction of the grain-procurement plan and the provision of food relief are revealed in a letter that the Soviet leader sent to Lazar Kaganovich on 15 June 1932: “I did not like Chubar's and Petrovsky's letters. The former is indulging in ‘self-criticism’ in order to obtain additional millions of poods of grain from Moscow; the other is playing the saint who sacrificed himself to carry out the ‘directive of the CC AUCP(B) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)]’ in order to obtain a reduction of the grain-procurement

⁷ Ibid., pp. 211–12.

plan. Both this and the other are unacceptable.... In my opinion, Ukraine has been given more than its due. There is no need to give more grain, nor is there any place from which to take it.”⁸

The fact that the refusal of food relief for Ukraine became the general line of the Kremlin’s conduct is attested by the materials of the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference, held in July 1932. In response to the Soviet Ukrainian leadership’s appeal for a reduction of grain-procurement quotas, the head of the Soviet government, Viacheslav Molotov, declared that “there will be no concessions or vacillations on the question of completing the task assigned by the party and the Soviet government.”⁹ Meanwhile, the presence in Kharkiv of Molotov and another of Stalin’s associates, the secretary of the CC AUCP(B) Lazar Kaganovich, was no accident. Stalin had dispatched them to the Ukrainian party conference to remind the Soviet Ukrainian leadership not only that the republic had not fulfilled the grain-procurement plan for 1931 but also that the Kremlin would not tolerate another such “failure.”

Until late autumn 1932, the Kremlin observed Ukraine’s failure to fulfill the excessively high plan rather dispassionately. Finally, realizing that its fulfillment was at risk, on 22 October 1932 the CC AUCP(B) set up an extraordinary commission whose members included Viacheslav Molotov (head), Moisei Kalmanovich, Sarkis, Markevich, and Krentsel. The commission radically altered grain-procurement methods, created an atmosphere of fear, and initiated mass repressions targeting leading collective farm, party, and Soviet activists, as well as ordinary peasants. The working methods of the “Molotov commission” were described in a letter to Stalin written on 17 December 1932 by a member of the Young Communist League named Novytsky: “He [Comrade Molotov] inspired terror in county (raion) workers; they, in turn, inspired terror in

⁸ Ibid., p. 206.

⁹ *Pravda*, 14 July 1932.

local workers, and the local people inspired terror on collective farms and especially among individual farmers (so many illegal actions and arbitrary decisions).”¹⁰

Attempts to instill terror had taken place earlier. For example, following the results of the grain-procurement campaign of 1931, the so-called Drabiv case was fabricated in Ukraine. This was a show trial that resulted in the dissolution of the county party committee office, presidiums of the control commission, and the county executive committee; the arrests of the heads of the county executive committee, control commission, and trade-union council; and the expulsion from the party of the secretary of the county party committee of the CP(B)U.¹¹ In the fall of 1932 the Soviet Ukrainian government, on orders from the Moscow center, resorted to more radical measures. On 6 November 1932 “in order to improve fundamentally the management” of judicial repressions, the Politburo of the CC CP(B)U proposed that provincial party committees create provincial commissions, so-called “quartets” including the first secretary of the provincial committee, the head of the control commission, the head of the GPU [State Political Directorate or secret police] branch, and a procurator. These commissions were to pay special attention to cases involving communists.¹²

On 14 December 1932 the CC AUCP(B) and the Council of People’s Commissars (CPC) of the USSR handed down a resolution branding as malicious enemies of the party, the working class, and the collective farm peasantry “saboteurs with party membership cards in their pockets.” The resolution noted that “in relation to these renegades and enemies of Soviet rule and

¹⁰ Central State Archive of Civic Organizations of Ukraine (hereafter TsDAHO Ukraïny), f. 1, op. 6, spr. 283, ark. 79.

¹¹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 236, ark. 99.

¹² M.I. Panchuk, “Zlochyn Stalina ta ioho otochennia,” in *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: Ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, comp. F. M. Rudych, R. Ia. Pyrih et al. (Kyiv, 1990), p. 43.

collective farms who still have party membership cards in their pockets, the CC and CPC order the application of severe repressions, sentences of five to ten years, confinement in a concentration camp and, in certain circumstances, execution by shooting.”¹³ Thus, by late 1932 judicial grounds had been established for launching repressions against collective farm and county leaders who were not coping with the task of fulfilling grain-procurement plans.

In order to acquire the necessary data for fabricating cases against so-called saboteurs, the GPU created a ramified secret-agent network in the Ukrainian countryside and then organized “political trials.” Thus, on charges of “tolerating kulak sabotage” alone, thousands of directors and members of collective farm administrations, specialists, and party and Soviet workers were arrested and sentenced in Ukraine. The most publicized court cases were lodged against the leaders of the Orikhiv, Balakliia, Nosiv, Kobeliaky, and Velykyi Tokmak counties of the Ukrainian SSR.

The best-known case was the “Orikhiv affair,” which was fabricated on Stalin’s direct order and based on GPU reports of “sabotage attitudes” among the leaders of Orikhiv county (Dnipropetrovsk province). On 7 December 1932, on Stalin’s directive, the CC AUCP(B) distributed a circular to all party organizations in which the leaders of Orikhiv county were proclaimed “deceivers and cheats surreptitiously conducting a kulak policy under the slogan of their agreement with the party’s general line.” The document therefore recommended that they be “arrested at once and rewarded for their merits, that is, each given from five to ten years’ imprisonment.”¹⁴ The “Orikhiv affair” was a direct reaction not only to Stalin’s letter but also to

¹³ Ibid., p. 291.

