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**The Ukrainian Holodomor against the Background  
of the Communist Onslaught, 1929–1938**

Thirty years ago Ukrainians in North America devoted a great deal of effort to publicizing the famine of 1932–33, which had been covered up in the Soviet Union. An important result of those efforts was the creation of the US Congressional Commission on the Ukraine Famine in October 1984. In the fall of 1986 the commission's executive director, James Mace, issued its first report.<sup>1</sup>

The policy of perestroika, announced by Mikhail Gorbachev, helped the leaders of the Communist Party of Ukraine realize that the Stalinist ban on information about the famine had lost its validity. In a jubilee address delivered in the Kremlin on 2 November 1987 Gorbachev himself touched upon the “excesses” that had taken place during collectivization but said nothing about the famine.<sup>2</sup> But on 25 December 1987, in a jubilee address dedicated to the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of Soviet rule in Ukraine, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the CPU, Volodymyr Shcherbytsky, acknowledged that a famine, supposedly caused by a poor harvest, had taken place. There can be no doubt that this admission was made with the agreement of the Politburo of the CC CPSU, of which Shcherbytsky was a member.

Ukrainian scholars were then permitted to research the famine, and they took full advantage of this opportunity. In the last twenty-five years, thousands of publications have appeared on this topic. In November 2006, when the draft law “On the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine” was introduced in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, scholars at the Institute of

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<sup>1</sup> See *Investigation of the Ukrainian Famine, 1932–1933: First interim report of meetings and hearings of and before the Commission on the Ukraine Famine, held in 1986* (Washington, DC, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> M. S. Gorbachev, *Oktiabr' i perestroika: revoliutsiia prodolzhaetsia, 1917–1987* (Moscow, 1987), 20.

Ukrainian History, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, prepared an information kit about this Stalinist crime for every member of parliament, making it possible to substantiate the recognition of the Holodomor as an act of genocide in the adopted law. To this day, however, a considerable segment of Ukrainian society doubts the genocidal nature of the Holodomor. Most Western scholars specializing in this topic are also loath to accept such an assessment.

There can be no doubt that the Holodomor was the result of a well-organized and meticulously camouflaged repressive action undertaken by the Soviet state security organs. Its mechanism lends itself to reconstruction, but it is more difficult to answer the question “why” than “how.” Let us examine the various obstacles encountered by researchers.

### *Problems of Analysis*

When scholars approach the study of the history of the USSR with a standard toolbox, they find it hard to understand that this approach does not work in complex cases. They are used to dealing with a past that unfolds like a natural historical process. The Soviet system, however, was first born inside someone’s mind. Some elements could be brought to life by coercive or propagandistic measures; others remained unrealized because they were unrealizable. The latter elements were either hushed up or reinterpreted as efforts to accomplish something else. One example is the communist onslaught (*shturm*, literally “storming”) of 1918–20, which set off a civil war, several interethnic wars, an economic collapse, and the famine of 1921–23, which was exacerbated by the drought of 1921. In bringing a halt to that onslaught, with its millions of victims, Vladimir Lenin called his three-year policy “war communism,” in other words, the kind of communism necessitated by a war, not the result of doctrine. But the state sector, which came

to include the “commanding heights” of the economy, remained in existence as a “dry residue” after the onslaught.

In 1929, Joseph Stalin undertook another onslaught under the slogan of “full-scale socialist construction on all fronts.” This onslaught also led to an all-Union famine in the early 1930s. Stalin then halted the further transformations prescribed by the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (RCP[B]) program of 1919, pretending that all objectives had been achieved, and proclaimed the triumph of socialism.

In putting an end to his onslaught, Lenin returned to a normal economic policy, although with certain limitations, which was now called a “new” policy. When Stalin ended his onslaught, he resorted to horrific means in order to force the already established artificial economy to function. Among those means were such punitive actions as the Ukrainian Holodomor of 1932–33 and the Great Terror (or Great Purge) of 1937–38.

Leninist-Stalinist economics proved ineffective but had colossal mobilizing potential that fully manifested itself in a country endowed with great natural and human resources. Making use of those resources, the Soviet Union contributed decisively to routing Hitler’s Germany, created an atomic-missile shield in the postwar period, built housing on a tremendous scale for its urbanizing population, and raised education and science to new heights in order to compete, above all in armaments, with the countries of the West, which were already entering the post-industrial era. Nevertheless, the command economy proved unable to continue responding indefinitely to the challenges it encountered.

Such is the history of the Soviet Union in brief outline, with the all-Union famine of 1931–33 and the Ukrainian Holodomor of 1933 as integral elements that must be distinguished from each other. In studying the Ukrainian famine, which escalated into the Holodomor at a

certain stage, one cannot limit oneself to facts that appear obligingly before one's eyes, even if they are found in the Kremlin archives. The Holodomor requires a comprehensive study of the political, social, and national aspects of "full-scale socialist construction on all fronts." Moreover, every aspect has to be approached with the realization that appearance belied reality.

In particular, the Soviet authorities positioned themselves as representatives of the workers and peasants, and so they appeared at first glance. In the final analysis, however, they showed themselves to be an oligarchic dictatorship with a tendency to turn into a personal despotism. The transfer of private property into the hands of the nation/society was proclaimed as the result of the socioeconomic transformations, when in fact society was expropriated, and the political dictatorship of the party chiefs was complemented by an economic dictatorship. Finally, according to its constitution, the USSR was a federation of sovereign national republics enjoying equal rights, but in reality it existed as a supercentralized unitary state.

The Bolshevik leaders avowed that they were building socialism. They presented communism to the people as the "bright future" eulogized by propagandists—a society that would distribute material wealth according to need. Until the early 1930s, they were absolutely convinced that socialism differed from communism only in the distribution of goods, not in their production. When the all-Union famine of 1932–33 forced them to halt their efforts to eliminate commodity-money relations, they called the order that they had managed to build "socialism" and postponed the final liquidation of the free market to the second phase of communism—the "bright future."

*The Political Dictatorship of the Leaders*

The famine of the early 1930s is usually associated with the Bolshevik leadership's modernizing efforts. The great majority of resources in a country trapped in a hostile (officially, capitalist) encirclement is assumed to have been dedicated to the goal of forced industrialization. This approach encourages scholars to consider the Soviet system in a global context. But the term "capitalist encirclement" itself suggests that the accustomed Westernization of prerevolutionary times was linked in the Soviet Union with efforts to create a completely different world—an attractive one, according to the propagandists' assurances, but a monstrous one in actuality. The famine was associated precisely with insistent efforts to realize the RCP(B)'s utopian program of 1919, which was based on the revolutionary Marxism of the era of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848).

In the *Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels described the activity of the working class after coming to power as follows: "The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class, and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible."<sup>3</sup> Here the expression "the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class," is striking. It turns out that the first Marxists did not differentiate hierarchically structured human communities (parties, armies, states) from human communities without an internal skeleton (societies, nations, classes). This conflation of communities different in principle meant that the recommendations of revolutionary Marxism were left hanging in the air, including the recommendation that guaranteed the advent of communism: "The theory of the communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in Karl Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, ed. David Fernbach (Harmondsworth, 1973), 86.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

The *Communist Manifesto* appeared a few weeks before the outbreak of the revolutions of 1848–49. Its opening line caused a global stir: “A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism.” But after the revolutions, the situation in Western Europe stabilized, and the specter of communism vanished. It appeared in Eastern Europe instead.

The arrival of the specter of communism in Russia was influenced by objective and subjective factors alike. The former included the extraordinary tension in relations between the tsarist regime and society, between peasants and landowners, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, as well as the situation caused by World War I and its negative effect on daily life. In the course of the war, millions of scattered and politically unorganized peasants were mobilized into the army and, as such, transformed into an organized armed force capable of standing up to the autocratic landowner system. The subjective factors included the political force guided by the revolutionary Marxist platform of the era of the *Communist Manifesto* and its leader, who knew how to implement the communist doctrine, which was directed against peasant interests. By using the soviets—councils of workers’ and soldiers’ deputies that emerged during the Russian Revolution and dispatched the 300-year-old Romanov autocracy in a week—as a fulcrum, in one year Vladimir Lenin managed to direct a gigantic country that did not understand what was happening to it onto the path of communist construction.

The specter of communist revolution appeared in Russia as early as April 1917, when Lenin announced, in his “April Theses,” the Bolsheviks’ intention to build a communal state. A year later, in April 1918, Lenin, in launching the construction of communism, once again formulated this principal task of “creating a communal state.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> V. I. Lenin, “Doklad ob ocherednykh zadachakh Sovetskoi vlasti na zasedanii VTsIK 29 apreliia 1918 g.,” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 36 (Moscow, 1974), 264. Cf. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/apr/29.htm>.

“The state organized as the ruling class,” “the communal state,” “the state of the commune”—these were the names for the state established by the Bolsheviks according to the promptings of the *Communist Manifesto*. Lenin understood how to unite an unstructured community (class) with a structured one (the state). For him, the soviets were the fulcrum, and their network had to be converted into the foundation of the worker-peasant state. On the first day he appeared in revolutionary Petrograd, he put forward the slogan “All power to the soviets!” The Bolshevik leader set out to implement communist doctrine by a tried-and-true method: “revolution from above.” That was how the Russian tsars had imposed capitalism with the goal of modernizing the country.

The communal state was to serve as the instrument for the imposition of communism. Who stood behind it, and what was the actual meaning of the expression “dictatorship of the proletariat,” first formulated in the *Communist Manifesto*?

