

5

DOCUMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Documents section is divided into subsections containing Soviet, British, German, Italian, Polish, Ukrainian Galician, European, American, and Ukrainian diaspora documents.

The first subsection begins with Soviet government and Communist Party documents. Their generally matter-of-fact bureaucratic tone stands in shocking contrast to the accounts of extreme human suffering elsewhere in the *Reader*. Yet these documents are a more terrible indictment of the Stalin regime's policy than any overt denunciation. In the words of the perpetrators themselves, they show to what lengths the regime was prepared to go in order to "knock sense" into the Ukrainian peasantry, as Stanislav Kosior expressed it. The Soviet leaders focus relentlessly on compelling Ukrainian officials, functionaries, and peasants to meet the grain-procurement quotas assigned to them and take "measures to strengthen grain procurement," no matter what the human cost, and on eliminating resistance to that goal by whatever means necessary.

The first document is a letter of August 1931 from Stalin to his lieutenant Lazar Kaganovich. It shows Stalin to have been well aware that excessive grain requisitions could lead to famine. The GPU document of 28 December 1931 shows that grain-procurement quotas were widely recognized as excessive and unrealistic, likely to result in the depletion of seed stock and famine. Nevertheless, the CP(B)U resolution of 29 December 1931 (in effect, a dictate from Stalin's envoy Viacheslav Molotov) enjoins the Ukrainian communist leadership to extort ever more grain from an already famished peasantry.

A letter from a young Russian worker to the newspaper *Izvestiia* (sent before 31 March 1932) tells of hungry Ukrainian peasants flooding into Russia's neighboring Central Black Earth province in search of food in early 1932. This is followed by a memorandum from the USSR deputy commissar of agriculture dated 3 May 1932. On the basis of a fact-finding visit to one Ukrainian raion, he describes the catastrophic conditions, including starvation, the mass exodus of the most capable farmers, and the loss of more than half the draft animals.

The two letters from the Ukrainian communist leaders Hryhorii Petrovsky and Vlas Chubar, sent to Stalin in June 1932, are particularly important. Both write of the existence of famine, asking for assistance and a reduction of the grain-procurement quota for Ukraine. It is here that Stalin's animus against Ukraine and the Ukrainian leadership starts to become apparent. In a letter to Kaganovich written soon afterward, he expresses displeasure with these entreaties, stating his intention

to take a hard line against Ukraine's leadership. The resolution of 7 August 1932 goes further, authorizing draconian measures, even summary execution of anyone caught gleaning, of "stealing" even a minuscule amount of grain.

This exchange of letters took place on the eve of an important conference of the Communist Party of Ukraine on 6–7 July 1932 to which Stalin sent his emissaries Molotov and Kaganovich (see their correspondence of 2 and 6 July 1932 with Stalin). Mykola Skrypnyk's speech at that conference shows that this prominent Ukrainian communist leader bent dutifully to the will of the Party's central authorities, even as he mentioned a case of famine that he had witnessed. The OGPU report of late July 1932 reveals the extent of the agricultural catastrophe, including cases of starvation, cannibalism, and suicide. The report notes the strength of resistance in Ukraine and the formation of anti-Soviet insurgent groups, including those of a national character.

Stalin's letter to Kaganovich of 11 August 1932 deserves special attention. The Soviet leader vents his dissatisfaction with Ukraine's leaders and suggests that they be replaced by his trusted lieutenants. Importantly, he twice expresses fear of losing Ukraine and associates that possibility, as well as resistance to grain-procurement quotas, with Ukrainian nationalism and Polish efforts to promote the secession of the Ukrainian SSR. Stalin exhorts Kaganovich to turn Ukraine into "a fortress of the USSR, a real model republic, within the shortest possible time." This was a green light for repressive measures against the peasants and the Ukrainian leaders alike. Ukrainians clearly understood that Stalin's policies were anti-Ukrainian, as evidenced by a secret-police report of 10 September 1932 on the attempt of two young scholars at the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences to inform Ukraine's foremost historian, Mykhailo Hrushevsky, of the famine. They believed that the famine was directed against Ukraine and its people—"to break the Ukrainian nation once and for all as the only national force capable of serious resistance."

