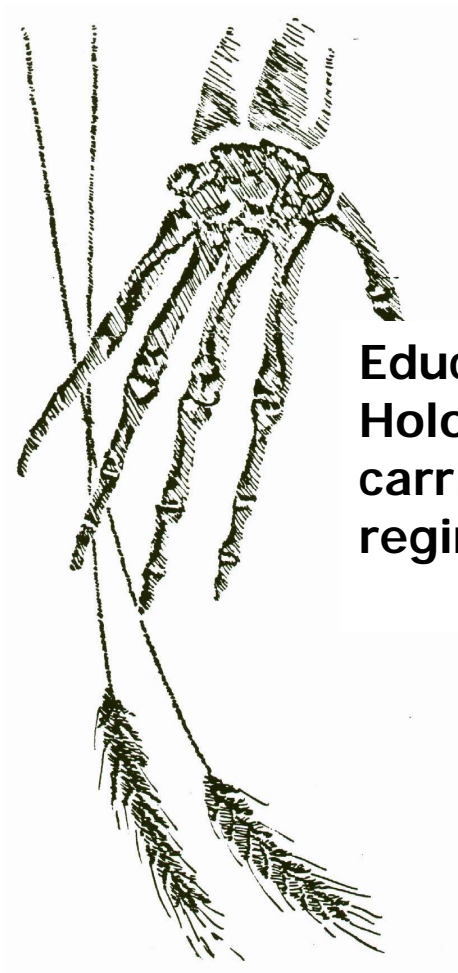




The Ukrainian Holodomor of 1932-1933

Student Handouts



**Educational materials on the
Holodomor, the Famine-Genocide
carried out by Stalin's Communist
regime in Ukraine.**

Image: Roman Zavadvych

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UKRAINE AND ITS PEOPLE

Before beginning our unit on the Ukrainian Genocide/Holodomor, it is helpful to begin with a brief overview of Ukrainian history. Our final lesson, titled “Ukraine in Recent Times”, is the culminating area of study in this unit.



Recorded Ukrainian history began in the 9th century with the rise of the city of Kyiv as the center of an empire that came to be called 'Kyivan-Rus'. In 988, the people of Kyivan Rus', then ruled by Volodymyr the Great (Prince Vladimir), adopted Christianity as the state religion.

'Kyivan Rus' started to decline soon after Kyiv was sacked by the Mongols in 1240. Descendants of the Kyivan royal house, however, continued to rule various duchies within the former empire. Three separate Slavonic people emerged from the Rus' empire - the Byelorus' (Byelorussians), the Muscovites

(Russians) and the Rus' (Ukrainians).

Following the decline of Kyiv, the center of Rus'-Ukrainian life shifted to the southwestern provinces of Galicia and Volynia. A second Rus' state emerged when Galicia and Volynia united during the 12th century. In the 14th century, Galicia was annexed by Poland while Volynia came under Lithuanian rule.

A third Ukrainian state was established in the 17th century by the Cossacks (Kozaks), a group of military adventurers who had created a series of autonomous forts along the Dnieper River. The Cossacks, who elected all of their "hetmans" (commanders-in-chief), eventually freed most of Ukraine from Polish rule and began to create a nation-state. An ill-fated military alliance with Muscovy (1654), however, resulted in a gradual take-over by the Muscovites. Poland quickly came to terms with Muscovy and the two nations partitioned Ukraine along the Dnieper River. The Cossacks attempted to free themselves of Russian rule in 1709 by allying themselves with the Swedes and attacking Muscovy. The Muscovites, however, were victorious. In 1775, Czarina Catherine II destroyed the famed Zaporozhian Cossack Fort (Sich), the last bastion of Ukrainian independence.

Ukrainian aspirations for freedom did not die, however. All through the 18th and 19th centuries writers and poets like Taras Shevchenko kept eastern Ukrainian hopes alive by writing about the glories of the past and urging Ukrainians to "cast off your chains." Soon after Polish Ukraine was annexed by Austria, a similar national literary tradition emerged in Galicia.

The czarist Russian regime was overthrown in 1917, and eastern Ukrainians established the Ukrainian National Republic. On January 22, 1918, following the Communist takeover of Russia, the Ukrainian people declared their independence from Russia. At about the same time, the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed and a Republic of Western Ukraine was

created. On January 22, 1919, the two Ukrainian republics formally united during imposing ceremonies in Kyiv, the national capital of one, sovereign, and independent Ukraine.

Ukraine was able to maintain its independence for three years against overwhelming odds. Poland wanted to annex Galicia and invaded from the west. The Russian Communists wanted eastern Ukraine and invaded from the east. A czarist Russian army, still hoping to retrieve "all of Russia," invaded Ukraine from the south. The Communists eventually defeated the Poles, the czarist Russians, and the Ukrainians. Soviet Russia signed a peace treaty with Poland, partitioning Ukraine once again. Moscow received eastern Ukraine and established the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkrSSR) under Russian domination. Poland annexed eastern Galicia and Volynia. Soviet rule of Ukraine was brutal. It is estimated that ten million people perished in Ukraine during the Soviet genocide of the Ukrainian people.

Hitler and Stalin invaded Poland in 1939 dividing the country between themselves. The Soviets incorporated Galicia and Volynia into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Hitler invaded Ukraine in 1941. The Nazis introduced racial policies which defined Jews, Slavs, and Roma (Gypsies) as "subhuman" (untermenschen). Some 600,000 Jews were murdered by the Nazis in Ukraine. Ukrainians were reduced to servitude status, permitted to attend school only through the 3rd grade. Educating future servants and common laborers served no useful purpose, the Nazis believed. Over 2 million people were eventually taken from Ukraine and transported to Germany to work as slave laborers. Ukrainians organized an insurgent army (the UPA) which fought both the Nazis and the Soviet partisans. By the time the Soviet armies returned in 1944, Ukraine was in ruins. The population had been reduced by 5 million. Because some 700 cities and 28,000 villages were destroyed, 10 million people were left homeless at the end of the war.

The return of Soviet rule of Ukraine in 1945 meant the revival of Soviet oppression. Ukrainians remained under tyrannical Soviet rule until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. That same year more than 90 percent of the people of Ukraine voted in favor of the establishment of an independent, sovereign Ukrainian nation-state. A declaration of independence was adopted by the Ukrainian parliament on August 24, 1991.

The remainder of this study unit is dedicated to the Ukrainian Genocide/Holodomor

Questions to Ponder:

- 1. Ukraine has a difficult history and has often been subject to invasion by foreign powers. What effect has Ukraine's geographic location had on its history?**
- 2. Ukrainians managed to maintain and develop their national identity despite centuries of foreign rule. What are some other examples of people maintaining their national identities despite outside domination? What factors might contribute to the preservation of a sense of national belonging under hostile conditions?**

RUSSIA AND THE SOVIET UNION

The Ukrainian Genocide/Holodomor did not occur in an historical vacuum. Russian and Soviet history and the nature of the imperialism spawned by Moscow, provide the background and context for the events of 1932-1933.