¹⁴ Cited in N. R. Romanets' and V. V. Chentsov, ““Orikhivs'ka sprava”: Pravda i vyhadky,” in *Istoriia Ukraïny: Malovidomi imena, podii, fakty; Zbirnyk statei* (Kyiv, 1996), p. 391.

the resolution issued on 29 November 1932 by the CC CP(B)U, which proposed to associate the repressions with organizational political work. That is, the “Orikhiv affair” was deliberately arranged from the outset, and its main purpose was to demonstrate to local leaders what would happen to those who did not show enough diligence in fulfilling state plans.

Along with intimidating local activists in the Ukrainian SSR, the Kremlin pursued a course of “strengthening” the upper echelon of the CP(B)U with the appointment of Stalin’s trusted associates who not only monitored the progress of grain procurement on the dictator’s behalf but also essentially took into their hands the leadership of the republic. Stalin’s first emissaries, the deputy head of the OGPU (All-Union State Political Administration; Soviet secret police) of the USSR, Ivan Akulov, and Mendel Khataevich, the “hero” of the collectivization campaign in the Volga region and an eminent party functionary, arrived in Ukraine in October 1932, that is, after Moscow became thoroughly convinced that without additional pressure on its part, the Ukrainian peasants would not give up their grain. These two officials, who headed the Donbas and Dnipropetrovsk provincial committees of the CP(B)U, respectively, were supposed to show the Ukrainian leaders how party directives were to be carried out. These appointments, especially the return to Ukraine of Pavel Postyshev in January 1933, indicated that Moscow would not retreat even one step from its plans for the accelerated collectivization of the Ukrainian countryside by means of a terror-famine.

Khataevich and Postyshev, who were appointed alternately to the position of second secretary of the CC CP(B)U in October 1932 and late January 1933, respectively, became the Kremlin’s de facto overseers of the Ukrainian republic and its leading figures, approving the most important decisions, proclamations, and directives pertaining to the grain-procurement campaign. Together with Postyshev, to whom Stalin granted unlimited power as commander in

chief of the famine (*glavgol*) in the Ukrainian SSR, Vsevolod Balytsky also returned to the republic in order to head the Ukrainian GPU and carry out a purge, together with Postyshev, of four of the CP(B)U's provincial organizations: Vinnytsia, Donetsk, Kyiv, and Odesa. As a result of the "cadre work" carried out by Stalin's henchmen, in the first ten months of 1933, 236 secretaries of county party committees and 240 heads of county executive committees were replaced in the Ukrainian SSR.¹⁵ Khataevich alone, who arrived in Dnipropetrovsk in February 1933, replaced 16 secretaries of county party committees and 10 heads of county executive committees that very month.¹⁶

Even though the reports of the Ukrainian GPU bristled with announcements about the deaths of thousands of peasants from starvation, the members of the Ukrainian republic's supreme party and Soviet leadership, terrified at the prospect of losing their positions, pretended stubbornly for a long time that nothing extraordinary was happening in the Ukrainian villages. For example, on 9 February 1933 Stasiuk, the head of the information sector of the Organizational and Instructional Department of the CC CP(B)U, sent a note for the information of members and candidate members of the CC CP(B)U Politburo titled "On the So-Called Sham Famine for the Purpose of Struggle against Grain Procurements." In it he tendentiously distorted the facts concerning the raging famine, informing the top political leadership of the republic only about "certain cases of emaciation resulting from starvation among children of so-called kulaks."¹⁷

¹⁵ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 429, ark. 73.

¹⁶ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6277, ark. 112.

¹⁷ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6274, ark. 62.

As Khataevich wrote to Stalin on 3 March 1933, “until mid-February not only was no attention whatever paid to all these cases and facts of swelling from hunger and deaths from starvation, but reacting to this...was deemed an anti-party attitude.”¹⁸ It was only when mass starvation among the peasants reached its peak that the Soviet Ukrainian leadership raised the alarm. The Kremlin then “magnanimously” allowed its minions in the Ukrainian SSR to provide selective relief to starving members of collective farms and poor independent farmers with the intention of exploiting that assistance in order to attract “more honest and better independent farmers (not kulaks)” to collective farms.¹⁹

It was only after obtaining permission from the Moscow center that the leaders of some Ukrainian provinces, notably Kyiv province, set about determining the actual state of affairs in all counties without conducting “a special, official accounting of the facts of acute malnutrition and special investigations by official commissions.”²⁰ On 15 February 1933 a commission for the creation of food and cash reserves in starving counties was established within the framework of the presidium of the Kyiv provincial executive committee. The resolution pertaining to its creation even noted that the presidiums of county executive committees “bear the strictest responsibility, up to and including judicial prosecution, for failing to adopt timely and active measures to liquidate cases of starvation.”²¹ At the same time, county executive committees were obliged “to wage a decisive struggle against all kinds of malingerers who seek to exploit discrete

¹⁸ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6277, ark. 110.

¹⁹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6277, ark. 265.

²⁰ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6274, ark. 63.

²¹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6274, ark. 67.

cases of malnutrition for the purpose of creating a nonproductive atmosphere on collective farms on the basis of starvation psychosis.”²²

On 22 February 1933 the office of the Kyiv province party committee of the CP(B)U approved a decision to organize special commissions in the counties of the province to eliminate “problems of food supply...and cases of starvation.” Commission members included the head of the county executive committee, the head of the county department of the GPU, the women’s organizer of the county department of health, and representatives of the county Communist Youth League committee and of the Children’s Friends Society.²³

In early March 1933, such special commissions were established in every province of the Ukrainian SSR and in the Moldavian ASSR, despite vigorous opposition to their creation on the part of K. Koval, the head of the organizational and instructional department of the CC CP(B)U. In a letter to Postyshev justifying his position, Koval referred to the rejection of the idea of establishing such commissions at a meeting of the Politburo.²⁴ Furthermore, according to data compiled by the GPU of the Ukrainian SSR, as of 12 March 1933, special commissions “for the mobilization of resources and provision of urgent relief” had been established in 139 counties of the republic where “cases of starvation have been observed.”²⁵

There were not enough local resources for providing relief, a fact recognized by the Soviet Ukrainian leaders themselves. Balytsky, for example, reporting on the measures adopted by Kyiv province in the struggle against the famine, wrote on 14 March 1933 that they “cannot

²² TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6274, ark. 68.