Lenin called the working class a “class in itself,” capable in its own milieu of developing nothing more than a trade-unionist consciousness. He gave assurances that an organization of revolutionaries directed by an intelligentsia recruited from diverse strata of the population could transform the workers into a “class for itself.” In his opinion, only the party he had created could be such an organization. He called it a “new type of party,” and he was right: unlike existing political parties, it was based on the principle of “democratic centralism.” The party masses had to render unquestioning obedience to their leaders, low-level leaders to their superiors, and superiors to the party chiefs.

Lenin had outlined the role and place of the soviets in the system of state power as early as November 1905 in an article titled “Our Tasks and the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies.” He considered it “inexpedient to demand that the [St. Petersburg] Soviet of Workers’ Deputies

accept the social-democratic program and join the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party.” The most important thing was that the soviet consider itself the germ of a provisional revolutionary government or aim for the creation of such a revolutionary government.<sup>6</sup> Knowing Lenin’s steady focus on winning political power, it is hard to imagine that he intended to remove his party from the St. Petersburg Soviet, which was poised to become a revolutionary government. Already in 1905, he regarded the soviets as an administrative structure inseparably tied to the dictatorship of his party. How was the sought-after inseparability achieved?

First of all, the soviets had to be organizationally separated from the Bolshevik Party. Second, the party’s undivided control over the soviets had to be ensured. This meant that the Bolsheviks had to force competing parties out of the soviets and fill them with their own ranks and sympathetically inclined independent deputies. As a result, the Bolshevik Party began to exist in two forms: first as a political party that, under the guise of the dictatorship of the proletariat, established its own dictatorship (more precisely, the dictatorship of communist party chiefs); second as soviets that had administrative functions but were deprived of political influence. Hence the dictatorship of the party chiefs relied on a firm authority that grew from the midst of the people but was independent of them.

It was no accident that the Communist Party/soviet tandem came to be called “Soviet rule” (despite the rules of orthography, the word “Soviets” in the plural and “Soviet rule” were written with capital letters). It was impossible to doubt the popular roots of this authority, especially as it took its cadres from the lower strata of society. Worker or peasant origin became an emblem of higher social status, similar to noble origin in the past. Possible misunderstandings

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<sup>6</sup> V. I. Lenin, “Nashi zadachi i Sovet rabochikh deputatov,” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 12 (Moscow, 1972), 62–63. Cf. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/nov/04b.htm>.

between the party and soviet apparatuses were avoided by allowing only Bolsheviks to occupy positions of authority in soviet institutions.

As head of the Soviet government, Lenin announced in December 1917 that “The state is an institution for coercion. In the old days, it was the coercion of the whole people by a handful of moneybags. We want to turn the state into an institution enforcing the will of the people. We want to institute coercion in the working people’s interests.”<sup>7</sup> Two weeks later, the head of the Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom) established the All-Russian Extraordinary Committee (*Vserossiiskaia chrezvychainaia komissiia*, VChK), the organ that would come to embody the dictatorship of the communist chiefs under various names: Cheka, OGPU, UGB-NKVD, MGB and MVD, and KGB.

The system of rule was built up once and for all in the course of Stalin’s socioeconomic transformations, also achieved by means of onslaught. Society’s horizontally structured organizations were either destroyed or verticalized, that is, converted to the principles of “democratic centralism.” Party and government (soviet) power verticals were rooted in the thick of the popular masses by means of “transmission belts”—the ramified system of soviets that provided the power vertical with executive committees at various levels: the Young Communist League (*Komsomol*) with its subordinate Pioneer and Little Octobrist organizations, the trade unions with their millions of members, and hundreds of various civic organizations. The Bolshevik Party was also turned into a “transmission belt” when its internal party of leaders (the *nomenklatura*) separated from it. The vertical of state security, officially subordinate since its inception to the Soviet vertical but actually to the party vertical, was freed from the control of local party committees and came under that of the general secretary of the Central Committee,

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<sup>7</sup> V. I. Lenin, “Doklad o prave otzyva na zasedanii VTsIK 21 noiabria (4 dekabria) 1917 g.,” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 35 (Moscow, 1974), 110. Cf. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/nov/21.htm>.

All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) [CC AUCP(B)]. Just like the party and soviet verticals, it was rooted in society by hundreds of thousands (in Ukraine) and millions (in the USSR as a whole) of its “secret collaborators” (*seksoty*). Unlike previous societies, Soviet society gained a skeleton, as a result of which it started to behave like a hierarchical structure similar to a party or an army. As early as April 1917, this skeleton had its own name—the communal state. Unlike traditional, totalitarian, and democratic states, separated from society by definition, the communist state merged with its society through all its institutions, thereby gaining colossal power. Only this kind of state was capable of achieving all that could be done in a communist utopia, specifically, expropriating society and augmenting its political dictatorship with an economic one.

### *The Economic Dictatorship of the Leaders*

It is worth repeating the already cited phrase from the *Communist Manifesto*: “The theory of the communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.” Does this mean that the “expropriation of the expropriators” led to the emergence of communist, that is, common property? Common property within the framework of the country had to be collective, belonging to the whole people.

Karl Marx lived another 35 years and Friedrich Engels another 47 after their *Manifesto* came out. Their work has found a worthy place in the intellectual treasury of humanity. But neither of them found time to clarify the *Manifesto*’s main riddle: how private property, on which the whole history of civilization is based, was to be transformed into common, collective property of the whole people. Without renouncing the predictions made in the *Manifesto*, they focused on studying the society of their day, which they called “bourgeois.” Moreover, Marx’s

principal work, *Capital*, contained a fundamental postulate that contradicted the revolutionary impatience of the *Manifesto*: “[Society] can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development.” Marx insisted that the development of productive forces and production relations, which he united in an integrated socioeconomic formation, was a natural historical process.<sup>8</sup>

An analysis of the *Manifesto* leads one to surmise that the young Marx and Engels associated the future of humanity with the absorption of the state by the revolutionary proletariat, which was becoming the main element of society with the development of large-scale mechanized industry. They believed that under these conditions society would assume the functions of the state. It turned out precisely the other way around: the communal state entered society without losing its identity and, having eliminated independent civic organizations, became capable of quashing expressions of citizens’ will from within their own community.

The founders of Marxism asserted that in the course of “expropriating the expropriators,” private ownership of the means of production would be socialized, that is, it would pass into the hands of society. They also assured their readers that nationalized property would pass into the hands of the nation. But nations and societies do not have “hands,” whereas the state as a hierarchical structure does. After the communist transformations, society as a totality of owners large and small found itself proletarianized and therefore helpless in the face of the communal state, in whose hands the means of production were concentrated.

The nationalization or socialization of the means of production led to state ownership. Yet in no way does this assertion define the nature of that ownership, for there are too many kinds of states. Lawyers distinguish many kinds of ownership, since it has three independent functions (possession, use, and control) that appear in various combinations in two environments

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<sup>8</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1 (New York, 1967), 10.

(state and society). Historians should reduce these to two basic forms, private and collective. After the expropriation of society, ownership of the means of production does not become the possession of the whole people, which means that it remains private. Owing to the maximum centralization of governance in the communal state, private property was concentrated at the top of the power pyramid. But one should avoid simplifying the function of the economic dictatorship, as if the members of the Politburo of the CC AUCP(B) were owners of factories, railroads, and steamships. They were satisfied with having their names attached to particular sites or even cities. The leaders' economic dictatorship manifested itself in such actions as the apportionment of national income between consumption and accumulation, spheres and branches of production, regions, and so on.

When we study the formation of grain-procurement plans, which were directly related to the rural famine of the early 1930s, we see that in the all-Union total an exorbitant amount was set for grain procurements. Stalin did not even conceal this approach to directive planning, calling it "spurring the country on" (*podkhlëstyvanie*).<sup>9</sup> But it is impossible to determine what criteria he used in apportioning plan targets among the regions. One can only surmise that the requisitioning of agricultural produce (*prodravërstka*) was used not only for its intended purpose but also as an instrument of the Kremlin's nationality policy.

### *The Kremlin's Nationality Policy*

Communist construction was accompanied by fanning the flames of civil war, and the Bolsheviks showed no small aptitude for making it even more intense. But they were not prepared to combat the national-liberation movement at the same time. On the contrary, they

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<sup>9</sup> I. Stalin, "Itogi pervoi piatiletki. Doklad 7 ianvaria 1933 g. na ob"edinennom plenum TsK i TsKK VKP(b)," *Sochineniia*, vol. 13 (Moscow, 1951), 185. Cf. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1933/01/07.htm>.

strove to ally themselves with the oppressed peoples' liberation movements, the better to overcome the resistance of the social strata opposed to building communism. Their success in restoring the empire that had disintegrated after the fall of the autocracy was ensured by the dual nature of the Soviet state—a combination of the administrative authority of the soviets' executive committees, which was specified in their constitutions, with the dictatorship of the party committees, which was nowhere to be found in any constitution. When they proclaimed Soviet rule in the ethnic borderlands of the former empire, the Bolshevik leaders were even prepared to give them the status of independent states. Nevertheless, every state sovietized according to the party line was subordinate to a single center. This strategy turned out to be more effective than the primitive use of force chosen by the White generals to restore the “one and indivisible” Russia.