As the crisis deepened in the autumn of 1932 and it became clear to the Soviet leadership that Ukraine would fall far short of its grain-procurement quota, Stalin appointed Molotov and Kaganovich to head special commissions (see the document of 22 October) to extort even more grain from Ukraine and the Ukrainian-populated North Caucasus. One result of Molotov's involvement was the CP(B)U resolution of 18 November reaffirming procurement policies and the instituted bans, fines, and punishments for noncompliance on collective and individual farms. The CC AUCP(B) resolution of 14 December 1932 sanctioned purges of Party organizations in Ukraine and the Kuban and ordered a complete rollback of policies promoting the use of the Ukrainian language, known as Ukrainization, in the Kuban region, and a partial rollback in Ukraine. This resolution also authorized the deportation of the entire Kuban Cossack settlement Poltavskaia *stanitsa* and its repopulation with reliable elements from the Red Army. On 15 December Ukrainization was halted in other parts of the USSR outside Ukraine. Other documents of late November and December 1932 show that the Soviet leadership was becoming increasingly concerned with political and nationalist (in Soviet parlance, "Petliurite") resistance in conjunction with the deepening crisis and the deteriorating food situation. It responded by closing loopholes, making threats, increasing repression, and continuing to take food from an already famished and plundered countryside.

In early 1933 the Soviet leadership continued its punitive measures. The Kremlin Politburo resolution of 1 January, based on a telegram from Stalin to the Ukrainian leadership dated the same day, threatened Ukraine's farmers "who stubbornly insist on misappropriating and concealing grain" with application of the draconian resolution of 7 August 1932. In his speech of 11 January to the Central Committee of the AUCP(B), Stalin blamed peasant resistance to grain collection on collective-farm leaders who had come under the sway of anti-Soviet elements, including Ukrainian nationalists (Petliurites), and authorized further repressive measures against them.

Two other brutal measures followed in January. First, an order of 22 January authorized barring peasants from Ukraine and the North Caucasus from searching for food in areas where it was available, such as central Russia and Belarus. Second, a resolution of the Central Committee of the AUCP(B) dated 24 January made Stalin's trusted lieutenant and opponent of Ukrainization Pavel Postyshev second secretary of the CP(B)U (effectively, Stalin's plenipotentiary in Ukraine). The resolution signaled the start of purges of Ukrainian communists, whom *Pravda* accused in an editorial of 10 March of engaging in "distortions of Leninist nationality policy in Ukraine" and of "underestimating the unbreakable link between the national and peasant questions."

A GPU report of 12 March 1933 shows that the secret police was fully aware of the extent of death from starvation. The memorandum of the CC CP(B)U to the CC AUCP(B), dated 15 March and signed by the Ukrainian Party's first secretary, Stanislav Kosior, is particularly cynical. Kosior admits to widespread famine but attributes it to "poor management and an unacceptable attitude toward the public good (losses, stealing, and waste of grain)." The peasants, he claims, are no longer blaming the famine on grain requisitions by the authorities but on "themselves for poor work, for not safeguarding grain, for allowing it to be pilfered." Even so, Kosior concludes, "starvation has not yet knocked sense into the heads of a great many collective farmers."

Another speech by Kosior, delivered in November 1933 at a CP(B)U plenum, blames the problems in the agricultural sector on Ukrainian communists who neglect the dangers of Ukrainian nationalism. He links kulaks with Ukrainian nationalists, treating them as almost identical enemies of Soviet rule. Skrypnyk, who had committed suicide earlier that year in protest against the Kremlin's policies, is condemned. The resolution adopted at the plenum links the social and class struggle with the struggle against Ukrainian nationalism, now identified as "the principal danger" in Ukraine. The resolution marked a subtle but important shift toward establishing the Soviet state on a Russian national foundation: in the 1920s, Russian chauvinism had been designated the greatest danger to the Party and Soviet society.

The subsection of Soviet documents ends with excerpts from three speeches—by Postyshev, Kosior, and Stalin—delivered at the Seventeenth Congress of the AUCP(B), dubbed "the Congress of Victors," in January 1934. Postyshev emphasizes the link between class-based anti-Soviet activities and Ukrainian nationalism, reminding delegates that "the Ukrainian kulak underwent a lengthy schooling in struggle against Soviet power, for in Ukraine the civil war was especially fierce and lengthy, given that political banditry was in control of Ukraine for an especially

long period." This passage indicates the Soviet leadership's recognition that the Ukrainian peasantry's fierce resistance to Soviet power in the years 1919–24, often under the national banner, might be reviving. Kosior dwells on Ukrainian nationalism not only in society but in the CP(B)U itself, which, he claims, "played an exceptional role in creating and intensifying the lag in agriculture." Referring to Stalin's view of the interconnectedness of the class and nationality questions in Ukraine, Kosior notes that "the national flag plays an exceedingly important role for the class enemy. Moreover, the predominant coloring of the class enemy, with which he masks himself, is above all the national flag, nationalist clothing." Finally, Stalin reaffirms the designation of nationalism as "the chief danger" in Ukraine and denounces it as a danger to the Soviet state.