²³ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6274, ark. 85.

²⁴ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6274, ark. 91.

²⁵ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6274, ark. 150, 152.

provide the necessary relief to the starving.”²⁶ The provision of relief was also fundamentally complicated by the lack of reliable data on the numbers of starving people. Balytsky admitted that the “cited figures [on the number of starving people in Kyiv province] are significantly reduced, inasmuch as GPU county personnel are not carrying out a registration of the number of starving people, and often even village councils do not know the actual number of those who have starved to death.”²⁷ This statement by the head of the GPU of the Ukrainian SSR was a clear-cut prevarication, for his office possessed the most accurate information on the number of starving people and those who had died. The cause lies elsewhere. Pursuant to the Kremlin’s directives, the communist authorities were quite deliberately concealing the mortality rate due to starvation, and targeted those who tried to speak the truth about the famine for repression. For example, a medical attendant named Vorobiov from the village of Husarivka in the Kharkiv region and his colleague Oleinikov from the village of Saryi Saltiv were arrested and prosecuted for issuing death certificates indicating the true cause of death: emaciation resulting from starvation.²⁸

Even after the Kremlin granted permission to provide relief to certain categories of peasants, the Soviet Ukrainian government acted indecisively, with the result that the adopted measures were inadequate, ineffective, and much too late to put an end to the pestilence of hunger, the victims of which were convinced that “the Soviet authorities are not interested in

²⁶ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6277, ark. 190.

²⁷ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6277, ark. 186.

²⁸ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr.6274, ark. 25.

improving the condition of the population; on the contrary, they are interested on the whole in destroying the peasants whom they do not need.”²⁹

Archival sources reveal that, even though the preponderant majority of local leaders scrupulously carried out Moscow’s directives concerning grain procurement, individual representatives of the republican leadership waged tacit resistance against Stalin’s policy of crushing the Ukrainian peasantry. Proof of this may be found in the materials for the biography of the then commissar of agriculture of the Ukrainian SSR, A. V. Odintsov, supplied by his wife. In them she notes: “At one of the plenums of the CC CP(B)U in [February] 1933, Aleksandr Vasilievich dared to criticize the incorrect implementation of policy in Ukrainian agriculture. This policy led to the peasantry’s difficult situation, the famine of 1932–33. Odintsov’s viewpoint was shared by the head of the Council of People’s Commissars, Vlas Chubar, the members of the CC CP(B)U Comrades [Mykola] Skrypnyk, [Volodymyr] Zatonky, [Hryhorii] Petrovsky, and others.”³⁰ To some degree this indirect evidence explains the reasons behind the permanent “reinforcement” of the Ukrainian republic’s party organization by tried-and-true Stalinist cadres during the Holodomor.

In the above-cited epistolary document, the omission of the name of the first secretary of the CC CP(B)U, Stanislav Kosior, is striking. The omission was not accidental because, as archival documents of the period reveal, Kosior, who was fearful of losing his position, had turned into one of the most zealous executors of the Kremlin’s directives and succumbed to any pressure from the Moscow center, no matter how insignificant. For example, on 18 November 1932 the Politburo of the CC CP(B)U, headed by Kosior, adopted a decision not to remove seed

²⁹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6277, ark. 138.

³⁰ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 39, op. 4, spr. 147, ark. 112.

stocks from collective farms, regardless of their fulfillment or nonfulfillment of grain-procurement plans. Later, however, Kaganovich arrived in Kharkiv and, on orders from Stalin, dismissed ten officials responsible for grain procurement, handing over their cases to the Central Control Commission of the CP(B)U in order to institute proceedings against them. At a meeting on 29 November, the Politburo of the CC CP(B)U rescinded the decision of 18 November and ordered those collective farms that had not fulfilled their grain-procurement plans to ship out their seed stocks, threatening them with the severest possible repressive measures.³¹ It was none other than Kosior, following Stalin's example, who declared cynically that the main cause of the famine in Ukraine was not the excessive grain-procurement plans but "poor management and an inadmissible attitude to communal property (losses, thefts, and squandering of grain)...for in most of the starving counties only a pitifully small quantity of grain was delivered, and it cannot possibly be said that 'the grain was taken.'"³²

It was also Kosior who, in a letter to Stalin dated 15 March 1933, named the true reason for the Holodomor: to force the Ukrainian peasants onto collective farms. "The fact that starvation has not yet knocked sense into very many members of collective farms is revealed by the unsatisfactory preparation for sowing precisely in the most problematic counties."³³ And the head of the CP(B)U shifted all responsibility for the famine onto local leaders, against whom he leveled the accusation that in 1932 they had "kept silent about the difficult situation in the counties, but this year it is the opposite: they are trying in every which way to single out the most difficult cases, to collect and generalize figures...."³⁴ In his speech at the February 1933 plenum

³¹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 238, ark. 182.

³² TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6275, ark. 3.

³³ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6275, ark. 4.