To Bolshevize the Russian urban soviets, it sufficed to set “workers” against “non-workers” and “exploiters” against “the exploited.” This approach worked because it took account of the objective difference between the working class and the bourgeoisie. All it took was the promotion of class warfare instead of class peace—in other words, the principle of revolutionary Marxism that formed the basis of Leninism. To Bolshevize the village soviets, disparities of property among the peasants had to be presented as class-based. This division also had an objective basis, since the figure of the kulak had appeared in prerevolutionary times as part of the process of transforming the peasantry from a social estate into a class. But the Ukrainian peasantry was wealthier than the Russian, so this attempt to divide peasant ranks did not always work. The Bolsheviks therefore had to resort to restricting the rights and competence of the soviets by creating a parallel organization of poor peasants and endowing it with rights taken from the soviets. These Committees of Poor Peasants (*Komitety nezamozhnykh selian*) remained

in existence until 1933 and played an infamous role in the terror-famine organized by the authorities.

The soviets created in the non-Russian regions held the plenitude of administrative power, just like the soviets in central Russia. If the Bolsheviks based the social organization of power in Russia on the ancient Roman principle of “divide and rule,” they had to come up with something different for the non-Russian regions in order to minimize the danger that Soviet institutions there might be exploited for separatist aims. The principle of politicizing ethnicity was such an invention, and it became the basis for the political and territorial division of the country for administrative purposes.

In Russia, Lenin’s government left the established division of regions into provinces (*gubernii*), but in the non-Russian lands it created ethnically based political or territorial administrative units. Each unit was named after the nationality that made up the majority population. Ukrainians (within the Ukrainian SSR), Moldavians (in the Moldavian Autonomous SSR within Ukraine), and members of other nationalities in ethnic regions established in Ukraine (Russians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Poles, Germans, and Jews) became titular nations. People of a given nationality were considered members of the titular nation within its own administrative borders and members of national minorities without any rights outside them. The status of Russians in Ukraine was ambiguous: officially they were a national minority within the boundaries of the republic as a whole but the titular nation in eight Russian national regions. Unofficially, the Bolshevik leaders saw them as the titular nation of the entire USSR. Ukrainians in the Soviet Union had three different statuses: representatives of the titular nation within the Ukrainian SSR, contenders for titular-nation status if the Ukrainized regions of the North Caucasus were to be annexed to the Ukrainian SSR, and national minorities in all other regions.

When it comes to studying the question of who was the target of the terror-famine in the Ukrainian SSR and the North Caucasus, such nuances are worth taking into consideration.

What was the status of Soviet titular nations? The proving ground for the development of nationality policy was Ukraine. In December 1919, the Eighth Congress of the RCP(B) held a debate “On Soviet Rule in Ukraine” and wrote in its resolution: “Members of the RCP(B) on Ukrainian territory must put into practice the right of the working masses to study in their native language and speak it in all Soviet institutions.”<sup>10</sup> Lenin argued for the principle of “speaking and studying in one’s native language” in such frank polemics with Russian Bolsheviks that he thought it best not to publish the speech he had given at the conference. It remains unpublished today.<sup>11</sup>

The peoples whom the Kremlin allowed to live in formally independent Soviet republics and, after the formation of the USSR, to earn the constitutional right to leave the federation, were titular nations with sovereign status. Any separatist inclinations among them were quashed by the party committees in charge of implementing the dictatorship. All other titular nations had to be satisfied with the principle of “speaking and studying in one’s native language” without the accoutrements of statehood. The difference between the titular nations of the Union republics and all others was that the party dictatorship prevented the former from becoming full-fledged nations, while the latter were officially considered ethnations.

The concept of a titular nation required the implementation of an indigenization (*korenizatsiia*) campaign, or the rooting of Soviet rule within the bounds of ethnically based administrative units. This campaign promoted indigenous cultural development among the titular

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<sup>10</sup> V. I. Lenin, “Rezoliutsiia TsK RKP(b) ‘O Sovetskoï vlasti na Ukraine,’” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 39 (Moscow, 1974), 335. Cf. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/nov/x01.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Stanislav V. Kul'chyts'kyi, “Restavratsiia Ukraïns'koï SRR” in *Narysy istorii Ukraïns'koï revoliutsii 1917–1921 rokiv*, vol. 2 (Kyiv, 2012), 315–81.

nations, even though the state was counting on it first and foremost to strengthen its rule in the given society. The wager paid off. Soviet rule, established in Ukraine after three attempts in 1917–19, was able to shed the appearance of an occupying regime precisely because it managed to find common ground with the local population.

Even though the Kremlin always stressed only the principle of “speaking and studying in one’s native language,” Ukrainization was Janus-faced. What mattered to the party leaders, however, was something entirely different: the copying of the communist regime in the non-Russian regions by “local people” (as Stalin put it). The acknowledgment that this campaign had two faces and the attachment of an appropriate name to each face (Bolshevik or “Petliurite”) occurred only after the Ukrainization of the North Caucasus had been brought to a halt. “Petliurite” Ukrainization was an unwelcome side effect of the indigenization campaign. It encouraged a national resurgence, running counter to the regime’s intention of returning the nation to the state of an ethnos. The resolution of the CC AUCP(B) “On the Progress of Grain Procurements in Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and the Western Province,” dated December 14, 1932, initiated a terror-famine in a territory already marked by the emergence of a “second Ukraine” within the USSR. It put an end to the “thoughtless, non-Bolshevik ‘Ukrainization’ of almost half the districts [*raiony*] of the North Caucasus, which did not proceed from the cultural interests of the population.”<sup>12</sup> The Ukrainization of those districts of the North Caucasus created objective conditions for its reunification with the Ukrainian SSR. The prospect of further increasing the resources and human potential of the largest non-Russian republic was extremely unwelcome to the Kremlin.

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<sup>12</sup> *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, ed. Ruslan Ia. Pyrih et al. (Kyiv, 1990), 292.

Along with the concept of titular nations and the campaign to indigenize Soviet rule, the third component of the principle of politicizing ethnicity was the official determination of the individual's ethnic allegiance, that is, the notorious "point five" in Soviet documents (in internal passports, which were introduced for residents of cities and new settlements in 1933, this point was fourth). In order to keep society under strict control, the communal state had to know two basic characteristics of every individual: social origin and nationality.

### *The Potential for Crisis in the Requisitioning System*

The essence of the Holodomor can be defined only in relation to the building of communism. That is why the first sections of this article explored the circumstances behind the emergence of the communal state and its penetration of society. In this section I shall discuss the all-Union famine of 1932-33, including the Ukrainian famine of 1932, on the basis of which the Holodomor became possible. Attention must be focused on the requisitioning of foodstuffs, which was the cause of the all-Union famine.

Historians associate the requisitioning system with the RCP(B) leadership's agrarian policy in the period of "war communism." But scholars should refrain, especially when studying the Holodomor, from a stage-by-stage reading of "war communism," the New Economic Policy, and Stalinist modernization in its three variants—industrialization of the country, collectivization of agriculture, and cultural development. If we look at the first two decades of Soviet history from the standpoint of the building of communism, we will see that requisitioning was introduced twice, in 1919–20 and 1929–32, with the same result in each case—famine. Admittedly, in the first case the tragic consequences of the Kremlin's agrarian policy were

masked by the terrible drought of 1921 affecting southern Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and the Volga region.

*Prodrazvërstka*—the requisitioning of agricultural produce—bore no direct relation to the building of communism but was the inevitable consequence of the efforts of the communal state to liquidate private ownership of the means of production. The logic of the communist transformations demanded the simultaneous abolition of private ownership, both large and small, in town and country alike. Removing the haute bourgeoisie from production proved rather simple. The authorities had the support of the working class, which was gaining substantial rights in the management of nationalized property through factory committees and trade unions. Identical transformations in the countryside were associated with the creation of Soviet farms (Russ. *sovkhos*, Ukr. *radhosp*) out of landowners' estates and communes through the amalgamation of peasant farms. With factories, Soviet farms, and agricultural communes at its disposal, the communal state acquired—or so its leaders thought—the capacity to liquidate the free market and introduce direct product exchange instead of the trade between town and country that had existed for ages. Lenin announced his intention to bring about these transformations in his April Theses of 1917, and provision was made for them in the communist program adopted by the RCP(B) in March 1919.

But the effort to introduce these changes was a failure from the start. Peasants and soldiers mobilized in the countryside would not hear of Soviet farms and demanded the “black repartition.” Lenin’s government was forced to satisfy their demands and found it necessary to replace direct product exchange between town and country with some other way of turning workers’ and civil servants’ wages into material means of existence. The attempt to retain a portion of the landowners’ estates as Soviet farms and give priority to the communes during the

“black repartition” in Ukraine, which was conquered at the beginning of 1919, proved deadly for Soviet rule.

Under the resulting conditions, the Sovnarkom outlawed free trade and requisitioned the quantities of produce it needed from the peasants under the guise of mandatory duties. For fulfilling those duties, peasants received only symbolic remuneration. First and foremost, the communal state had to support the Red Army, which had been built up to unbelievable numbers. Second, industry ended up in a state of partial collapse because of attempts to replace market relations in the state sector of the economy with a system of orders by directive. Third, the state became militarized and made the fulfillment of military needs its first priority.

Caught unawares by the introduction of requisitioning in 1919, in the following year the peasants began to limit their sowing to the extent required to meet their own needs, as they had no desire to work for the state without material compensation. Lenin then attempted to supplement the requisitioning of produce with the requisitioning of sowing. A law to that effect was introduced in December 1920, leading to the creation of a system of state agencies that were to assign a sowing plan to every farmstead and then to monitor how diligently peasant farms cultivated the sown land in order to produce a harvest that would be delivered to the state according to the amount requisitioned. It is hard to say what convinced the leader to renounce a communist policy that had overextended itself into a policy of serfdom. But several months later, after the law on sowing allotments had been introduced, Lenin went over to the New Economic Policy, and a few months before his death he began appealing to the party to reject established conceptions of socialism.