The next subsection contains five documents from the British Foreign Office. The first is a report by the agricultural expert Andrew Cairns on his trip to Ukraine and the North Caucasus in the late spring and early summer of 1932. This is followed by a brief report on conditions in the Kuban and in Ukraine. The next item is a report from the German agricultural expert Otto Schiller on his trip to the North Caucasus in the spring of 1933. Schiller describes famine conditions, expulsions, deportation of the Kuban Cossacks, and Young Communist confiscations of hidden stores of grain. The fourth document contains a report by William Strang, a counsellor at the British embassy in Moscow, on famine conditions in Ukraine in the summer of 1933 and mass deaths from starvation. In the fifth item, Strang forwards the *New York Times* correspondent Walter Duranty's description of his trip to Ukraine and the North Caucasus in the late summer of 1933. In contrast to his published articles, in which he downplayed the famine, Duranty here estimates population loss in Ukraine at four to five million and comments that "Ukraine had been bled white." He estimates total losses in the Soviet Union at ten million.

The two documents from the German Foreign Office are of particular interest for their analysis of the nationality question in relation to the famine. The first specifically discusses "The Ukrainian Question," noting the commonly held view in Ukraine that the government had brought the famine about "to force the Ukrainians to their knees." The report concludes that Ukraine is now guided by "Great Russian communist chauvinism." The second document is a report on a trip through Ukraine in 1936. The author begins with the startling assertion that "Ukrainian Ukraine has been destroyed." He estimates human losses at six million. Of particular interest are his descriptions of Russification and of the chauvinist attitudes of Russians and Russian speakers he met in Kyiv. He concludes that "the Ukrainian people's moral spine was broken in the terrible years of 1932 and 1933."

Italian Foreign Office documents follow the German reports. The first report of April 1933 describes the limitations on peasant mobility and the consequences for blacklisted villages in the North Caucasus. The second report, "The Famine and the Ukrainian Question," was written by the Italian consul in Kharkiv in May 1933. He argues that the famine was "contrived" in order to "teach the peasants a lesson" and concludes: "The current disaster will bring about a preponderantly Russian colonization of Ukraine. It will transform its ethnographic character. In a future time, perhaps very soon, one will no longer be able to speak of a Ukraine, or a Ukrainian people, and thus not even of a Ukrainian problem, because Ukraine will become

a *de facto* Russian region." His report of 19 July 1933 relays an apocryphal but deeply symbolic account of Skrypnyk on his deathbed telling Postyshev that the greatest danger to communism is Russian imperialism. The last Italian document is a letter from the consul in Odesa, who writes: "The persecutions conducted against the Ukrainian intellectuals...the suicide of Skrypnyk...the withholding of the grain reserves from the peasants...[have] turned Ukraine...into the site of an unprecedented famine, which according to reliable evidence has sent 7,000,000 people to their deaths; all of these things betoken the Moscow Government's intention to use every means at their disposal to crush every last vestige of Ukrainian nationalism." Appended to this subsection is a news item (reproduced from a recent collection of documents from the Vatican archives) describing the reaction of Pope Pius XI to a report on the famine.

The next subsection of documents comes from Polish Foreign Ministry and Intelligence Service offices. In a document of 8 May 1933 the consul in Kharkiv reports on economic policy and the resultant famine as seen through the prism of the nationality question. He notes that ruthless grain collections "stripp[ed] bare the Ukrainian countryside" and calls the famine a result of the Kremlin's "predatory management," concluding that "the economic policy of the central government with regard to Ukraine has been much more ruthless and predatory than toward the neighboring provinces of the RSFSR, with the sole exception of the North Caucasus." The same consul, reporting on a car trip from Kharkiv to Moscow on 5 May, describes the stark difference in conditions in the Ukrainian and Russian countryside as akin to crossing "from the land of the Soviets into Western Europe."