³⁴ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6275, ark. 1.

of the CC CP(B)U, Kosior accused the secretaries of county party committees for the failure of the grain-procurement plan.³⁵

Such vague and indecisive conduct on the part of the CP(B)U leader during the Holodomor was condemned, albeit indirectly, by some representatives of local administrations who sought to ease the consequences of the famine. For example, Volodymyr Cherniavsky, secretary of the Vinnytsia provincial party committee, reproached Kosior who, unlike Petrovsky, had advised him against going to Moscow to request food relief for the starving districts of his province. “I feel that because of the modesty with which we approach the issue of resolving questions of relief for those counties in the province that are affected with regard to food supplies,” wrote Cherniavsky, “it is significantly more difficult for us to achieve those necessary conditions that would allow us an opportunity to overcome, with lesser consequences, the difficult situation that exists in a number of counties in the province.”³⁶

As archival sources attest, Mykola Demchenko, secretary of the Kyiv provincial party committee, acted with greater resolve. This party official recommended prosecuting the entire membership of the commission charged with providing relief to the starving in Khrystynivka county “for its ignorance of the food situation in the villages, for showing complete inaction and a heartless attitude toward those who require assistance.”³⁷

But such actions by the Soviet Ukrainian party leadership were rather the exception. In most cases the republic’s party leadership, striving to fulfill the unrealistic grain-procurement plans no matter what, literally terrorized the local leadership. For example, the Kharkiv

³⁵ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 403, ark. 1–4.

³⁶ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6275, ark. 152.

³⁷ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6275, ark. 105.

provincial party committee distributed secret circulars to the localities indicating the need to accelerate the fulfillment of state grain deliveries; otherwise, those to whom this pertained “would have to answer directly to the provincial department of the GPU.”³⁸ No time was wasted in acting on these threats, and leaders who did not meet the “demands of the time” were dismissed and replaced by others. There were frequent cases of a newly appointed official being dismissed before having had the time to familiarize himself with the situation.

In his speech to the plenum of February 1933, Kosior noted: “When you look around a county, at a collective farm, you are simply overwhelmed with horror: the person in charge works one month, two, three, sometimes half a year.”³⁹ Between 1932 and April 1933 three secretaries of the county party committee, four heads of the control commission, and five heads of the county executive committee were replaced in Volodarka county (Kyiv province) alone.⁴⁰ In shuffling leading cadres, the Bolshevik authorities made every effort to force the local leadership to fulfill the grain-procurement plans. That the cost of this practice was excessively high is attested by a letter written by the party member G. Nikolaev to Molotov declaring that the “local authorities are intimidated by the arrests and are afraid to report to the Government” about the actual situation in the Ukrainian countryside. He therefore requested that “a commission be dispatched, which will see throughout ...the villages thousands of corpses of collective

³⁸ Cited in R. Konkvest [Robert Conquest], *Zhnyva skorboty: Radians'ka kolektyvizatsiia i holodomor* (Kyiv, 1993), p. 257.

³⁹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 400, ark. 119.

⁴⁰ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6275, ark. 204.

farmers.”⁴¹ During the grain delivery period the peasants of Skvyra county, Kyiv province, called the secretary of the county committee nothing other than “death’s auxiliary.”⁴²

The [Soviet] Ukrainian press of the time was filled with announcements of repressive measures targeting not only the kulaks but also leaders of local administrations. In 1933 the higher-level republican authorities adopted methods of fulfilling grain-procurement plans that had been tested in 1932. In the course of five months, between 25 and 30 percent of all middle-ranking agricultural managers of the republic were arrested.⁴³ Repressions became more diverse and sophisticated. For example, in addition to prosecution, so-called commodity repressions—“financial and meat”—were instituted against heads of collective farms guilty of leaving large quantities of unharvested grain in the fields.⁴⁴

Unlike the members of Ukraine’s top leadership, who expressed their disagreement with the Kremlin’s policies only behind the scenes, some lower-ranking local leaders who had witnessed the horrible consequences of Stalin’s drive for all-out collectivization blatantly defied Moscow’s directives. For example, Yaremenko, the head of a department within the Nosivka party committee of the CP(B)U, resigned from the Communist Party because he “had become convinced that the line pursued by the party on the peasant question is incorrect....” As he said in conversation with an informer of the county party committee and the GPU, “There are counterrevolutionaries in the CC implementing policy in such a way as to arouse dissatisfaction

⁴¹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6275, ark. 29.

⁴² TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 377, ark. 197.

⁴³ *Visti*, 30 November 1932; 20 December 1932; 1, 4, and 9 January 1933.

⁴⁴ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6275, ark. 97.

among the peasants.”⁴⁵ Actions such as these usually led to arrests and other repressive measures.

The Stalinist leadership shifted its responsibility for the genocide committed against the Ukrainian peasantry onto local leaders so ably that even some secretaries of county party committees believed that all the problems were due to the Kremlin’s “unawareness of the actual situation in Ukraine” and that it was “simply not being informed”; otherwise the “CC AUCP(B) would not tolerate such a situation.”⁴⁶ Another segment of the Ukrainian countryside was convinced that the cause of the famine was the helplessness of the local authorities, and it proposed, as revealed in a letter written by the peasant S. Klymenko from the Bila Tserkva area, that “heads of village soviets be elected, not appointed; that the entire village administration, the so-called elective administration, be elected by the community itself, and not vote according to a list drawn up beforehand; that collective farms be managed by a board of directors, not by various plenipotentiaries or heads of the RVK [county executive committee] and municipal councils, as was the case with us.”⁴⁷

But the Kremlin leadership remained deaf [to everything]. For the sake of building socialism at an accelerated pace, it was prepared to force all strata of the population to starve, with the exception of the ruling stratum. While Ukraine suffered from starvation, material relief was denied to everyone, including the very class in whose name the ruling party had established a dictatorship.

⁴⁵ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 5481, ark. 48.

⁴⁶ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 5481, ark. 94.

⁴⁷ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 5406, ark. 30.