The repudiation of the New Economic Policy and the switch in 1929 to a new communist onslaught revived the requisitioning system. On June 28, 1929, the VTsIK and Sovnarkom of the

RSFSR adopted a resolution “On Expanding the Rights of Local Soviets to Promote the Fulfillment of National Tasks and Plans.” On July 3, it was duplicated by the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (VUTsVK) and Council of People’s Commissars (Radnarkom) of the Ukrainian SSR. These resolutions introduced mandatory plan targets for grain delivery with requisitions in every village according to the principle of self-taxation. They were based on the conclusion of the Fifteenth Congress of the AUCP(B), held in December 1927, according to which, in proportion to the success of socialist construction, trade in commodities would increasingly turn into the exchange of commodities, and trade would ultimately be supplanted by the “socialist distribution of goods.”<sup>13</sup> In a resolution of the CC AUCP(B) “On Basic Results and Further Objectives with Regard to Contracts for Grain Crops,” adopted on August 26, 1929, victory over the market, which seemed very close, was marked by a terminological revolution: goods were already being called “products.” The contract between the state and the peasant, collective farm, or cooperative began to be considered a “means of organizing planned barter between town and country.”<sup>14</sup>

There is no need to demonstrate that requisitioning had a disastrous effect on production. This has been established by many famine researchers, particularly Robert Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, as well as Viktor Kondrashin.<sup>15</sup> The peasants sowed less and less, and the state requisitioned a steadily increasing portion of the harvest, which nevertheless continued to shrink with every year of requisitioning. As a result, the threat of famine loomed over both the countryside and the cities, the latter relying on centralized state deliveries of grain via the

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<sup>13</sup> *KPRS v rezoliutsiiakh i rishenniakh z'izdiv, konferentsii i plenumiv TsK*, vol. 4 (Kyiv, 1980), 41.

<sup>14</sup> *Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziaistva: Vazhneishie postanovleniia Kommunisticheskoi partii i Sovetskogo pravitel'stva, 1927–1935* (Moscow, 1957), 196–97.

<sup>15</sup> See Robert Dévis [Davies] and Stiven Uitcroft [Stephen Wheatcroft], *Gody goloda: Sel'skoe khoziaistvo SSSR. 1931–1933* (Moscow, 2011), translation of Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (New York, 2004); Viktor Kondrashin, *Golod 1932–1933 godov: tragediia rossiiskoi derevni* (Moscow, 2008).

rationing system. The collectivization of agriculture adjusted this pattern by postponing the specter of famine. Collective farmers could no longer decide on their own how much to sow, and sown areas were expanded from one year to the next. At the Sixteenth Congress of the AUCP(B), held in June 1930, Stalin declared optimistically that, thanks to the collective-farm system being established in the country, the grain problem was being resolved successfully.<sup>16</sup>

On the collective farms, however, the destructive effect of the Bolshevik division of the peasantry into poor peasants, middle peasants, and kulaks began to disappear. The peasantry again began behaving, according to the definition of Teodor Shanin, a discerning expert on peasant psychology, “as a social entity with a community of economic interests, its identity shaped by conflict with other classes and expressed in typical patterns of cognition and political consciousness, however rudimentary, which made it capable of collective action reflecting its interests.”<sup>17</sup> Forced to work in the fields to raise crops destined for the state, collective farmers were so careless that grain losses increased to fantastic proportions. In the fourth year of requisitioning the peasants practically stopped working because they were also weakened by hunger. Refusing to work conscientiously in the fields, they focused their efforts on their individual plots, which were supposed to save them from hunger in the winter months.

The government regarded the peasants’ unwillingness to work on collective farms as sabotage. Foreigners were struck by its scale. The head of the Polish general consulate in the Ukrainian SSR, Jan Karszo-Siedlewski, told his ministry of foreign affairs that on September 27, 1932 he had flown from Kharkiv to Odesa in order to get an idea of the actual state of agriculture in Ukraine. The six hours he spent in the air on a cloudless day convinced him that no more than one-sixth of the republic’s arable land had been plowed and sown. Everywhere he saw only

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<sup>16</sup> I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12 (Moscow, 1949), 279–89.

<sup>17</sup> “Part IV: Peasantry as a Class” in *Peasants and Peasant Societies: Selected Readings*, 2d ed., ed. Teodor Shanin (Oxford, 1987), 329.

small numbers of people in the fields, even though the autumn agricultural season was reaching its end.<sup>18</sup> In June 1933 the Italian ambassador in Moscow, Bernardo Attolico, informed his government: “We must seek the main cause of the current famine in the peasants’ loss of interest in working the land, which has ceased to be their property, and in the peasant resistance and disinclination to give the state the fruits of their labor.”<sup>19</sup>

Characterizing the scope of the grain-procurement plans in their detailed year-by-year descriptions, Davies and Wheatcroft limit themselves to remarking that the extraordinarily high all-Union procurements were allocated among the republics, provinces, and districts with particular assignments for state farms, collective farms, and individual farmers.<sup>20</sup> The regional requisitions were an act of voluntarism, and here the two authors had to do without assumptions of their own. Yet the breakdown of regional grain quotas, which is reproduced in their book without comment, gives food for thought. Why indeed did Ukraine give the state 7,675,000 metric tons of grain in 1930 when the Central Black Earth, Middle Volga, Lower Volga, and North Caucasus krajs (regions), taken together, gave 7,356,000 metric tons?<sup>21</sup> Never—not in the years of the NEP nor before the revolution—had Ukraine produced as much grain as those four other regions of commercial agriculture in the European part of the country put together. Not until the end of May 1931 did the republic manage to fulfill the grain quota set for the harvest of 1930. The state received 4.7 quintals of grain from every sown hectare in Ukraine—a record-breaking index of marketability for all the years before and after the revolution. But the productive powers of the Ukrainian countryside had been undermined.<sup>22</sup> From its harvest of

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<sup>18</sup> *Hołodomor 1932–1933: Wielki Głód na Ukrainie w dokumentach polskiej dyplomacji i wywiadu*, comp. Jan Jacek Bruski (Warsaw, 2008), 126–27.

<sup>19</sup> *Lysty z Kharkova: Holod v Ukraïni ta na Pivnichnomu Kavkazi v povidomlenniakh italiis'kykh dyplomativ. 1932–1933 roky*, comp. Andrea Hratiiozi [Graziosi] (Kharkiv, 2007), 168–69.

<sup>20</sup> Dèvis and Uitkroft, *Gody goloda*, 94–95.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 479.

<sup>22</sup> S. V. Kul'chyts'kyi, *Tsina “velykoho perelomu”* (Kyiv, 1991), 226–27.

1931, Ukraine gave the state 7,253,000 metric tons of grain—not significantly less than in the previous year (the other four regions of commercial agriculture taken together supplied 8,336,000 metric tons).<sup>23</sup> Grain procurement continued until the late spring of 1932, when many districts were left with no reserves of produce or fodder at all. The effect of this was not limited to the further erosion of agricultural productivity. In the first half of 1932, famine began to rage in 44 districts of the Ukrainian SSR, claiming the lives of tens of thousands of people.<sup>24</sup>

Can we guess why the communal state so forcefully imposed requisitions specifically in Ukraine? It is perhaps necessary to take a closer look at the regional statistics on peasant disturbances in 1930 cited by Lynne Viola. As is well known, in March 1930 Stalin halted total collectivization for six months and published an article titled “Dizziness with Success,” in which he characterized his own policy of communizing the peasantry as a “distortion of the party line” by local party workers. He described the situation in the spring of 1930 across the country in a confidential letter of April 2, 1930 to lower party organizations as follows: “If measures had not been taken immediately against these distortions of the party line, we would now be facing a broad wave of insurgent peasant actions, a good half of our lower-ranking officials would have been killed by peasants, the sowing would have been disrupted, the development of collective farming would have been undermined, and we would be under internal and external threat.”<sup>25</sup>

And now let us take a look at the regional statistics on peasant disturbances in four regions of commercial agriculture (excluding the Middle Volga):<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Dëvis and Uitkroft, *Gody goloda*, 94–95.

<sup>24</sup> Kul'chyts'kyi, *Tsina “velykoho perelomu,”* 247–49.

<sup>25</sup> *Dokumenty svidetel'stvuiut: Iz istorii derevni nakanune i v khode kollektivizatsii, 1927–1932 gg.* (Moscow, 1989), 390.

<sup>26</sup> Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York, 1996), 138–39.

Regions	March 1930	All of 1930
Ukrainian SSR	2,945	4,098
Central Black Earth Krai	737	1,373
North Caucasus	335	1,061
Lower Volga	203	1,003

These data speak for themselves. Situated on the European border with Western Ukraine, which was then part of Poland, the national republic with the greatest human and economic potential in the USSR particularly unnerved the party leadership. It is not hard to imagine how those in the Kremlin felt when they read OGPU summaries citing the proclamations of Ukrainian insurgents with their calls for achieving independence and restoring the Ukrainian People's Republic. Many of these facts are presented by Liudmyla Hrynevych in the book *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni: prychny ta naslidky* (The Famine of 1932–33 in Ukraine: Causes and Effects).<sup>27</sup>

Bearing in mind the possible connection between grain-procurement plans and peasant disturbances, let us examine the economic situation in the Soviet Union after several years of requisitioning. Anyone seeking to understand the situation by perusing Soviet newspapers could only be astonished by the large number of new industrial plants that began production in 1932. Nevertheless, the country was engulfed by a severe economic crisis.