Russian history began with the founding of Moscow in 1147. By 1300, Moscow was the seat of the Grand Duchy of Muscovy, a state of some 18,500 square miles. Ruled by a series of ambitious grand dukes, Muscovy began expanding its borders east and west, conquering a variety of ethnically different people in the process. By 1500, Muscovy, whose people were called Muscovites, included an area of some 772,000 square miles.

Muscovy continued to conquer and subjugate other peoples in much the same way that the ancient Romans had done. By 1700, Muscovy was an empire that encompassed an area of 5,600,000 square miles. Muscovy's rulers began to call themselves "czars," the Russian word for "Caesar" or emperor. Czar Peter I changed the name of the empire from Muscovy to "Russia" to convince the world that his empire was heir to the ancient Kyivan Rus' empire which once included large sections of Ukraine, Byelorussia, Muscovy, and a small part of Poland.

Russia's rulers rarely hesitated in their efforts to expand their empire. By 1900, the Russian empire extended from the Black Sea in the south to the Baltic Sea in the north, and from the Vistula River in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east. It was the world's largest empire totaling some 8,571,400 square miles. Russian aggression during the last five centuries conquered forty-six distinct peoples speaking sixty-one different languages.¹

The czarist government conducted its first modern census in 1897. Of the 126 million inhabitants living in the Russian empire at the time, only 51 million (41 %) were ethnic Russians. The non-Russian majority were considered foreigners and were often denied any means of self-expression in their native languages. The government was officially designated an autocracy, meaning that absolute authority resided in the person of the czar whose authority was not limited by a constitution. Without a constitution, or set of fundamental laws independent of the ruler's will, individuals had no legal rights other than those which the czar saw fit to grant. People living in the Russian empire could not criticize the government; they had to pay high taxes; those who were inducted into the military had to serve for twenty years. With education generally reserved for the privileged few, most people could neither read nor write. Only in 1905, when a popular revolt shook the regime to its foundation, did the czar "grant" his subjects a limited form of representation. When it became evident that most of those elected to the newly created legislative assembly (Duma) did not always vote according to government wishes, the czar restricted voting privileges to the affluent class whose loyalty to royal policies was assured.

¹ William G. Bray, *Russian Frontiers: From Muscovy to Khrushchev* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1963) pp. 11-75. For a more detailed and precise history of Russia see Jesse D. Clarkson, *A History of Russia* (New York: Random House, 1961) and George Vernadsky, *History of Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954). For an historical overview of the growth of Muscovite/Russian imperialism, see Harold Lamb, *The March of Muscovy* (New York: Bantam Books, 1966).

Soon after Russia consolidated its control of east Ukrainian territory in the 18th century, the czars attempted to assimilate the Ukrainian people, with a "Russification" campaign. The first step was conversion to the Russian Orthodox faith. The Ukrainian people resisted. They wished to retain their religious and national identities. The government began to discriminate against a separate Ukrainian identity by calling Ukrainians "Little Russians," forbidding Ukrainian language publications, and jailing Ukrainian leaders who advocated greater freedom and autonomy for their people.

By 1917, the peoples of Russia had had enough of czarist despotism. They staged a revolution and the authoritarian rule of Czar Nicholas II was replaced by a democratically constituted government headed by Alexander Kerensky. Soon after the Russian revolution began, the conquered peoples of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Byelorussia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine declared their independence.

A representative Russian government based on democratic principles was short-lived, however. Within a year, a small, well-organized group of Communists (Bolsheviks) headed by Vladimir I. Lenin, overthrew Kerensky's government in a coup d'état and re-established authoritarian rule over Russia. Following in the footsteps of their czarist predecessors, Lenin's Red Army invaded and recaptured Armenia, Azerbaijan, Byelorussia, and Ukraine. Promising to grant full national rights to each of the conquered nations (including the right to secede), Moscow established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), forcibly incorporating the re-conquered people into a Russian orbit. Although all of the Soviet republics were supposedly equal, it was Moscow that dominated Soviet affairs from the beginning.²

During the 1920s, Lenin and his followers attempted to pacify their minorities by granting limited national and civil rights. When the various national groups began to push for more equality and local control, the Communist government imposed centralized political rule. According to Hannah Arendt, the USSR was a totalitarian state by the time Stalin had consolidated his power in 1929.³

During the 1930's, Stalin initiated a reign of terror in the Soviet Union that was unlike any the world had ever seen. All opposition to Stalin's rule was ruthlessly suppressed. Millions of Soviet citizens were sent to Siberia for the slightest offense, most often without trial. Millions were shot or simply disappeared. No one was safe from Stalin's unpredictable will. University professors, teachers, army generals, farmers, journalists, even Stalin's closest revolutionary associates, were executed simply because Stalin or his secret police decided they were "enemies of the state".⁴

In 1939, Stalin signed an agreement with Germany's Adolf Hitler, another totalitarian dictator, and the two of them invaded Poland. Stalin annexed the eastern third of Poland,

² Bray, pp. 82-96; also see Basil Dmytryshyn, *USSR: A Concise History* (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1965) pp. 38-86; V. I. Kozlov, *Natsional'nosti SSR: Ethnodemokraticheskiy Obzor* (Moscow: Finansy i Statistika, 1982) p. 38.

³ Dmytryshyn, pp. 113-153; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1973) p. 411.

⁴ Dmytryshyn, pp. 155-207; also see Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purges of the Thirties* (New York: Collier Books, 1968).

populated mainly by Ukrainians and Byelorussians, after a bogus plebiscite in which the results were predetermined. A year later, the Soviet Union invaded and annexed Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania claiming that their people wanted to become part of the USSR. By 1960, the Soviet Russian empire included an area of 8,650,060 square miles. In addition, the Soviet Union controlled most of Eastern Europe including Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Rumania, and Poland.

The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Russia became a republic and the former Soviet republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan declared their independence from Moscow.

RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM

Russian imperialism has a long history. It began soon after Kyivan-Rus was invaded by the Mongols in the 13th century. At the time, Moscow was little more than a small trading post in the principality of Vladimir-Suzdal. The town began to expand during the 14th century under a series of capable leaders. In time it became the Principality of Moscow, then the Grand Duchy of Moscow, and finally the Tsardom of Muscovy. Expansionism became its raison d'être. As each new territory was conquered, Russian Orthodox priests attempted to convert the newly conquered peoples. Below are citations from authors familiar with Russian history.