According to a decision of the Politburo of the CC CP(B)U dated 13 February 1932, the bread allowances for workers registered on all three so-called lists were first reduced by 100 grams, and in 1933 workers' rations were cut even more.⁴⁸ Only workers whose names were on a "special" list and former Red Army partisans were not affected by these changes. The famine affected even Red Army units deployed in Soviet Ukraine. Red Army troops, most of whom were peasants, were convinced that everything confiscated by the government was being "devoured...by ranking officials and the GPU." As a Red Army soldier named I. Shipilov wrote to Stanislaw Kosior, "in the event of war, let them fight both the external enemy and all the starving and wretched people in the country."⁴⁹ A communist from Zhmerynka named A. Banivsky wrote the following to Stalin: "County leaders engage systematically...in self-provisioning and drinking bouts." The Kyiv-based communist P. Smirnov wrote that local leaders "have restricted-access cafeterias...while unfortunate people are starving to death; all the self-seekers are afraid of becoming opportunists," meaning that they did not dare to talk openly about the true state of affairs in the Ukrainian countryside.⁵⁰ Davydenko, a member of a collective farm located in Znamianka county, Odesa region, wrote to Stalin: "The heads of the collective farm eat bread, milk, and fatback; they even sell flour at the market, but you sit starving and perish.... If we have nothing, why is the state not helping? On top of it, they say that in the Soviet Union people will not be allowed to perish."⁵¹

⁴⁸ Workers registered on list no. 1 until 13 February 1933 received 1,000 grams of baked bread per day, and their dependents obtained 400 grams; workers and their dependents included on list no. 2 received 800 and 400 grams, respectively; workers and their dependents registered on list no. 3 received 600 and 300 grams, respectively (TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 235, ark. 71).

⁴⁹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 29, sor. 5406, ark. 26.

⁵⁰ *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni*, pp. 153–54, 157–58.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

The government's refusal to provide a guaranteed food minimum to the working class, in whose name the Bolshevik Party had established its dictatorship, resulted in the fact that as early as 1931 famine had swept through a number of regions in the USSR. At the same time, the years 1931 and 1932 marked a sharp increase in the number of workers and functionaries who received bread from the state, since industrial enterprises were constantly recruiting workers in order to fulfill the state's unrealistic plans. Between January–March 1931 and January–March 1932, the number of people receiving state support in the form of ration cards rose from 30 to 38 million. Having shown itself incapable of feeding such a large proportion of its population, the Politburo of the CC AUCP(B) approved a decision on 23 March 1932 to abolish the guaranteed provisioning of bread for 20 million people who were on the so-called second and third lists.

At a time when millions of Ukrainians were starving to death, the party and Soviet leadership did not deny itself provisions. While the ration-card system was still in place, the higher-ranking members of the nomenklatura, like the entire Soviet population, received rations. In contrast to the ration issued to ordinary citizens, however, the ration for the nomenklatura was categorized as “special,” and the food was cheaper and more calorific. For example, in the summer of 1932 the monthly ration for the higher all-Union nomenklatura in group A was worth 147 rubles and consisted of [the following]: 4 kg of meat and 4 kg of sausage; 1.5 kg of butter and 2 liters of oil; 6 kg of fresh fish and 2 kg of herring; 3 kg each of sugar and flour; 800 grams of bread per day; 3 kg of various types of groats; 8 tins of food; 20 eggs; 2 kg of cheese; 1 kg of red caviar; 50 grams of tea; 1,200 cigarettes; 2 bars of soap; and 1 liter of milk per day. The assortment also included pastries, vegetables, and fruit.⁵² The ration for senior workers in group

⁵² E. Osokina, *Za fasadom “stalinskogo izobilii”: Raspredelenie i rynek v snabzhenii naseleniia v gody industrializatsii, 1927–1941 gg.* (Moscow, 1999), p. 128.

B was more modest. They obtained their rations at special distribution centers. Essentially, members of the nomenklatura were supported by the state and thus did not deny themselves anything, particularly food. For example, on 19 January 1934 the dinner of Hryhorii Petrovsky the head of the VUTsVK, consisted of chicken, soup, tomatoes, cucumbers, and caviar.⁵³ Until June 1932, the only people who vied (and relatively, at that) with the nomenklatura with regard to the question of receiving food from the state were miners working underground.⁵⁴

Preparing for the “decisive assault on the peasantry,” in connection with which all hopes were placed on county activists, on 1 January 1932 the Soviet government switched the county leadership to centralized provisioning; henceforth, it received food products and manufactured items through a network of restricted-access GPU-run distribution centers. The established allowance was the same as for workers included in the so-called “list no. 1”: 800 grams of bread per day; 2.5 kg of groats per month; 400 grams of oil; 3 tins of food; 2 kg of fish; 1.5 kg of sugar; 2 bars of soap; 10 rubles’ worth of manufactured goods, such as cotton material, ready-made clothing, galoshes, knitwear, cigarettes, thread, and footwear per month. The allowance for the family of a member of the county nomenklatura was somewhat smaller but nonetheless adequate.⁵⁵

Thus did the Moscow center show its concern for the local authorities, who, in the opinion of an unnamed party member (since 1919) and coauthor of an anonymous letter addressed to the CC CP(B)U dated 18 May 1932, “had brought things to such a point that while

⁵³ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6462, ark. 3.

⁵⁴ Until June 1932 shaft miners received 3.6 kg of meat per month. In June they began receiving 2 kg of meat and 800 grams of fatback and smoked foods; 2.5 kg of groats, 1 liter of oil; and 1 kg of sugar (TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 236, ark. 158–60).