For the first time, the government was forced to reduce spending on the “sacred cows” of the budget—industry and the army. The balance of payments was in a terrible state. In order to pay off debts incurred by short-term loans (there was already a Western black market in Soviet credit notes), the government began selling off masterpieces of world art and unique antiquities

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<sup>27</sup> L. V. Hrynevych, “Vyivlennia natsional'noï identychnosti ukraïns'koho selianstva v roky kolektyvizatsiï,” in *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni: Prychny ta naslidky* (Kyiv, 2003), 421–25.

from national museums. Grain rations for officials and dependents of workers and officials were reduced, and some categories of the urban population were denied centralized grain provisioning. But the worst situation by far was in the countryside, where another famine began in the fall of 1932.

The country's senior leadership was inundated with Chekist reports about society's "aggravated mood." On March 6, 1932, the following letter was tossed into the correspondence box for the newsletter of the 153rd Infantry Regiment in the Ukrainian military district: "Woe to socialism if war breaks out in 1932. All it takes is one spark, and an unheard-of fire will flare up."<sup>28</sup> On June 18 H. Tkachenko, a twenty-year-old Young Communist League member from the Brusyliv district in the Kyiv region who was studying at the Kyiv Fishery College, wrote a letter to the general secretary of the Central Committee, Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine [CC CP(B)U], Stanislav Kosior: "It seems to me that, as far as the party was authoritative at least among the broad masses, its authority is constantly declining. As soon as a spark appears among the peasantry, flames will break out everywhere.... Comrade Bukharin's theories are now gaining strength and authority."<sup>29</sup> The reports flowing into the Kremlin included this one: "The peasants are under such an impression that it is frightening even to speak of it: if the least thing were to happen, they would immediately turn their guns against [the regime]. This is Ivan Tarasiuk, a student at the factory apprenticeship school, Dolyna station, writing to you. I am currently working for the GPU in detecting anti-Soviet activity."<sup>30</sup>

On August 5, 1932, the Secret Political Division of the OGPU summed up the data on peasant protests for the seven preceding months. Of the 1,630 disturbances recorded by the

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<sup>28</sup> *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni: Prychyny ta naslidky*, 641.

<sup>29</sup> *Holodomor 1932–1933 rr. v Ukraïni: Dokumenty i materialy* (Kyiv, 2007), 212.

<sup>30</sup> *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, 152.

Chekists, 923 took place in the Ukrainian SSR, 173 in the North Caucasus, and only 43 in the Central Black Earth Krai.<sup>31</sup> Was the Ukrainian peasants' twentyfold greater protest activity due only to their love of liberty, their propensity to revolt or, ultimately, their mentality? It would make more sense to consider the burdensome grain quota that the Kremlin imposed on Ukraine and recognize its provocative nature.

Any worker-peasant protest in the non-Russian regions of the country inevitably took on a national tint. The Kremlin leaders realized that the joint cumulative force of both forms of protest in the Ukrainian SSR, located in close proximity to Europe, was particularly dangerous to them. Given that the principle of prevention was central to Stalin's repressions, one might think that exorbitant grain quotas were imposed in the Ukrainian SSR in 1930–32 and in the Kuban region in 1932 not only as part of the all-Union policy of "spurring"<sup>32</sup> but also with the goal of undermining the economic basis of the national-liberation movement. In all likelihood, the Kremlin overestimated rather than underestimated the threat of Ukrainian separatism.

### *A "Crushing Blow"*

In the early 1930s, Stalin subordinated the upper echelons of the party, government, and Cheka power verticals to himself, but not the entire party or the whole population. The Stalin who was beyond criticism only appeared after the Great Famine of 1932–33 and the Great Terror of 1937–38, with their many millions of victims, and after World War II, in which he was responsible for the deaths of as many as 30 million Soviet citizens. The economic crisis of 1932 caused by requisitioning and the ensuing all-Union famine might easily have cost him his post of general

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<sup>31</sup> *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni: Kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie. Dokumenty v 5 tomakh, 1927–1939*, vol. 3 (Moscow, 2001), 141.

<sup>32</sup> Stalin's own expression. See Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 13 (Moscow, 1951), 182.

secretary of the Central Committee. In order to protect his position at the top of the power structure, the chief was prepared to sacrifice the lives of millions of people.

The state, which was Stalin's team incarnate, presented itself to the working class as an aggregate entrepreneur obligated to pay wages and make sure that those rubles would suffice to provide adequate nutrition. The workers invested their hopes for a minimum level of nutrition under conditions of "temporary hardship" not in the peasantry but in the state, since it was the state that had destroyed the free market previously functioning between town and country in order to facilitate requisitioning. In 1931 and especially in 1932, however, the workers began to sense that something was going wrong in the country. Workers who belonged to the party still remembered the observations and warnings of leaders of the Right Opposition in the Politburo of the CC AUCP(B), even though those "rightist opportunists" had publicly recanted. Meanwhile, the policies of those who had ousted Nikolai Bukharin, Mikhail Tomsky, and Aleksei Rykov from the senior party leadership led to famine not only in the countryside but also in the cities. Consequently, members of the social stratum that the Chekists called "socially close" to the authorities began to pose a threat to Stalin's team.

Martemian Riutin, expelled from the CC AUCP(B) at the Sixteenth Congress in 1930 for propagandizing "rightist opportunistic views," came out openly against the Kremlin leadership. At his initiative, a document titled "Stalin and the Crisis of the Proletarian Dictatorship" was prepared in March 1932, along with "An Appeal to All Members of the AUCP(B)." Grigori Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, and a number of (recently) senior party and government officials in Moscow and Kharkiv who had suffered during the rout of the Right Opposition familiarized themselves with the documents. "An Appeal" stated in particular:

The party and the proletarian dictatorship have been led by Stalin and his clique to a dead end without precedent and are undergoing a deadly crisis. Through deception, slander,

and duping of party people, through unbelievable violence and terror, under the banner of struggle for the purity of Bolshevik principles and party unity, relying on a powerful centralized apparatus, over the last five years Stalin has cut off and removed all the best, genuinely Bolshevik members of the party from its leadership, established a personal dictatorship in the AUCP(B) and the entire country, broken with Leninism, and set out on the path of the most unbridled authoritarianism and savage personal despotism, bringing the Soviet Union to the edge of the precipice.<sup>33</sup>

This long quotation should illustrate the mood that was shared by a certain portion of the party membership and reflected the actual state of affairs in the country. To be sure, Stalin remained sufficiently devoted to Leninism that he did not venture (until January 1933) to reject the literal implementation of the constructions of the Soviet system that were set forth in the RCP(B) program of 1919.

The October 1932 plenum of the CC AUCP(B) held as many as thirty people liable to the party in the Riutin affair. But only a month later, Stalin had to deal with a number of individuals in the Russian government who had grouped themselves around Aleksandr Smirnov. Influenced by the growing crisis, this group began to regard the general line of the CC AUCP(B) in Stalin's implementation as a threat to the party and the country.

On November 27, 1932, Stalin convened a joint session of the Politburo of the CC and the Presidium of the CCC AUCP(B) at which he raised the question of Aleksandr Smirnov's group. Denying personal responsibility for the failure of the grain procurements, on which the group had focused attention, he gave two reasons for the defeat: 1) the penetration of collective and state farms by anti-Soviet elements in order to organize wrecking and sabotage; and 2) the wrong attitude to collective and state farms manifested by a significant number of rural communists. He called for an end to the idealization of collective and state farms and the use of force against them in order to root out "elements of sabotage and anti-Soviet phenomena." "It

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<sup>33</sup> "O dele t.n. 'Soiuza marksistov-lenintsev,'" *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* (Moscow), 1989, no. 6:106.

would be foolish,” declared the general secretary, “if communists, proceeding from the premise that collective farms are a socialist form of agriculture, failed to respond to the blow struck by these individual collective farmers and collective farms with a crushing blow of their own.”<sup>34</sup>

In 2007, the Russian State Archives of Sociopolitical History (RGASPI) and the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace published the edited transcript of the joint session of the Politburo CC and Presidium CCC AUCP(B) that was circulated to party and government activists, as well as the original text, which reflected what was actually said on November 27. Comparison of the two versions gives an idea of what Stalin wanted to say to the broad range of party activists and what he considered prudent to conceal. As indicated in the text distributed to the central committees of communist parties in the national republics and provincial party committees, Stalin announced only the intention to deliver a “crushing blow.” The nature of the blow remained undefined, and its direction was minimized: “against individual collective farmers and collective farms.” Stalin was more forthcoming at the meeting of the higher ranks of the party, naming regions where extraordinary grain-procurement commissions were operating, as well as concrete enemies: White Guardists and Petliurites.<sup>35</sup>

As Stalin spoke, two emergency commissions had already been operating for several weeks. They had been dispatched to the Ukrainian SSR and the North Caucasus Krai according to a resolution of the Politburo CC AUCP(B) adopted on October 22. The day after his speech, the general secretary created another commission for the Lower Volga Krai. The Ukrainian commission was led by Viacheslav Molotov, the head of the Soviet government, the commission for the North Caucasus by Lazar Kaganovich, the secretary of the CC AUCP(B), and the Lower Volga commission by Pavel Postyshev, secretary of the Central Committee. The commissions

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<sup>34</sup> *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni*, 3: 559.