"Modern Russia grew from the Principality of Muscovy after Mongol control of Russia began to ebb in the fifteenth century ... At the same time the small Principality of Muscovy, an area around Moscow which grew into the great Russian Empire, launched its march of expansion under the rule of Ivan III, (the Great), and hungrily devoured nation after nation and race after race."⁵

"It has been estimated that the growth of the Russian Empire between the end of the fifteenth and the end of the nineteenth century proceeded at the rate of 130 square kilometers or fifty square miles a day."

"One of the anomalies of pre-1917 Russia was the fact that although, to quote one observer, 'The Russian empire, Great Russian in origin, which ceased being such in ethnic composition...continued to be treated constitutionally and administratively as a nationally homogeneous unit. The principle of autocracy, preserved in all its essentials until the Revolution of 1905, did not permit...the recognition of separate historic or national territories within the state in which the monarch's authority would be less than absolute or rest on a legally different basis from that which he exercised at home.'"⁶

⁵ William G. Bray, *Russian Frontiers: From Muscovy to Khrushchev* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963). pp.11-28. Also see *Russian Imperialism: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy, 1860-1914* (London: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁶ Richard Pipes. *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp.1-7.

SOVIET IMPERIALISM

Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, a number of Sovietologists (experts on the nature of Soviet life) described the nature of the Soviet system of national repression and totalitarian rule. They believed Soviet imperialism was a continuation of Russian imperialism. Their analyses are quoted below.

"Today we think of Russia's territorial aggression as a result of Communism instead of regarding Communism as a weapon being used to assist in her historic imperialistic aggression."⁷

* * *

"The Soviet Union is not a country like others, but almost a continent, where Europe and Asia meet. And it is not a nation so much as an empire ... it is not a state of workers and peasants it claims to be ... it is primarily a state of nations."

"More than a hundred nations and nationalities lie within its borders, speaking more than a hundred languages, with all that keeps them apart: history, race, traditions, religions ... A tormented history, comprising invasions, wars, and patient re-conquests over the centuries has fashioned this indefinable mass of completely different people ... Today the descendents of the conquerors and conquered live side by side. All, according to their passports, are Soviet citizens, children of the Workers' Revolution of 1917."

"According to history, the empire of the czars was a 'prison house of the peoples' and Lenin opened it. But history is never quite that simple ... The Soviet federation in 1952 was a real empire, one in which the preeminence of the Russian people was justified - as in the colonial empires of the past - by a superior civilization and the progress toward which it led its subjects. The 'prison house of the peoples' no longer existed. But the federation was a perfectly un-egalitarian community where the 'elder brother' dominated and sought to assimilate others."

"Another trait shared by all Soviet leaders has been the belief that the only solution to the national problem lies in eliminating national differences. Only the methods have changed."⁸

* * *

"The nationality problem occupies a unique place in internal Soviet politics. The Soviet Union is the only major power where the dominant nationality barely has a majority ... Why does national sentiment survive among the Soviet nationalities? Why do Soviet authorities have to stress continuously the desirability of the ethnic minorities 'drawing

⁷ William G. Bray, *Russian Frontiers: From Muscovy to Khrushchev* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963) p. 27.

⁸ Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Socialist Republics in Revolt* (New York: Newsweek, 1979) pp. 11, 13, 46.

together (sblizheniye)"? To this question there are many answers, the most obvious of which is that under conditions prevailing in the USSR - where one nationality comprises more than half the population and controls, to boot, the state and its economy - 'drawing together' means nothing else but Russification."⁹

Questions to Ponder:

- 1. How does Soviet imperialism compare and contrast to earlier forms of Russian imperialism? Do they share goals and justifications? How do these examples compare to other world empires (e.g. Roman empire, the British empire)?**
- 2. How did ordinary people fare under Russian and Soviet rule? Did their nationality or ethnicity affect how they would be treated? Did their religion?**
- 3. Russia slowly expanded its borders to the Pacific Ocean and, eventually, beyond to Alaska. The United States also expanded its borders to the Pacific Ocean. How were the two expansions alike? How were they different?**

Extra Credit:

Write a research paper comparing Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler, the two worst tyrants of the 20th century. How were they alike? How were they different? How many people died in the Soviet Union while Stalin was in power?

Write a research paper on modern day Russia. Relatively recent Russian actions against Georgia and Ukraine suggest to some people that Russian imperialism has returned. Does evidence exist to suggest that Russian imperialism is alive and well?

⁹ Richard Pipes, "Introduction: The Nationality Problem," *Handbook of Major Soviet Nationalities*, Zev Katz, ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1975) pp. 1-3.

THE UKRAINIAN GENOCIDE/HOLODOMOR IN PERSPECTIVE¹⁰

Russia and the Soviet Union wished to eradicate the Ukrainian people as a separate ethno-national entity. By any definition, this was genocide. The most horrendous aspect of this genocide was the Holodomor, the artificial famine forced on Ukraine by Soviet rule during the winter of 1932-1933. The conclusions of Professor Robert Conquest, who researched the events leading to the Genocide/Holodomor, are cited below. His narrative was written before the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet assault on the peasantry, and on the Ukrainian nation, in 1930-1933 was one of the largest and most devastating events in modern history. It was a tremendous human tragedy - with many more dead than in all countries together in World War I. It was a major economic disaster. And it was a social "revolution from above," as Stalin put it, which wholly transformed a major country.

Yet these events have not to this day been fully registered in Western consciousness. There is a general knowledge here that some sort of catastrophe struck, or may have struck, the Soviet countryside, but little more. This minimum awareness has percolated over the decades, from eyewitnesses and victims; and more recently from the fact that almost every work by the many talented Soviet writers who have come (or whose unofficial writings have come) to the West has at least a passing reference to the rural terror and its hideous consequences, taking for granted events which to them are part of a known background.

But the events are both complex and unfamiliar to westerners. The very concept of a peasant is strange to American and British ears. The Ukrainian nationality, subjugated to be merely part of the Russian Empire for a century and a half, enjoying only a few years of precarious and interrupted independence after the revolution, and then again becoming merely part of the USSR, does not declare itself to the western observer as the Polish or even the Latvian nations are able to*. Even the Communist Party, its ideology and its motivations, is for us an alien and not easily understood phenomenon.