⁵⁵ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f.1, op. 20, spr. 4582, ark. 29; f.1, op. 6, spr. 237; ark. 159.

they themselves receive food from distribution centers, unfortunate poor peasants and members of collective farms are perishing from starvation.... Send authorized representatives to the villages, but they shouldn't pose questions to the upper ranks of careerists; they should delve into the masses and partake of a dead horse; only then will they learn what is going on in our villages in the fifteenth year of the revolution.”⁵⁶ By way of comparison, the allowance for a teacher in May 1933 consisted of 400 grams of bread, 600 grams of sugar, 400 grams of baked goods, and 1 kg of fish (anchovy or *khamisa* [a small Black Sea fish]).⁵⁷

On 26 October 1932 the CC CP(B)U approved a resolution titled “On Measures Concerning the Improvement of the Servicing of Leading Employees of Provincial Committees and the CC CP(B)U,” which raised the salaries of employees of provincial and central party apparatuses by an average of 35 percent, increased the per diem rate for business trips, and improved the provisioning and servicing of families of the nomenklatura, as well as their rest and living conditions. In particular, the per diem rate for business trips taken by top members of provincial committees was raised to 12 rubles, and for members of the CC to 15 rubles per day. In order to improve the provisioning of these categories of employees, the Soviet authorities devised a plan to create an “agricultural base” at cafeterias servicing the Central Committee and provincial committees, establish sewing workshops, supply fuel to the families of functionaries, and improve the provisioning of cafeterias and centers distributing food and manufactured goods. The Central Medical Commission at the People’s Commissariat of Health (TsLK) was ordered “to include in its servicing list all nomenklatura party workers of provincial committees

⁵⁶ TsDAHO Ukraïny , f.1, op. 20, spr. 5406, ark. 6.

⁵⁷ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f.1, op. 6, spr. 282, ark. 214.

and the CC along with the members of their families.”⁵⁸ A resolution was also adopted to expand the network of polyclinics and build a new hospital for the members of the Central Committee nomenklatura and their families in 1933, and the question of increasing the number of vouchers for “special” spas in Sevastopol, Sochi, and Zheleznovodsk was raised. In order to organize short-term rests (from one to ten days) for important officials, it was decided to establish a rest building in Kharkiv.⁵⁹ For the purchase of up-to-date medical equipment, medications, and medical literature, the CC AUCP(B) issued foreign currency to the TsLK. In 1934, for example, the TsLK put in a request to the CC AUCP(B) for US \$1,500.⁶⁰

On 30 December 1932 the Politburo of the CC CP(B)U approved a decision to regulate the provisioning of executives working in central and province-level institutions. Seemingly taking account of the republic’s food-supply problems, it reduced the six existing distribution centers to two. As noted in the Politburo’s decision, the closing of distribution centers and cafeterias servicing people’s commissariats and various institutions “made it possible to establish higher norms for the distribution of food and manufactured goods” for those officials who were serviced at the so-called first distribution center by offering home deliveries of goods. Furthermore, Distribution Center no. 1 was assigned a suburban state farm that supplied it with dairy and meat products, poultry, and vegetables.⁶¹ The allowance established for patrons of Distribution Center no. 2 was equivalent to that of employees on the “special” list.

⁵⁸ The Central Medical Commission (TsLK) serviced the leading members of the central party, Soviet, economic, and trade-union organizations, while province-based medical commissions serviced leading activists in provinces and counties (TsDAHO Ukraïny , f.1, op. 20, spr. 6462, ark. 1).

⁵⁹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f.1, op. 7, spr. 246, ark. 3.

⁶⁰ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f.1, op. 20, spr. 6462, ark. 2.

⁶¹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f.1, op. 16, spr. 9, ark. 99.

Distribution Center no. 1 serviced members of the CC and the Central Control Commission of the CP(B)U, people's commissars and their deputies, authorized representatives of people's commissariats of the USSR and their deputies, presidium members of the VUTsVK, top presidium members of the All-Ukrainian Council of Trade Unions (VURPS), and the "main leading executives of the CC, Council of People's Commissars, Central Control Commission, and the headquarters of the UVO [Extradepartmental Security Directorate]," that is, heads of departments and their deputies. Distribution Center no. 2 serviced members of the collegiums of people's commissariats, heads of all-Union and republican economic associations and their deputies, directors of publishing houses, and newspaper editors.⁶²

Although the salary of a nomenklatura official before October 1933 was limited by the *partmaksimum*, which officially restricted the salary of a Communist Party member from exceeding the average salary of a worker, in actual fact it rose steadily during the Holodomor. As early as the fourth quarter of 1932, the salaries paid to the provincial and county party elite (starting with the county committee instructor and ending with the secretary of a provincial committee) ranged between 225 and 280 rubles.⁶³ But already by the spring of 1933 the CC AUCP(B) adopted a decision to fix the monthly salaries of county committee secretaries and county executive committee chairmen in the range of 300–340 rubles; the salaries of provincial nomenklatura appointees were also raised accordingly.⁶⁴ In October 1933 the *partmaksimum* was abolished, and a resolution handed down by the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) and Council of People's Commissars of the USSR established fixed salaries for the personnel of Soviet organizations. Henceforth the heads and secretaries of the TsIK USSR and Union

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f.1, op. 7, spr. 271, ark. 168.