The report of the Polish journalist Berson on his conversation with Karl Radek, Stalin's adviser and envoy on Polish affairs, shows that Soviet propaganda is prepared to equate or link any expression of concern over the famine with sympathy for or collaboration with Nazi Germany and its foreign-policy objectives. A document of 6 November 1933 contains an excerpt from a report by the Polish ambassador in Turkey on a conversation with Stalin's confidant Kliment Voroshilov. While official Soviet rhetoric trumpeted the equality of nations in the USSR, Voroshilov's remarks clearly indicate that the Soviet leadership was anti-Ukrainian. Commenting in the wake of an attack by a Ukrainian nationalist on the Soviet consulate in Lviv in Polish-ruled western Ukraine, he told the Polish ambassador that Poland was lenient with Ukrainians, whereas "in Soviet Russia they are kept on a tight leash."

An article of 10 October 1933 in a bulletin intended for diplomats, *Poland and the Outside World*, notes that the Communist Party has taken control of Ukraine by breaking the resistance of the peasantry and destroying "the decentralizing nationalist tendencies of the Ukrainian intelligentsia." Reporting on 6 January 1934, the Polish consul in Kharkiv analyzes the reversal of Bolshevik nationality policy in Ukraine, stressing that this suits the Soviet leadership's long-term goal of making the USSR a great power: "[T]hey are becoming more and more great-power politicians, strengthening their regime and the borders of their state, sacrificing to that end the ideals hitherto upheld by the Communist International." Finally, a letter from a Polish student notes that the famine has produced antipathy toward the Soviet state and promoted Ukrainian nationalist and separatist tendencies.

The next subsection of documents focuses on reaction to the famine by Ukrainian organizations and non-governmental bodies outside the Soviet Union, including the Polish-ruled province of Galicia. An appeal by leaders of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, headed by Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky, characterizes the Soviet state-run economy as a “cannibalistic system of state capitalism.” The signatories accuse the Soviet leadership of abandoning religion, suppressing liberty, turning free farmer-citizens into slaves and starving them. Another declaration is signed by the most influential western Ukrainian political and civic leaders, who claim that the Soviet authorities intend to exterminate Ukrainians and Ukrainian national life.

An appeal by Cardinal Innitzer of Vienna calls on non-governmental and religious organizations to create an inter-faith committee to organize famine relief. This is followed by a letter from Margery Ashby, a feminist leader, on behalf of the international coordinating body of the worldwide feminist movement—the Liaison Committee of Women’s International Organizations—to Johan Mowinckel, president of the League of Nations. The letter urges Mowinckel, who was also Norway’s prime minister, to raise the famine as an issue at a meeting of the League’s Council in order to press for “League action in any form which you may think wise.”

In their letter to Prime Minister R. B. Bennett of Canada, the leaders of the Ukrainian National Council, an umbrella group uniting Ukrainian organizations in that country, accuse the Kremlin authorities of systematically starving the population of Soviet Ukraine. In their memorandum to President Franklin Roosevelt opposing the recognition of the USSR by the United States, the president of the United Ukrainian Organizations of the United States and several other Ukrainian civic leaders conclude: “We are firmly convinced that the famine in Ukraine is not the result of poor crops or drought, but on the contrary, is a result of the political and cultural conflict between Ukrainian nationalistic aspirations and Moscow’s imperialistic and centralizing designs.... The famine is the culmination of that unremitting and ferocious persecution of the Ukrainian people by [the] Moscow dictatorship.” There follows a draft resolution of the U.S. House of Representatives sponsored by Congressman Hamilton Fish. The document accuses the Soviet central government of being aware of the famine and of having complete control of food supplies but failing to take relief measures. Instead, the regime used famine “as a means of reducing the Ukrainian population and destroying the Ukrainian political, cultural, and national rights.”

The final subsection contains official Soviet denials of the famine. In his letter of 3 February 1934 to U.S. Congressman Herman Koplemann, the Soviet counsellor B. Skvirsky writes that the death rate in Soviet Ukraine was the lowest of the seven constituent republics comprising the Soviet Union. Skvirsky makes reference to articles by Duranty. The last official, and quite lengthy, denial was issued by the Soviet embassy in Ottawa on 28 April 1983. It is reproduced here in its entirety.