<sup>35</sup> *Stenogrammy zasedanii Politbiuro TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b), 1923–1938 gg.*, ed. K. M. Anderson et al., vol. 3 (Moscow, 2007), 589, 657–58.

were organs of the Kremlin's dictatorial rule created in specific regions for a certain time. Their decisions were made public in the name of local government agencies. The struggle against "sabotage" of grain procurements was publicized in the media in order to drive a wedge between grain producers in the countryside and grain consumers already starving in the cities. The sabotage was portrayed as the peasants' unwillingness to share grain with the state, and the struggle against it as the search by rural activists and authorized representatives dispatched from the cities to take charge of grain procurements for "black granaries" and pits that had been concealed from the state grain inventory.

When Stalin announced his intention to deal a "crushing blow," he already knew the form it would take. The goal of Molotov's first trip to Ukraine, which lasted until November 6, was to reconnoiter the situation in the republic. He returned to Kharkiv on November 17, and on instructions from Stalin, for the first two days he worked on the Kharkiv center's party and government resolutions on the intensification of grain procurements. The head of the commission then sent the draft resolutions of the CC CP(B)U and the Radnarkom of the Ukrainian SSR to the Kremlin for approval.<sup>36</sup> After that, the resolution of the CC CP(B)U was adopted on November 18, and the resolution of the Radnarkom was published on November 20. Both resolutions had an identical title: "On Measures to Intensify Grain Procurement." According to the Radnarkom resolution, district executive committees were obliged to "organize the seizure from collective farms, individual farmers, and state farm workers of grain stolen in the course of harvesting, threshing, and transportation."<sup>37</sup> From this point it followed that the state was sanctioning mass searches and seizures of all grain stocks, as no one was about to distinguish "stolen" grain from any other kind. The Radnarkom resolution included point 9,

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<sup>36</sup> *Komandyry Velykoho holodu: Poïzdky V. Molotova i L. Kahanovycha v Ukraïnu ta na Pivnichnyi Kavkaz, 1932–1933 rr.*, ed. Valerii Vasyl'iev and Iurii Shapoval (Kyiv, 2001), 36, 239.

<sup>37</sup> *Kolektyviziatsiia i holod na Ukraïni, 1929–1933* (Kyiv, 1992), 548.

which bore directly on the Holodomor: “In-kind fines in the form of additional meat-procurement targets shall be levied on those collective farms that have countenanced the theft of collective-farm grain and are maliciously undermining grain-procurement plans: they are to supply an additional 15-month quota of meat from both collectivized livestock and that owned by collective farmers.”<sup>38</sup> The party resolution demanded that fines in kind include not only livestock or meat (fatback) but also the “other grain”—potatoes.<sup>39</sup> Taking this into account, it must be concluded that the main result of the activities of the grain-procurement commission under Molotov’s direction in the Ukrainian SSR was the creation of a legislative basis for terror by famine.

Terror by famine was initially applied to particular villages placed on the “blacklist” for their failure to settle up with the state in grain over a lengthy period. At a meeting of the bureau of the North Caucasus Krai party committee on November 1, Kaganovich first announced his intention to place three to five villages (*stanitsy*) on the blacklist.<sup>40</sup> On December 6, by resolution of the CC CP(B)U and the Radnarkom of the Ukrainian SSR, six villages in Ukraine were blacklisted. On December 8, Stanislav Kosior was already informing Stalin that the provincial party and executive committees had blacklisted as many as 400 collective farms.<sup>41</sup> If we look at the resolution describing blacklist status that was published in *Visti VUTsVK* on December 8, we see nothing out of the ordinary: cessation of cooperative and state trade, preterm loan collection, expulsion of “organizers of grain-procurement wrecking,” and the like. All this was going on in other villages as well. What remained behind the scenes?

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 549.

<sup>39</sup> *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, 257.

<sup>40</sup> *Komandyry Velykoho holodu*, 315.

<sup>41</sup> *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, 284.

Inquisitive Italians took an interest in this, and on May 9, 1933 the Italian ambassador in Moscow, Bernardo Attolico, sent Rome the text of Consul Leone Sircana's report describing the state of agriculture in Ukraine "on the basis of newspaper reports and direct observation." Sircana described the situation as follows: "The placing of entire villages and collective farms on the so-called 'blacklist' entails severe penalties, such as the suspension of all deliveries of goods; the confiscation even of the insignificant stock of goods already available at the cooperatives; an absolute ban on leaving the boundaries of one's village or farm; searches and seizures of produce."<sup>42</sup> So the blacklist penalties provided for "searches and seizures of produce." Barricaded in their villages and deprived of all foodstuffs, the peasants died of hunger.

In November the deputy head of the OGPU and special plenipotentiary of the OGPU in the Ukrainian SSR, Vsevolod Balytsky, was sent to Kharkiv as part of a large group of Chekists. Stalin gave Balytsky some assignments that he soon announced in operational order no. 1 to the GPU of the Ukrainian SSR, dated December 5 (published for official use as a separate brochure). The order began with the assertion that Ukraine was experiencing the "organized sabotage of grain procurements and autumn sowing, organized mass theft on collective and state farms, terror against the staunchest and most steadfast communists and activists in the countryside, the infiltration of dozens of Petliurite emissaries, and the distribution of Petliurite leaflets." Hence the conclusion about the "undoubted existence of an organized counterrevolutionary insurgent underground in Ukraine associated with foreign powers and foreign intelligence services, mainly with the Polish general staff."<sup>43</sup> The Chekists were given an advance description of whom they were to expose as belonging to counterrevolutionary organizations whose members were already

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<sup>42</sup> *Lysty z Kharkova*, 145, 147.

<sup>43</sup> Iu. I. Shapoval and V. A. Zolotar'ov, *Vsevolod Balyts'kyi: Osoba, chas, otochennia* (Kyiv, 2002), 189.

under arrest. Naturally, the Chekists received an assignment from Stalin to find grain concealed from the state inventory—evidence of counterrevolutionary activity.

While there was no problem in exposing individuals designated by the authorities as enemies of the people (in order no. 2 to the GPU of the Ukrainian SSR, dated February 13, Balytsky reported on the discovery of a counterrevolutionary underground in 200 districts),<sup>44</sup> fulfilling Stalin's mandate to discover pits of grain was not so simple. At a meeting of the Politburo of the CC CP(B)U on December 20, Balytsky reported that since the beginning of December, searches had turned up 7,000 pits and 100 "black granaries" concealing 700,000 poods of grain.<sup>45</sup> Two conclusions could be drawn from this information: a) peasants really were hiding remnants of the harvest from the state so as to not die of hunger; and b) the amount of grain uncovered was paltry, offering no hope of the "black granaries" fulfilling the grain-procurement plan.

There is every reason to assert that the procurement campaign of January 1933 in the Ukrainian countryside had nothing to do with grain quotas. Between December 20, 1932 and January 25, 1933, the use of sweeping home searches by Chekists, poor peasants (*nezamozhnyky*), and urban activists managed to turn up fewer than 8,000 pits, 521 "black granaries," and up to 1,400 other secret caches from which they confiscated one million poods of grain in all of Ukraine's rural localities. In order to bring the figure up to a million poods, they included grain obtained from repeat threshings of straw and chaff (so-called *ozadky*, or scraps) as well as grain confiscated from dealers. This overall figure is worth comparing with the grain-procurement plan approved by the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference in July 1932 under

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<sup>44</sup> *Holod-henotsyd 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni*, ed. Iu. Shapoval (Kingston, Ontario: Kashtan Press, 2005), 297.

<sup>45</sup> *Komandyry Velykoho holodu*, 316.

pressure from their Kremlin guests, Molotov and Kaganovich—356 million poods from the peasant sector.<sup>46</sup>

Under the pretext of looking for grain concealed from the state by “peasant saboteurs,” the Kremlin prepared a punitive campaign, the essence of which lay in the confiscation of all food from the Ukrainian countryside, which had long been seized by famine. This campaign was inhumane but constitutional. The constitution of the Ukrainian SSR adopted in March 1919 included article 28, which said: “The Ukrainian SSR recognizes work as the obligation of all citizens of the Republic and proclaims the slogan ‘He who does not work, neither shall he eat.’” This article was copied from article 18 of the constitution of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, which was adopted by the Fifth All-Russian Congress of Soviets in July 1918.<sup>47</sup>

The “crushing blow” was initiated by a telegram of January 1, 1933 from Stalin to the leaders of the Ukrainian SSR in Kharkiv. The general secretary demanded that all collective and individual farmers be notified through the village councils that they were voluntarily to deliver their “previously stolen and hidden grain” to the state. The second and final point of the telegram concerned people who ignored this demand. It read: “As for the collective farmers, collective farms, and individual farmers who stubbornly continue to conceal grain stolen and hidden from the grain inventory, the harshest punitive measures provided by the resolution of the CEC and Sovnarkom of the USSR (“On Safeguarding the Property of State Enterprises, Collective Farms,

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<sup>46</sup> Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi, *Holodomor 1932–1933 rr. iak henotsyd: trudnoshchi usvidomlennia* (Kyiv, 2007), 245, 299.

<sup>47</sup> *Istoriia Radians'koï Konstytutsii v dekretakh i postanovakh Radians'koho uriadu, 1917–1936* (Kyiv, 1937), 75, 118.

and Cooperatives and Strengthening Public (Socialist) Property”) of August 7, 1932, will be applied.”<sup>48</sup>

The logical connection between the first and second points of the telegram prompted local authorities to organize searches of every peasant household on the whole territory of the Ukrainian SSR. After all, the threat of employing the Law of Spikelets against peasants who avoided delivering their “hidden grain” to the state could only be effectuated if it were determined that they had in fact resisted. Hence Stalin’s telegram was not so much a threat as a signal to begin mass searches.