⁶⁴ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f.1, op. 6, spr. 282., ark. 133.

republics and their deputies; heads of territorial and provincial executive committees and municipal councils of Moscow, Leningrad, and Kharkiv; people's commissars of the USSR and the RSFSR and their deputies; heads of the Supreme Court of the USSR, RSFSR, territorial, and provincial courts; prosecutors of the USSR, the Union republics, territories, and provinces; rectors of institutes of the Red professoriate and of a number of universities received a monthly salary of 500 rubles.⁶⁵ This was precisely the amount of the salary reported in December 1933 by Ivan Akulov, the then chief procurator of the USSR, in the "Questionnaire for Old Bolsheviks and Veterans of the Revolution."⁶⁶

While the nomenklatura's well-being improved, workers earned an average of 125 rubles; teachers, 100–130 rubles; doctors with diplomas, 150–275 rubles (medium-level and junior medical personnel earned between 40 and 50 rubles a month); students at technical colleges received a net stipend of 15–20 rubles; while peasant invalids received 20 rubles a month.⁶⁷

In addition to their high salaries, members of the nomenklatura had various hidden sources of income. For example, they received "assistance" from various "secret funds" that were created in the 1920s but became widespread specifically in the 1930s. These funds were used for paying for food purchased by executives in restricted-access cafeterias and special canteens; purchasing apartments and books; obtaining assistance with medical treatment and vouchers for sanatoriums; financing the construction of restricted-access recreational resorts, etc. In 1933 the annual budget of the secret fund for assisting senior officials of the USSR People's Commissariat of Supply was 600,000 rubles. Out of this sum, 80 rubles' worth of subsidies were

⁶⁵ Osokina, *Za fasadom "stalinskogo izobiliiia,"* p. 129.

⁶⁶ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 39, op. 4, spr. 3, ark. 6.

⁶⁷ Osokina, *Za fasadom "stalinskogo izobiliiia,"* p. 129; TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 5406, ark. 10, 28.

issued every month to a single individual for food purchased in cafeterias 50 rubles per quarter for book subscriptions; and 400 rubles per person for the medical fund per year. In addition, 7,000 rubles a month were issued for the upkeep of restricted-access canteens.⁶⁸

Starting in the fall of 1932, nomenklatura benefits were also officially granted to the top county officials, who had to that point been on so-called “centralized provisioning.” On 1 November 1932 the Politburo of the CC CP(B)U adopted a resolution titled “On Improving Material and Living Conditions of Management-Level County Workers.” Accordingly, it ensured that top county officials, including secretaries of county committees, chairmen of county executive committees, and heads of trade unions and county control commissions and their families would be registered at “restricted-access provincial distribution centers” to supply them with manufactured goods. A further 23,900 people were registered for “special centralized provisioning”: 10,400 executives and 13,500 family members. The resolution also entailed a salary increase, improvement of living conditions, and the establishment in every county of small market gardens for servicing the needs of the local leadership.⁶⁹

The Torgsin system was turned into another source of self-provisioning for the local leadership during the Holodomor. Torgsins were special shops for foreigners in the USSR that were organized in a broad network of restricted-access stores that sold antiques, kilims, furs, food, and scarce commodities. The Torgsin system was founded in the summer of 1930 within the USSR People’s Commissariat of Trade and had branches in the Union republics, provinces, and territories. In order to extract gold and precious valuables from the starving population, the party leadership issued a directive about opening Torgsin shops not only in cities and county

⁶⁸ Osokina, *Za fasadom “stalinskogo izobiliiia,”* p. 129.

⁶⁹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 237, ark. 155–57.

centers but also in large villages. In the fall of 1932, when Moscow set itself the task of significantly expanding the Torgsin trading network, the Politburo of the CC CP(B)U, reacting to this directive, ratified a resolution on 10 December 1932 “On the Work of the Torgsin.” The extent to which the Soviet authorities counted on the Torgsin system is revealed by several points of this resolution, according to which the executives and specialists of its offices were to be provided for on par with executives of “central and provincial organizations,” while the directors of the provincial networks of Torgsin offices and their deputies were inducted into the Central Committee nomenklatura. Directors of large department stores and warehouses were added to the lists of the provincial nomenklatura.⁷⁰

During the years of starvation, when the Ukrainian population was trading its valuables for food in Torgsin shops, the members of the nomenklatura, capitalizing on their dominant positions in society, turned these stores into their private preserve, paying for goods and food not with foreign currency or precious metals but with Soviet currency. The authorities’ abuse of their official positions often exceeded all bounds. For example, in the fall of 1933, by tacit agreement of Chernihiv province’s high-ranking officials, the head of a distribution center catering to executives and the director of a Torgsin store sold 3,688 kg of flour for gold and foreign currency. With the proceeds from this shady transaction they “purchased in the Torgsin shop lengths of wool fabric (for suits) and other goods, and supplied them to executives.”⁷¹

The nomenklatura did not shrink from enjoying a variety of “transport” privileges. In addition to company cars driven by personal chauffeurs—a means of transport that was already perceived as a customary attribute of power—in the 1930s VIP-style railroad cars were

⁷⁰ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 238, ark. 153–54.

⁷¹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 286, ark. 87.

especially popular among circles of the higher elite. Custom-made for the functionary, they were paid for by the department that he headed. Manufacturing such a VIP-style railroad car cost the state treasury a minimum of 300,000–400,000 rubles. Although in 1932 the right to this mode of transport was held by secretaries and members of the Politburo of the CC AUCP(B), heads of the TsIK USSR, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the RSFSR, the OGPU of the USSR, people's commissars of the USSR, and commanders of military districts, VIP-style railroad cars continued to be used by republican, provincial, and territorial leaders without the authorities' permission. According to official data, in 1933, that is, at the peak of the mass famine in Ukraine, "official railroad cars of the Central Committee" every month "consumed" 200 kg of butter, 250 kg of Swiss cheese, 500 kg of sausage, 500 kg of gamebirds, 550 kg of assorted meats, 300 kg of fish, 350 kg of tinned fish, 100 kg of herring, 100 kg of red caviar, 300 kg of sugar, 160 kg of chocolate and candy, 100 baskets of fruit, and 60,000 cigarettes manufactured for export.⁷²

The party and state elite took similar trips quite frequently during their vacations, which lasted from one and a half to two months. During this period, the entire upper-level republican and provincial nomenklatura also had the opportunity to stay in state-owned villas operated by the Central Medical Commission (TsLK). For example, in 1932 the Odesa provincial leadership, consisting of the secretary of the provincial party committee, the head of the provincial executive committee, and the head of the provincial control commission established their permanent residences in state-owned villas in Mirazli Park, where the Chubar Sanatorium for members of the nomenklatura was also located.⁷³

⁷² Osokina, *Za fasadom "stalinskogo izobiliiia,"* p. 131.