****It was not until 1991, when Ukraine declared its independence from the Soviet Union, and more recently the Orange Revolution of 2004-2005, that the world began to identify with Ukraine as an open and democratic nation.***

The facts of the assault on the peasantry, and on the Ukrainian nationality, are complex. Essentially, it was a threefold blow. "De-kulakization" meant the deportation of millions of peasant farmers identified by Soviet authorities as "kulaks" [independent farmers with as little as 16 acres of land]. "Collectivization" meant the herding of the rest of them into collective farms. And in 1932-1933, the collectivized peasantry of the Ukraine and adjacent regions was crushed in a special operation by the seizure of the whole grain crop and the

¹⁰ Adapted from Robert Conquest is the author of *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). Also see "Ukraine: 1933: The Terror Famine", Remarks by Robert Conquest at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Committee on Conscience, November 7, 1995). Available on the internet.

starvation of the villages. We see no single, and simply describable and assignable, event, but a complicated sequence.

Most important of all, a great effort was put into denying or concealing the facts. Right from the start, when the truth came out from a variety of sources, the Stalinist assertion of a different story confused the issue and some Western journalists and scholars were duped or suborned into supporting the Stalinist version. Nor have the Soviet authorities yet admitted the facts. A contemporary novel [*Forever Flowing* by Vasily Grossman] published in the former USSR briefly describes the terror-famine, and later notes: "in not a single textbook in contemporary history will you find reference to 1933, the year marked by a terrible tragedy."

Lenin had devised a Marxist analysis of village life, a division of the peasantry into "kulaks," "middle peasants" and "poor peasants" plus a "village proletariat." This implied a "class struggle" in the village which in fact failed to occur, but was thereupon imposed by the representatives of the cities. The most lethal invention was the "kulak." This word - "fist" - had in reality been used by the Soviet administration to label a very small class of village moneylenders, all of whom had disappeared by 1918. Lenin transferred it to the richer peasantry. These too were wiped out by 1920. The term was then used to define the more prosperous survivors.

From 1918 on, the attempt was made across the entire Soviet Union to abolish the market, and get grain by forced requisition. By 1921, peasant resistance, expressed in widespread - indeed almost universal - peasant uprisings had brought the regime to the point of collapse and Lenin, with the "New Economic Policy" (NEP), restored the market system. The ruined peasants, who then worked indefatigably to restore their fortunes, thereby saved the country: but the more they prospered, the more they were regarded as "kulaks" by party ideologists.

The party hated the kulak as the main obstacle to socialism. In reality, as is often admitted in party literature, the middle peasants and even the poor peasants almost always adhered to the same political positions. However, party doctrine required a "class enemy," and the term kulak, precisely because it was never clearly defined, was marshaled to this end.

Lenin died in 1924, and Joseph Stalin consolidated power soon after that. In the first years of his reign, the peasantry had gradually restored the economy, and soon Stalin felt strong enough to strike at the kulak. During the winter of 1929-1930, almost ten million kulaks - men, women and children - were deported to the arctic from around the Soviet Union. These supposedly "rich exploiters" owned around \$150 worth of property. A typical kulak would have something like 12 acres, a cow, a horse, ten sheep, a hog and about 20 chickens on a farm supporting four people.

The kulak category was later broadened to include "subkulaks" who were not kulaks by party definition, except that they shared kulak "attitudes."

In the villages, teams headed by Communist party members from the cities, supported by GPU men (secret police) held violent denunciation sessions to meet their quota of kulaks.

Even now these latter were often defended by poor villagers, who themselves were then labeled "subkulaks."

Some 100,000 kulaks were shot. The remainder (except for the very old who were left to their own devices) were evicted from their homes, and marched to the nearest railway. Huge lines of peasants converged on the trains which took two to three thousand people in cattle cars, on journeys lasting a week or longer, to the arctic. In the unheated trucks, death, particularly of the infants, was common. On detraining, they might spend some time crammed starving into the confiscated churches of Archangel or Vologda, or go straight to their destinations - typically being marched for several days to a clearing in the forest and told to make their own homes. About three million died in the early stages, predominantly young children. The survivors either had to create farms in the frozen wilderness, or were sent to work on such projects as the Baltic-White Sea Canal, on which about 300,000 died (and which was never of any use).

The kulaks and subkulaks, of course, included all the natural leaders of the peasantry, especially those resistant to the new collectivization. After their removal, the bulk of the remaining peasants were forced into the collective farms.

There was much resistance. Sporadic armed risings involving whole districts took place, especially in the Ukraine and the North Caucasus. But scythes and shotguns could not prevail against the armed forces of the GPU. They were ruthlessly suppressed. But so was more peaceful resistance.

The one peasant tactic which had a measure of success was the astonishing "women's rebellions" [*babski bunty*]. Peasant women would resist confiscation of their cows, and the authorities were often at a loss as to how to respond (see page 16 below). The peasants' main reaction, however, was to slaughter the cattle. In a few months over 40% of the country's cattle, and 65% of the sheep were gone. Stalin's policy lay in ruins. Like Lenin, in March 1930 he made a tactical retreat. Peasants were now allowed to leave the collective farms. Sixteen million families had been collectivized. Within a few weeks, 9 million left.

But they were not allowed their land back. They were given rough ground at the edge of the plowed land. Then heavy taxes were imposed on them. A huge new wave of dekulakization removed the more recalcitrant. And over the next two years, the bulk of the land was again collectivized. The system was inefficient from the start, and the countryside soon presented, as Soviet Nobel Prize novelist Boris Pasternak described it, "such inhuman, unimaginable misery, such a terrible disaster, that it began to seem almost abstract, it would not fit within the bounds of consciousness."

The collective farm system, the Soviet Union's agricultural mainstay, was an economic disaster. Even in the 1950s, the new mechanized farms were admitted to be producing less than the pre-World War I mujiik [peasant] with his wooden plow. A schematic idea had failed, at enormous human and other cost.

Dekulakization and collectivization were virtually complete by mid-1932. It was then that Moscow launched the third and most lethal of its assaults - the genocide famine against the peasants of Ukraine and some neighboring areas, in particular the largely Ukrainian Kuban.

Soviet Academician Sakharov refers to Stalin's "Ukrainophobia." But it was not an irrational Ukrainophobia. In the free elections of November, 1917, Ukraine had voted overwhelmingly for national parties. The Bolsheviks got only 10% of the vote, and those were mainly in Russified industrial centers. Over the next few years, independent Ukrainian governments rose and fell. Twice Bolshevik governments were established by Russian troops, but only on the third attempt was the country finally subdued. The first two efforts had made virtually no concession to nationalism. The view of Lenin and his subordinates was that Ukrainian was merely a peasant dialect. It was only after bitter experience that it was seen that Ukraine could not be mastered without some recognition of its national feeling.

Just as the peasants were temporarily placated by the New Economic Policy, so was the Ukrainian nation. Over the next eight or nine years, Ukrainian culture was allowed to flourish, and high officials and supporters of the former independent Ukrainian government were given posts. But there were always Moscow's complaints and apprehensions about the national tendencies thus encouraged. Thus, starting in 1929, a violent mass purge was initiated, first of non-Communists, then of Communist cultural and political figures. During the years that followed, some 200 of the 240 published authors in Ukraine were shot or died in camps, together with a wide swath of all other intellectuals, from agronomists to language specialists.