The legend about the “hidden grain” proved necessary not only to signal the need for these mass searches but also to provide plausible motivation for the actions of the hundreds of thousands of people who had to take part in them. It was no accident that at the time Stalin was sending his telegram, the New Year’s edition of the newspaper *Pravda* published a report from the large village of Krynychky in the Dnipropetrovsk region. According to the journalist, there were fifty grain-procurement officials from the district and province in the village. On average, they were supposed to ensure the delivery of 1,000 quintals of grain daily but were managing to wring no more than 15 quintals out of the peasants. The report ended as follows: “We must keep looking, as there is a whole ‘underground city of wheat.’ Yet only rarely do the efforts of the best workers turn up one or two pits.”

What were the objective consequences of Stalin’s New Year’s telegram? We have a more or less precise measurement of the extent of excess mortality and can therefore differentiate the all-Union famine of 1932 in Ukraine from the Ukrainian Holodomor of 1933. According to the latest calculations of experts at the Institute of Demography and Social Research, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine—Omelian Rudnytsky, Nataliia Levchuk, Alla Savchuk, and

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<sup>48</sup> *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv*, 308.

Pavlo Shevchuk, under the leadership of Oleh Wolowyna (University of North Carolina)—excess mortality in 1933 was 3,335,000 people in the rural areas of the Ukrainian SSR and 194,000 in the cities. The corresponding statistics for 1932 were 207,000 in the villages and 43,000 in the cities. I am grateful to these demographers, who have allowed me to cite their unpublished findings based on their ongoing research.<sup>49</sup>

Death by starvation in 1932 was a consequence of the grain procurements. In extracting the *prodrazvērstka* from the 1931 harvest, Molotov “outdid himself” in a whole series of districts of the Ukrainian SSR, which led to mass mortality in the first half of 1932. In order to ensure the spring sowing and save the starving, the state provided food aid, which included the reduction of grain exports. At that time, no one was bent on the destruction of starving Ukrainian peasants. The fourteenfold difference between the famine of 1932 and the Holodomor of 1933 cannot be explained by grain procurements. In January 1933, under a total information blockade, all food supplies were confiscated from peasant households in the course of a campaign to uncover that nonexistent “underground city of wheat.” On January 22, the information blockade was augmented with a physical one. Stalin himself wrote the directive of the CC AUCP(B) and Sovnarkom of the USSR (the holograph has been preserved) to halt the mass exodus of peasants from Ukraine and the Kuban to other regions.<sup>50</sup>

The famine caused by grain procurements can be justified by whatever one wishes, even—and this is often done when genocide is being denied—by the need to establish a defense infrastructure in anticipation of the events of 1941. However, when the state confiscates not grain

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<sup>49</sup> Nataliia M. Levchuk, “Raionna dyferentsiatsiia vtrat naselennia Ukraïny unaslidok holodu v 1933 roku” in *Holod v Ukraïni u pershii polovyni XX stolittia: prychny i naslidky*, 261; Omelian Rudnytskyi, “Urban-Rural Oblast Dynamics of 1932–34 Famine Losses in Ukraine,” paper presented at the 18th Annual World Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, Columbia University, New York, April 18–20, 2013.

<sup>50</sup> *Tragediia sovetskoï derevni*, 3: 32, 635.

but any and all food, its intentions should be deemed murderous: there can be no other explanation. We are dealing here with mass murder—planned in advance and well organized—not only of those whom the Kremlin regarded as saboteurs but also of children and the elderly. The searches for and confiscation of foodstuffs were carried out by urban activists and local members of Committees of Poor Peasants under the direction of Chekists. The poor peasants were starving; they did not have to be inveigled to do what they did.

The fact that stores of food were confiscated by state agencies removes the grounds for opposition to calling the Holodomor a genocide. That is why objectors adamantly demand: “Show us the documents!” Yet documents on the confiscation of all food from peasants have not been found for the whole territory of Ukraine and the Kuban. The Kremlin rulers considered that such nightmarish intentions could not be set down on paper. Their assessment can be backed up with documents. In November 1932, the Starominsk AUCP(B) district committee in the North Caucasus Krai recommended repressions against the village of Novoe Selo: “Apply the harshest measures of influence and coercion, carrying out the confiscation of all foodstuffs.” In a letter to the CC CP(B)U secretary Mendel Khataevich, Molotov hypocritically called this recommendation “un-Bolshevik” and prompted by “despair, for which we have no grounds, since the party is coming out against the practice of local authorities ‘to take any grain wherever they want, ignoring the consequences, and so on.’”<sup>51</sup>

What was happening in the Ukrainian countryside has been described by witnesses to the Holodomor who were fortunate enough to survive. There are hundreds of documented and published testimonies asserting that the search brigades confiscated not only meat and potatoes, as provided by the legislation on in-kind fines, but all available foodstuffs. The online Famine Web Map, part of the MAPA: Digital Atlas of Ukraine project at the Harvard Ukrainian

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<sup>51</sup> Kondrashin, *Golod 1932–1933 godov*, 216.

Research Institute, includes a map of the whereabouts of the witnesses who attested the confiscation of all food.<sup>52</sup> There are already enough such testimonies, gathered from various sources, to fill a volume.

The locations where the witnesses spent the Holodomor have been plotted on a map, proving that food was being confiscated not only along the border with Romania and Poland but also in the districts of Polisia. Such a map constitutes a full-fledged document, not the subjective testimony of various individuals.

Stalin's "crushing blow" consisted of two interrelated operations, one punitive, the other rescuing. The punitive operation lasted from January 1 to February 7, 1933 and was directed, as can be seen from its results, at preempting uprisings of starving villagers against the authorities. Transforming the famine into absolute starvation paralyzed the villagers' will to fight. That was the result sought by the Soviet organs of state security, and it was precisely the outcome observed by their Polish counterparts, who were carefully following the situation in Right-Bank Ukraine. The chief of the Polish intelligence agency in Kyiv, Władysław Michniewicz, informed the embassy on June 2, 1933 of the situation in the countryside around Kyiv: "Death from hunger is a constant occurrence. Cannibalism is the order of the day. There's nothing to report on the political mood; the only desire is for bread."<sup>53</sup>

The rescue operation took place to much fanfare, the echoes of which can still be heard today. In 2009 the Russian Archives published an expensive coffee-table book under the title *Golod v SSSR: Famine in the USSR, 1930–1934*.<sup>54</sup> It is a collection of 188 color photocopies of documents from six of the Russian Federation's central archives, including ones with extraordinarily limited access. Document no. 83 is laid out quite effectively in the publication: it is a page from the unbound file of the proceedings of the Politburo of the CC AUCP(B) dated February 8, 1933, with three points on the provision of food aid to the North Caucasus Krai party committee and the Dnipropetrovsk and Odesa provincial

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<sup>52</sup> The Famine Web Map can be accessed at <http://gis.huri.harvard.edu/historical-atlas/the-great-famine/famine-web-map.html>.

<sup>53</sup> *Holodomor 1932–1933: Wielki Głód na Ukrainie*, 299.

<sup>54</sup> *Golod v SSSR: Famine in the USSR, 1930–1934*, comp. O. Antipova (Moscow, 2009).

committees. Below the text is the red seal of the CC AUCP(B) and Joseph Stalin's signature in red ink. The file was unbound and the document photographed with the truest possible reproduction of its colors to demonstrate how the Bolshevik leaders helped the starving regions.

How could there be any talk of genocide when the Soviet government had made every effort to save the starving? With this collection of full-color illustrations, the Russian Archives tried to make the argument for genocide appear absolutely unfounded. As for the survivors of the Holodomor, it remained incomprehensible to them, especially as discussions of it were illegal until December 1987. Nearly one-third of the witnesses who testified to James Mace's commission about what they had lived through did so anonymously. Half a century after the event and half a world away, with the protection of their American citizenship, they could not overcome the fear that the Stalin regime had instilled in them.

The "crushing blow" was one form of Stalin's terror. We should accept the term "terror-famine" that Robert Conquest suggested in 1986. Like all other forms of state terror, it was meant to annihilate a limited segment of the population in order to make the behavior of the whole population predictable and acceptable to the authorities. Unlike other forms of terror, terror by famine was "blind." Its victims were not photographed en face and in profile; there were no investigations of their cases. Not infrequently the victims were grateful to the regime, which, having confiscated everything edible, organized rescue food aid after a premeditated interval of a few weeks through state and collective farms in order to safeguard the sowing campaign of 1933.

The identities of those directly involved in organizing the "crushing blow" can be established with a high degree of credibility. This action was carried out under the guise of grain procurements, and those members of the Communist Party and Soviet leadership who claimed in the winter of 1932-33 that the peasants had concealed colossal supplies of grain in secret granaries and pits must have been involved in it. The group spearheading the action included, besides Stalin himself, the secretaries of the CC AUCP(B) Lazar Kaganovich and Pavel Postyshev, the head of the Sovnarkom of the USSR, Viacheslav Molotov, as well as Vsevolod Balytsky and Yefim Yevdokimov, the OGPU plenipotentiary in the North Caucasus Krai. All the rest carried out their assigned functions without realizing the ultimate goal of the

actions entailed in the concept of the “crushing blow.” With the exception of Kaganovich and Molotov, the executioners of the Ukrainian people were subsequently eliminated by Stalin himself, who did not want to leave any traces.