⁷³ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6232, ark. 17.

Members of the nomenklatura also enjoyed access to special medical care that was not only free but also of high quality. Vouchers for a stay in a sanatorium were issued for a nominal fee. Despite the grave currency crisis of the 1930s caused by the global economic crisis, leading Soviet officials and their families often sought health care abroad. High-ranking Ukrainian officials vacationed and took the cure at such internationally known spa resorts as Vichy (France), Carlsbad (Czechoslovakia), and Merano (Italy), and they traveled to Berlin and Vienna to consult with the “leading lights” of the European medical establishment. As was the custom, this privilege was granted by the CC AUCP(B). During the starvation years of 1932–33 alone, members and candidate members of the Politburo traveled abroad for medical treatment and rest: Volodymyr Zatonsky, Hryhorii Petrovsky, and Oleksandr Serbychenko (Berlin); and Mykola Skrypnyk (Vichy).⁷⁴ In 1933 the TsLK issued its patients more than 160,000 rubles’ worth of material assistance alone, and more than 50,000 rubles in the first half of 1934.⁷⁵ The party nomenklatura was particularly solicitous about the health of meritorious veterans of the Communist Party. In 1934, medical treatment for a single “old Bolshevik” cost the state 600 gold rubles and US \$75.⁷⁶

In 1932 the TsLK, which functioned under the People’s Commissariat of Health, provided services to 567 executives working in Kharkiv and 1,042 family members. By 25 December 1933, those numbers had become 1,637 and 2,929 people, respectively.⁷⁷ During this period, approximately 15,000 adults and 2,000 children received medical treatment at TsLK-

⁷⁴ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 6, spr. 235, ark. 170; f. 1, op. 6, spr. 236, ark. 189, 211, 229.

⁷⁵ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6462, ark. 63.

⁷⁶ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6462, ark. 25.

⁷⁷ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 5311, ark. 33; f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6232, ark. 88.

operated sanatoriums and lodges.⁷⁸ Until 1933, the Soviet Ukrainian nomenklatura obtained medical treatment in sanatoriums based in Kharaksa (Crimean Peninsula), Odesa, and Kislovodsk (Stavropol territory, RSFSR), with a combined number of 5,925 beds (a bed cost 348 rubles in 1932, and 401 rubles in 1933).⁷⁹ For example, a bed in the Kislovodsk Paradi-Semashko sanatorium cost 360 rubles.⁸⁰ In 1932–35, the TsLK also undertook the construction of new sanatoriums for the Ukrainian nomenklatura in Gagra (Georgia), Kislovodsk, Sochi, and the Crimea, villas in Pomirky and Odesa, and a recreational resort in Nalchik (Kabardino-Balkar ASSR). It is noteworthy that there were always sufficient funds for such construction, which was conducted with particular intensity in 1932–33, that is, when the famine was raging.

Despite the financial crisis, in February 1933 the Kremlin leaders, who were stubbornly refusing to provide relief to the starving Ukrainian peasantry, allowed the Soviet Ukrainian government to ratify the TsLK's budget for 1933 in the amount of 11,190,000 rubles, which exceeded the 1932 budget by 5,165,000 rubles.⁸¹ The commission planned to spend more than one-third of this amount—4,180,000 rubles—to complete the construction of sanatoriums for the Ukrainian nomenklatura in Gagra, Kislovodsk, and the Crimea, a recreational resort in Odesa, and a polyclinic in Kharkiv. According to a resolution approved by the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR on 22 February 1933, funds for the needs of the TsLK were to be transferred from the Ukrainian ministries of finance, justice, health, and labor and the All-Union's People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry, all of which were financed from the state budget, as well as from the Central Commercial Bank and a number of republican industrial

⁷⁸ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6232, ark. 88.

⁷⁹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6232, ark. 110.

⁸⁰ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6232, ark. 11.

⁸¹ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6232, ark. 5; f. 1, op. 20, spr. 5311, ark. 1.

enterprises.⁸² At the time that the TsLK budget was being approved, in March 1933 the USSR People's Commissariat of Supply removed from central provisioning all five recreational resorts that had been at the disposal of Ukrainian educators and transferred them to local provisioning, which offered pitiful allowances: 100 grams of bread per day and 400 grams of oil and 1 kg of sugar a month.⁸³

Thus, in the early 1930s, at the very time that the Ukrainian people as an ethno-anthropological entity became victims of one of the greatest genocides in modern history, the Communist Party and Soviet elite enjoyed ever-increasing benefits and privileges. It was pointless to expect anything different from the Soviet Ukrainian nomenklatura, as most of its leaders, including top-ranking ones, had a low level of education, culture, and qualifications. As a rule, all of them were assiduous executors of party directives and did not reflect for a minute on the consequences of their "actions." It is no wonder that within a few years (1937–38) most of them were repressed by Stalin as "enemies of the people." As paradoxical as it may seem, this epithet is an accurate one, for the actions of these individuals in 1932–33 cannot be described otherwise: they truly became enemies of their own people.

Translated from the Ukrainian by Marta D. Olynyk

⁸² TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 6232, ark. 5; f. 1, op. 20, spr. 5311, ark. 1.

⁸³ TsDAHO Ukraïny, f. 1, op. 20, spr. 5311, ark. 13.