But in Stalin's view "the national problem is in essence a peasant problem." Thus, the persecution of Ukrainian culture was accompanied by an attack the peasant bulk of the nation. Furthermore, the peasantry of Ukraine and contiguous areas had also been the foremost in resisting collectivization. They therefore emerged, as it were, as a double target. Stalin's Secret Police Chief in the Ukraine, Balitsky, spoke of a "double blow" at the nationalists and the kulaks.

The Ukrainian countryside had already, in 1931-1932, suffered grain requisitions, which left it on the point of famine. In July, 1932, Stalin issued the decisive decree: 6.6 million tons of grain were now to be delivered. The figure was far beyond possibility. Ukrainian Communist leaders protested, but were ordered to obey. As Soviet novelist Vasily Grossman puts it, "the decree required that the peasants of Ukraine, the Don and the Kuban be put to death by starvation, put to death along with their little children."

By November 1, 1932, 41% of the delivery plan had been fulfilled, and there was nothing left in the villages. There were again protests from leading Ukrainian Communists who told Stalin that famine was raging. They were rebuffed and ordered to find the grain. "Brigades" with crowbars searched the peasants' houses and yards. A little hidden grain was sometimes found, and the peasant would be shot or sent to a labor camp. But in general, the villages were now living on all sorts of marginal edibles - cats and dogs, buckwheat chaff, nettles, worms, ground bark.

The borders between the Ukraine and Russia were blocked by police posts, which prevented bread being brought back. About a third of Ukraine itself was officially blockaded so that not merely bread, but no supplies of any sort, could enter. In the Ukrainian cities a small ration was issued, but in the countryside nothing at all was given.

The cities were barred to the peasants by guard posts. Even so, when the last food had gone, many peasants managed to crawl to city centers. It was forbidden to feed them, or treat them medically, and they either died on the spot or were removed in twice weekly roundups.

Back in the countryside, while any strength remained, families would come to the railway lines in the hope of being thrown a crust. Arthur Koestler,¹¹ who was then in Kharkiv, describes these events: **"the stations were lined with begging peasants with swollen hands and feet, the women holding up to the carriage windows horrible infants with enormous wobbling heads, stick-like limbs and swollen pointed bellies ... "**

They returned to die in the villages. One need only envisage famine scenes as in the world today, with a single difference - that no aid or relief organizations were present trying to alleviate things. Indeed, it was illegal - even in the villages - to suggest that famine was taking place.

Infants like those described by Koestler were particularly vulnerable and many died. Children of seven or eight years of age often also died, either at home or rounded up into special centers and given some, largely inadequate food. But many, after their parents died, joined the wandering bands of the "Homeless Ones", and lived by petty pilfering. Others, indoctrinated in the Party's "Pioneers" organization, were used by the authorities to help harass the peasants. Some became much-publicized heroes by denouncing their own parents.

One of the most moving descriptions of the famine is by Vasily Grossman, a Soviet Jewish writer. His mother was killed at Auschwitz, and he himself wrote the first documentary description of the Nazi death camps The Hell of Treblinka, and was joint editor of the Soviet section of the Black Book on Nazi atrocities (never published in the Soviet Union). He gives us, in his novel Forever Flowing, the most harrowing description and indictment of Stalin's slaughter of the Ukrainian peasantry*, and quite explicitly makes the parallel with Hitler, adding that in the Stalinist case it was a matter of Soviet people killing Soviet children. And the death roll was indeed on the Hitlerite scale.

***"Everyone was in terror. Mothers looked to their children and began to scream in fear. They screamed as if a snake had crept into their house. And this snake was famine, starvation, death...Only famine was on the move. Only famine did not sleep. They children would cry from morning on, asking for bread. And what could their mothers give them---snow? And there was no help. The party officials had one answer to all entreaties: 'You should have worked harder, you shouldn't have loafed.'" Vasily Grossman, *Forever Flowing*, translated by Thomas P. Whitney, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972) pp. 153-154.**

A census taken in January 1937 was suppressed and the census board was shot (in the words of an official communiqué) " as a serpent's nest of traitors in the apparatus of Soviet

¹¹ Arthur Koestler was a Hungarian-born British writer whose novel *Darkness at Noon* analyzed the psychology of victims of Stalin's 1930s purges.

statistics," They had, Pravda stated, "exerted themselves to diminish the population of the Soviet Union".

During Khrushchev's time the head of the Census Board wrote sardonically that the State Planning Commission had been very incompetent in its population predictions, having forecast 180.7 million for 1937 when the real total was 164 million. This enormous discrepancy can be reduced to about 11.5 million for various reasons (for example, children unborn owing to prematurely dead parents). Of this, the famine deaths accounted for the greatest cause of death. Over 3 million had already died during dekulakization, and about 1 million (out of some 4 million) Kazakhs had perished as a result of the banning of their nomad life and resettlement on desert "farms."

To this 11+ million we must add over 3 million for the peasants in labor camps during the 1937 census (many of whom perished there later) for a reasonable estimate of approximately 14.5 million victims of the entire anti-peasant and anti-Ukraine campaign. The total dead in all countries during World War I was under 9 million.

There have been many useful books, usually of a specialist nature, about one aspect or another of the Stalinist revolution in the countryside, and many individual testimonies have also appeared; but there has not previously been a general history covering the whole phenomenon.

Yet the material only needed to be brought together. We have literally hundreds of first-hand accounts, from victims and from officials, from foreign Communists and from journalists: that is, first-hand observers. We have official material, both from the early 1930s and from the Khrushchev period, which strongly indicates much of the truth. And we have fiction, from the Soviet writer Mikhail Sholokhov in the 1930s, through novels published in the USSR in Khrushchev's time and even in the early 1980s, to say nothing of *samizdat* and émigré work, in which the events are presented in only slightly dramatized form.

All of them tell, or contribute to, the same story. Every point made here can be overwhelmingly documented. Soviet history - and the world today - cannot be properly understood without full knowledge of such major determining events as those described above.