### *The Holodomor as Genocide*

The anatomy of the “crushing blow,” as characterized in the preceding section, must be tested by jurists with regard to its applicability to the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted on December 9, 1948. The concluding section of this article will discuss the reasons why the genocidal nature of the Ukrainian Holodomor has not been recognized.

The basic reason is political. In September 1993 an international scholarly conference on the “Holodomor of 1932-33 in Ukraine: Causes and Consequences” was convened in Kyiv to mark the sixtieth anniversary of this tragedy. Speaking at the conference, the then president of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, declared: “I fully agree that this was a planned action; that this was genocide directed against our own people. But I would not consider the matter closed at this point. Yes, against our own people, but according to a directive from another center. Obviously, that is precisely how this horrific page of our history should be treated.”<sup>55</sup> From that time and for a long period thereafter, until the coming to power of the fourth president of Ukraine, Ukrainian-Russian relations were constantly strained by the question of whether the Holodomor was an act of genocide.

One can understand President Kravchuk. He wanted to protect his country from the “integrative” efforts of the leadership of the Russian Federation, which sought to restore the Soviet Union in a different form. It is clear, however, that the Holodomor was organized by a very small group of people and that the whole mighty apparatus of party and government was exploited “in the dark,” to use Chekist jargon. Enraged politicians, historians, and archivists rushed to the defense of Russia’s good name but put themselves in an awkward position when, contrary to obvious facts, they began claiming that the Soviet

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<sup>55</sup> Leonid Kravchuk, “My ne maiemo prava znekhtuvaty urokamy mynuloho,” in *Holodomor 1932–1933 rr. na Ukraïni: Prychyny ta naslidky. Mizhnarodna naukova konferentsiia. Kyiv, 9–10 veresnia 1993 r. Materialy* (Kyiv, 1995), 10.

authorities' mass repressions were implemented only on the basis of social distinctions. Writing in the above-mentioned book of documents reproduced in color, Vladimir Kozlov, the head of Rosarkhiv, noted: "Not a single document has been found that substantiates the notion of a 'Holodomor genocide' in Ukraine, nor even an allusion in the documents to ethnic motives behind what happened, including in Ukraine. The whole corpus of documents demonstrates absolutely that the main enemy of Soviet rule at that time was an enemy identified not by ethnicity but by class."<sup>56</sup>

An equally important reason behind the rejection of the Holodomor as genocide is rooted in the non-acceptance of the true picture of how the Soviet order was created. By no means all Ukrainian citizens can imagine that the supreme leaders of the AUCP(B)-CPSU were capable of adopting horrifying decisions and concealing them successfully from both the public and the rest of the Communist Party and government apparatus. Thus, the decision to sentence to death millions of Ukrainian peasants for their unwillingness to work without financial reward is simply beyond the comprehension of those who saw the Soviet government only in its liberalized guise, from Nikita Khrushchev to Mikhail Gorbachev.

There is another important reason why the genocidal nature of the Holodomor is not accepted. It stems from the traditional approach to assessing the Soviet past. Ukrainian and foreign scholars alike view it the same way as they do the history of prerevolutionary Russia or any other country; that is, they study what happened. Meanwhile, one cannot ignore what did not happen or the consequences of that which did not take place during the formation of the communist order, that is, during the first two decades of Soviet rule (1918–38). The Soviet Union actually ended up outside the natural historical process, for within that state a society was being constructed whose outlines were generated in the mind of a single person.

Let us examine this collision, taking as an example the most fundamental research work issued to date on the first two decades of the Soviet era—the twenty-volume set of monographs produced by the Birmingham school in the field of Russian and Soviet history. The school was founded by the distinguished Western Sovietologist Edward Hallett Carr, author of the fourteen-volume *History of Soviet*

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<sup>56</sup> V. P. Kozlov, "Predislovie" in *Golod v SSSR: Famine in the USSR, 1930–1934*, 7.

*Russia*. A student of Carr's, Robert Davies, published the next six volumes, covering the period from 1929 to 1937 (volume 5 was coauthored with Davies's student Stephen Wheatcroft, while volume 6 was written in collaboration with Stephen Wheatcroft and the Russian historian Oleg Khlevniuk). It is important to understand the position of Wheatcroft, who denies the genocidal nature of the Holodomor, because it is shared by the majority of Western experts on the history of Soviet society. In the introduction to the Russian edition of his book, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933*, Wheatcroft states that he and Robert Davies “did not unearth any evidence that the Soviet government had carried out a program of genocide against Ukraine.”<sup>57</sup> It seems to these authors, then, that what the leaders of the Bolshevik Party envisioned was a “program of genocide” and not the program of building communism ratified by the Eighth Congress of the RCP(B) in 1919 and the program of modernizing the country, which was the indispensable prerequisite for spreading communism on a global scale.

Yet the phrase “program of genocide” was probably chosen as a result of polemical fervor. For, as everyone understands, no member of the higher party leadership wanted famine to flare up in the country. Once famine did break out as an inevitable result of efforts to build a society stripped of commodity-monetary relations and a market, Stalin decided, with some hesitation, to replace requisitioning with a fixed tax in kind.

The building of a society based on commodity exchange, with the subsequent shift of commodity exchange to a second, now hypothetical, phase of communism was brought to a halt by the resolution “On the Mandatory Delivery of Grain to the State by Collective Farms and Individual Farmers” of January 19, 1933. Like the decision of the Tenth Congress of the RCP(B) on replacing the requisitions system with a produce tax, this resolution normalized economic relations between town and country.

It is telling that during the same month of January 1933 Stalin carried out a terror-famine in the rural regions of the Ukrainian SSR and the Kuban region. These actions were by no means triggered by a “program of genocide” but by the concrete situation outlined above. One must perforce arrive at such a conclusion if only because the contents of Stalin's two decisions were contradictory. It would have been

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<sup>57</sup> Dêvis and Uitkroft, *Gody goloda*, 12.

entirely possible to make do with a retreat from the RCP(B) program of 1919 if not for the concrete situation that had come to a head in the principal regions of commodity agriculture, to which the extraordinary state grain-procurement commissions were dispatched.

It is worth noting that these commissions were sent not only to Ukrainian regions. The Lower Volga Krai was also decimated by Postyshev's commission. The table below indicates the decrease of the rural population according to the 1937 census, as compared to the population listed in the 1926 census in the territories comprising the Lower Volga Krai (in percentages):<sup>58</sup>

Stalingrad province – 18.4

Volga German Republic – 26.0

Saratov province – 40.5

Compare these data to other territories:<sup>59</sup>

North Caucasus – 15.3

Ukraine – 20.4

Kazakhstan – 31.9

It turns out that the scale of the demographic catastrophe in the Lower Volga Krai was comparable to that of rural population losses in the territories hit hardest by the famine.

The Lower Volga Krai was also blockaded in February 1933. Viktor Kondrashin states guardedly that in the Volga-Don region and in the Kuban “special raids were carried out on the pits and cellars of collective and individual farmers.”<sup>60</sup> But the finding of genocide is taboo for him; therefore, relying on his own view rather than on the sources, he assures readers as follows: “Of course, the party leadership did not sanction the confiscation of all food supplies from the granaries and pits of collective and individual farmers, but the fact that the leaders did not stop it expeditiously and take the necessary measures to

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<sup>58</sup> V. B. Zhiromskaia, *Demograficheskaia istoriia Rossii v 1930-e gody: Vzgliad v neizvestnoe* (Moscow, 2001), 67–68.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Kondrashin, *Golod 1932–1933 godov*, 216.

rectify lawlessness does not absolve them of responsibility for the death of thousands of peasants by starvation.”<sup>61</sup> “Thousands of peasants,” indeed...

Last but not least, the phrase “Ukrainian Holocaust” has played a certain role in the failure to comprehend that the Holodomor was genocide. It first appeared as the title of Vasyl Hryshko’s book about the Holodomor, published in New York and Toronto in 1978.<sup>62</sup> Between 2003 and 2013, Professor Yurii Mytsyk of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy National University published a nine-volume series of survivor testimonies—a superb collection, but it appeared under the title *The Ukrainian Holocaust of 1932–1933*.<sup>63</sup> The Holocaust is recognized throughout the world as genocide, and some of those who desire such recognition for the Holodomor believe that this striking epithet will help gain recognition for it. But those who wield this phrase should recognize that it is risky. First of all, we have no moral right to use this concept in its figurative meaning. The Ukrainian Holocaust was the extermination of 1.6 million Jews on the territory of Ukraine during the Second World War. Second, equating the Holodomor with the Holocaust is equivalent to saying that Ukrainians in the Soviet Union were persecuted in the same way as Jews in Nazi Germany. In other words, the Soviet authorities killed or imprisoned Ukrainians wherever and whenever they were found. Such a statement is patently absurd. Stalin’s punitive action against the Ukrainian peasantry must be regarded as a terror-famine, not as ethnic cleansing.

Posing the question of the Ukrainian Holodomor in the context of building an artificial society in the Soviet Union according to the templates of the *Communist Manifesto* is a very promising direction of research. It is to be hoped that this new angle will help scholars reach a consensus on the main question: the Ukrainian Holodomor differed completely from the Holocaust but was nevertheless genocide.

*Translated from the Ukrainian by Ali Kinsella and Marta D. Olynyk*

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>62</sup> *Ukraïns'kyi “Holokost,” 1933* (New York and Toronto, 1978).

<sup>63</sup> *Ukraïns'kyi Holokost, 1932–1933: svidchennia tykh, khto vyzhyv* (Kyiv, 2003–13).