In his summation, Professor Conquest wrote:

1. the cause of the famine was the setting of highly excessive grain requisition targets by Stalin and his associates.
2. Ukrainian party leaders made it clear that these targets were too high.
3. targets were nevertheless enforced.
4. Ukrainian leaders pointed this out to Stalin and his associates and the truth was made known to him and them by others.
5. the requisitions nevertheless continued.
6. grain was available in storage in the famine area but was not released to the peasants.
7. orders were given to prevent peasants from entering the towns

8. orders were given to prevent food, legally obtained, being brought over the borders of Soviet Ukraine.
9. bread rations, albeit low ones, were established in the towns but not in villages.
10. the fact of the famine has been established by witnesses including high Communist officials, local activists, foreign observers, and the peasants themselves.¹²

***More on the Women's Rebellions ("Babski Bunty")**

"In 1933, when Stalin called for a cow in every peasant household (partly to placate collective farm women and partly to mask the famine), he acknowledged the opposition of peasant women to collectivization by remarking 'Of course, not long ago Soviet power had a little misunderstanding with collective farm women. This business was about cows.' The 'business about cows' became a national phenomenon in the late 1920's and 1930's evolving well beyond the confines of the 'little misunderstanding.'"

"Lazar Kaganovich, a politburo member and one of Stalin's closest allies, said 'We know that in connection with the excesses in the collective farm movement, women in the countryside in many cases played the most 'advanced' role in the reaction against the collective farm movement.'"

"Men pushed women to protest against collectivization because the authorities were less likely to take physical action against women. ("Make a fuss, Matrena, nothing will happen to you."). "Officials were unlikely to arrest women, even when fifty of them broke up a meeting by shouting 'Down with the collective farms!' Give the speaker a thrashing!' Bring back the Tsar!'"¹³

Questions to Ponder:

- 1. What is the definition of a genocide according to current international agreements? Does the Holodomor meet this definition?**
- 2. What is the difference between a natural famine and an artificial famine? Why is the Holodomor considered an artificial famine? What political purposes did it serve?**
- 3. In what different ways did Ukrainian farmers resist collectivization? How did Soviet authorities respond?**
- 4. Arthur Koestler wrote that women during the Holodomor held their starving babies up to train windows when trains stopped at Ukrainian train stations. What did they hope to achieve?**

¹² Robert Conquest, *op cit.*, p. 320. Also see Congressional testimony presented before the Ukraine Famine Commission in Washington, D.C. on October 8, 1986.

¹³ Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels Against Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) p.183-184; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) pp. 65-66

5. The Holodomor resulted in the deaths of over ten million people. Why do you think that even today so few people know about it?

Extra Credit: Write a research paper on the women's rebellions during the collectivization campaign in Ukraine (see references above). Why were women first to rebel against Soviet collectivization?

HOLODOMOR AND NATIONALISM IN SOVIET UKRAINE¹⁴

One of the foremost experts on the Holodomor, the late James Mace, concluded that the genocide was part of an overall Soviet strategy to destroy Ukrainian national consciousness. His conclusions are presented below:

By the time the 1936 Soviet Constitution was adopted, the Soviet Union had become a state in which the administrative competence of its constituent republics had been sharply reduced, and that of the Union greatly enlarged.¹⁵ The ideology of Soviet patriotism dominated by Russian culture and centralism was in no small part a legacy of the Ukrainian famine. While the suppression of national self-assertion and the introduction of centralization were principal features of overall Soviet policy in the 1930's, the Ukrainians, as the largest and most self-assertive non-Russian nation, seemed to be singled out for special treatment. Only they had to suffer the loss of several million villagers to starvations in an artificially contrived famine. Placed in this context, the famine of 1933 makes sense as one of a series of policies designed to neutralize Ukrainians as a political factor, indeed, as a social organism in the Soviet Union. These policies entailed the destruction of the spiritual and cultural elites of Ukraine, and the subordination of the Ukrainian structures to central ones; the destruction of the officially sanctioned Ukrainian Communist political leadership as a distinct force in Soviet politics ...the abandonment of Ukrainianization and the gradual abolition of structures designed to prevent the assimilation of Ukrainians entering Russified urban and industrial environments; and a body blow against the main constituency of Ukrainian nationalism - the peasantry. In sum, one cannot understand the famine without understanding the turnabout in Soviet nationalities policy - from seeking to foster - to seeking to absorb national cultures. By the same token, one cannot understand how this policy was imposed without reference to the famine. The famine must therefore be understood within the context of an attempt to impose a final solution on the "Ukrainian problem" as it had hitherto existed.

The Soviet state never solved its "Ukrainian problem. Stalin himself helped undermine his policy by annexing Ukrainian territories from Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia during World War II claiming they were rightfully a part of Western Ukraine. Western Ukraine had never experienced such devastation as the famine nor the related repressions of the

¹⁴ Adopted from: James E. Mace, "Famine and Nationalism in Soviet Ukraine" in *Problems of Communism*, May-June 1984, pp. 49-50.

¹⁵ The process of increasing Union competence at the expense of Republic authority is traced by V. Sadovsky in "National Policy of the Soviets in Ukraine." *Works of the Ukrainian Scientific Institute*, Vol. 39 (Warsaw, 1937) pp. 102-116.

1930's, and it was inevitable that the traditional cross-fertilization of ideas between Western and Eastern Ukraine would flourish when the two parts become united. In the 1960's a dissident movement arose that included Ukrainians from all Ukrainian territories. They demanded certain national and human rights. For a brief moment, the Soviet Ukrainian government of Petro Shelest (1963-1972) was able to edge a little further away from Moscow. Shelest was removed by Moscow and the dissidents were arrested. After the Soviets signed the 1975 Helsinki Final Act guaranteeing human and national rights, a Helsinki Monitoring Group, similar to, and connected with counterparts in other parts of the Soviet Union, was formed in Kyiv.

Questions to Ponder:

What steps did the Soviet government take to eradicate Ukrainian national consciousness? Were these steps ultimately successful?

UKRAINIAN HOLODOMOR WITNESS ACCOUNTS

1. Holodomor Testimony of SVIATOSLAV KARAVANSKY¹⁶

From my childhood years I remember that from 1929, the beginning of industrialization and collectivization, our family and all of the people of Odessa, suffered a great shortage of food. Buttermilk, milk, sugar, and even bread disappeared from the stores. In the period 1929-1930 the whole city turned to the rationing system. The entire population lived on rations. The portions that were handed out continued to decrease, and in the winter of 1933, I, as a dependent, received 200 grams (seven ounces) of black bread per day. My mother, brother, and sister received the same ration.

Bread was, and still is, the main source of nourishment for the Soviet population. For comparison, let's consider the daily ration of the Soviet soldier. The soldiers of the Red Army received at that time one kilogram (36 ounces) of bread per day. The entire city of Odessa lived on rations which were insufficient for healthy people, but which kept it from starving. The rural population was not subject to rationing, and it perished. People in the villages could not receive any help from their relatives in towns because the city population was hungry too. It should be mentioned that the closing of churches preceded the great famine. So, the organizers of the famine took into consideration the major role played by the church in dealing with national disasters like the famine. It is known that during the famine of 1921 in Ukraine, churches aided the starving people. During 1932-1933, the churches did not function, and the clergy were sent to labor camps, which, in reality, were death camps.

Our family lived in downtown Odessa, and I attended school there. I never saw starving people downtown, but many of the latter were seen on the outskirts of the city. Odessa was a port where foreign sailors and businessmen could always be found, so the authorities took measures not to allow peasants to reach the downtown area. But everyone in Odessa knew that there was a horrible shortage of food in the villages. People swelled from hunger and died. In the school which I attended from September 1932 to May 1933, the teacher told us that the kulaks (or kurkuls) were responsible for all the temporary difficulties of the Soviet socialist economy.

My father was employed in the Odessa shipyard, and I heard from adults that a lot of foreign ships in the docks were waiting their turn to be loaded with grain from Odessa grain elevators. My parents wondered how it was possible that such great quantities of food were being exported while the village population was starving. To ask questions about this was dangerous. If a child asked about these things in school, the teachers assumed that he had been taught by his parents, who were thus placed in danger. So my parents were very

¹⁶ Congressional testimony presented before the United States Ukraine Famine Commission in Washington, DC, October 8, 1986.

careful about telling me not to ask any questions in school, and not to reveal anywhere what was discussed in the family.

The entire population was terrorized by the arrests and trials, which culminated in 1932-1933. In those years so-called "torgsins" were opened in Odessa. In "torgsins" anyone could buy for gold and foreign currency all the food that otherwise was distributed through the rationing systems. Many people who had small golden crosses or wedding rings brought them to the "torgsins." Once my mother went to a "torgsin" as well. She brought back a loaf of black bread, turning the day into a holiday for the entire family. There were rumors in Odessa that people were being arrested for selling human sausage in the market place. There was a rumor that the sausage makers "had been shot." Such accounts were not published in the newspapers, which only praised the wisdom of the party and the great leader, Stalin.

In 1934, my father, a shipyard employee, got a free ticket for an Odessa-Batumi cruise on the Black Sea. Traveling to Batumi on the liner, he observed that a large number of Ukrainian peasants had migrated to Georgia where there was no food shortage and no famine.

The famine in Ukraine was over, but those who survived fled from Ukraine. I know that in the local schools in the village of Rossosha near Proskurov (now Khmelnytsky) there was no first year class for the 1940-1941 school year because the birth rate in 1933 had been zero. In 1953-1954, the Soviet navy also experienced shortages of healthy servicemen because of the zero birth rate in 1933 in Ukraine. The requirements for service in the navy were reduced because otherwise it was impossible to recruit the necessary numbers of sailors. I received this information from a naval officer who had served a ten-year term in Mordovia. In 1970, my wife and I met a woman in the village of Tarussa (Kaluga region) who spoke with a strong Ukrainian accent. She told us that she was born near Kyiv. In 1933, she had fled from her native village because of the famine and had found shelter in Tarussa where she later married and settled down, thereby escaping death while her entire family died of starvation.

Since the revolution the majority of the Ukrainian population evidenced hostility toward the Soviet occupation. The artificial famine deepened the hostility. It is believed that half of the entire prison population in the Gulag was Ukrainian. The memory of the famine was especially vivid for the Ukrainian national and human rights dissidents of the 1960's and 1970's. The founder of the Ukrainian Helsinki monitoring group, Mykola Rudenko, wrote a poem about the famine entitled "The Cross." References to the famine are present in the works of Vasyl' Stus', Oles' Berdnyk, and others.

Questions to Ponder:

What were "torgsins"? What purpose did they serve during the Holodomor? Do any other countries have similar institutions today? Do you think they are a good idea?



MASS GRAVE OF GENOCIDE VICTIMS IN EASTERN UKRAINE

2. Holodomor Testimony of VARVARA DIBERT¹⁷

In 1932 and 1933 Kyiv seemed like a paradise to nearby villagers who had been stripped of all they had by the Soviet government. And no wonder. Some villages were dying out completely, except for those who still had the courage and strength to flee. There were cases where mothers had gone mad and killed a child to feed the rest of the family. So, thousands of villagers flocked to the city of Kyiv. Many of the weak ones sat or lay down by buildings or fences, most never to get up again. Trucks, driven by policemen or Communist Youth League members, mobilized for that purpose, went around picking up bodies or carrying those still alive somewhere outside the city limits. It was especially terrible to see mothers whose faces had turned black from hunger with children whose little faces had wrinkled up like baked apples, children who could no longer cry, but only squeal, moving their limbs in an attempt to find sustenance where there was none. People sought salvation and found death. I saw these things as I walked to work through the hay market on Pidvil'na Street near the Golden Gates and Volodymyr Street. .

No one in Kyiv had the right to allow even their closest relatives to stay the night in their residences. One had to go to the building manager with a certificate and get it stamped with a date indicating the length of stay. For more villagers, particularly men and boys, such certificates were not easy to obtain. Single women and girls were more fortunate. Sometimes they were able to get jobs as servants for party people and thereby acquire

¹⁷ Congressional testimony presented before the United States Ukraine Famine Commission in Washington, DC, October 8, 1986.

union cards, even without residency certificates. Later they could even attend evening courses and get permanent jobs. This was sometimes done not only by villagers but also by women of the intelligentsia who had been denied employment because their husbands had been arrested as so-called "enemies of the people" or because of their own "nonproletarian" class origins. I knew of four such cases of the latter from among my own relatives, and my aunt in this way saved six women, two of whom had already begun to swell from hunger.

Townpeople tried in every possible way to help relatives who were living in the countryside, but it was not easy. Workers and officials in Kyiv received ration cards, but the rations were so small that even some of them began to swell and even die. Only those allowed to use the so-called "closed distribution points" were able to get as much food as they needed. They had enough of everything. They were members of special organizations and the party, but not even all party members were so fortunate. Civil servants got 400 grams of bread per day and another 200 grams for each dependent. Factory workers got 500 grams per day, while workers at military factories got 800. Some millet, sugar, and fat were also given out. Today some people may say that 400 grams per day does not constitute a famine, but this is because we have other things to eat besides bread and don't need as much of it. And in those days, what mother would eat her ration if she saw her starving child looking pitifully at her. In 1933 the so-called "commercial bread" appeared in Kyiv. You could buy a kilo for two-and-a-half rubles. They would only let you buy one kilo a day, and the lines for this bread were so long that not every working person could wait so long. The police would take villagers from these lines, load them on trucks, and take them out of the city.

The so-called "torgsin" (acronym for "trade with foreigners") appeared. For gold you could get all sorts of food and dry goods there. But how was one to get gold? Once my husband brought home a certificate and said he could buy some food with it at the torgsin. When I stared at him in amazement, he opened his mouth, and I saw he had steel fillings instead of gold ones.

Ever since the revolution, Kyiv had been full of orphans from age six to fifteen. Although the government set up orphanages, the number of homeless orphans continued to grow, especially when dekulakization started and later when the famine began. Near the house where I lived was a large building. The government converted this building into a so-called "collector" for homeless children caught on the streets, and who, after sanitary inspection, were sent to orphanages.

When leaving my home, I would often see how trucks would pull up there and the police would take out the filthy, bedraggled children who had been caught on the streets. A guard stood at the entrance and no one was permitted inside. During the winter of 1932-1933, I saw five or six times how in the early morning they took out of the building the bodies of half-naked children, covered them with filthy tarpaulins, and piled them onto trucks. Going as far as Artem Street, I would hear a loudspeaker (at that time there was one on every

corner) blare out how children lived in horrible conditions in capitalist countries and what a wonderful life they led in our own Socialist Fatherland.

Questions to Ponder:

- 1. Soviet citizens had to have ration cards during the 1930's. Why? Did Americans ever have to have ration cards? If yes, when and why?**
- 2. Soviets citizens who lived in the city could not have relatives from the villages stay with them without permission from the building manager. What purpose did this system serve during the Holodomor? Do we have similar restrictions in the United States.**
- 3. Did members of the Communist Party live better than the average Soviet citizen? Why or why not?**
- 4. Why were there homeless children in Ukraine? How did they live? What happened to them? Are there homeless children in the United States? How are the Ukrainian and American situations different?**
- 4. Why were there loudspeakers on street corners in the Soviet Union? How did Soviet officials use propaganda during the Holodomor? What are other examples of propaganda?**

3. Holodomor Testimony of TATIANA PAWLICHKA¹⁸

In 1931, I was ten years old, and I remember well what happened in my native village in the Kyiv region. In the spring of that year, we had virtually no seed to plant. The Communists had taken all the grain, and although they saw that we were weak and hungry, they came and searched for more grain. My mother had stashed away some corn that had already sprouted, but they found that too and took it. What we did manage to sow, the starving people pulled up out of the ground and ate.

In the villages and on the collective farms (our village had two collectives), a lot of land lay fallow because people had nothing to sow, and besides, there wasn't enough manpower to do the sowing. Most people couldn't walk, and those few who could had no strength. When, at harvest time, there weren't enough local people to harvest the grain, others were sent in to help on the collectives. These people spoke Russian, and they were given provisions.

After the harvest, the villagers tried to go out in the field to look for gleanings, and the Communists would arrest them and shoot at them, and send them to Siberia. My aunt, Tatiana Rudenko, was taken away. They said she had stolen the property of the collective farm.

That summer, the vegetables couldn't even ripen - people pulled them out of the ground - still green - and ate them. People ate leaves, nettles, milkweed, and hedges. By autumn, no one had any chickens or cattle. Here and there, someone had a few potatoes or beets. People coming in from other villages told the very same story. They would travel all over trying to get food. They would fall by the roadside, and none of us could do anything to help. Before the ground froze, they were just left lying there dead, in the snow; or, if they died in the house, they were dragged out to the cattle-shed, and they would lie there frozen until spring. There was no one to dig graves.

All the train stations were overflowing with starving, dying people. Everyone wanted to go to Russia (the RSFSR) because it was said that there was no famine there. Very few (of those who left) returned. They all perished on the way. They weren't allowed into Russia and were turned back at the border. Those who somehow managed to get into Russia could save themselves.

In February of 1933, there were so few children left that the schools were closed. By this time, there wasn't a cat, dog, or sparrow in the village. In that month, my cousin Mykhailo Rudenko died; a month later my aunt Nastia Klymenko and her son, my cousin Ivan, died, as well as my classmate, Dokia Klymenko.

¹⁸ Testimony presented before the United States Ukraine Famine Commission in Washington, DC. October 8. 1986.

There was cannibalism in our village. On my farmstead, an 18 year-old boy, Danylo Hukhlib, died, and his mother and younger sisters and brothers cut him up and ate him. The Communists came and took them away, and we never saw them again. People said they took them a little ways off and shot them right away - the little ones and the older ones together.

At the time, I remember, I had heavy, swollen legs. My sister, Tamara, had a large, swollen stomach, and her neck was long and thin like a bird's neck. People didn't look like people - they were more like starving ghosts. The ground thawed, and they began to take the dead to the ravine in ox carts. The air was filled with the ubiquitous odor of decomposing bodies. The wind carried this odor far and wide. It was thus over all of Ukraine.

Questions to Ponder:

- 1. Faced with starvation, what strategies did people use to survive the Holodomor? Do you think that strategies such as stashing away corn or eating unripe plants were appropriate to the circumstances?**
- 2. Why were Russians who came to harvest given “provisions” while Ukrainian villagers who were too weak from hunger received no provisions? Did one’s ethnicity affect whether one would receive food from the government? Why or why not?**
- 3. Why weren’t the people of Russia starving during the Holodomor? Why weren’t Ukrainians allowed to travel to Russia or other parts of the Soviet Union where there may have been more food? Why did the Soviet Union want to control the movement of its people?**
- 4. How do you think Tatiana felt when two of her cousins, her aunt, and her classmate died all in one month?**

4. Holodomor Testimony of POLIKARP KYBALO¹⁹

The spring of 1933 was the most horrible and tragic moment in the history of the Ukrainian people. In the fall of 1932 and the early winter of 1933 the Russian Communist government had taken away the entire grain crop and all food produce from Ukrainian farmers in order to bring them into submission and obedient servitude in the collective farms.

In the collective farms of my native district, which numbered 672 people, 164 died that fatal spring of 1933. Actually this collective farm suffered little compared with all the surrounding places, for to induce the farmers to remain there, they were given 300 grams of bread per person baked from all kinds of chaff and some liquid concoction cooked from refuse. But there were villages and hamlets where not a single person remained alive - for instance, in the large village of Chernychyna, in the Neforoshchanske County, which stretched for two and a half miles, though I do not recall its population, and the hamlet Rybky, of the Sukho-Mayachka village administration, where the population of 60 died.

Here is one of the many incidents of the famine. In my native village there was a stallion kept for breeding mares. He was well fed, receiving 13 pounds of oats daily, but for some unknown reason he suddenly died. This happened at the end of May 1933. The district administration forbade the stallion to be buried until a special commission arrived and held an inquest.

The dead stallion lay in the open for three days and began to decay. A guard was appointed to shield it from the starving people who would have eaten the meat. On the fourth day the commission arrived and having completed the investigation, ordered the stallion to be buried.

No sooner was that done and the commission gone, then like an avalanche, the people descended on the dead, decaying stallion and in an instant nothing was left of him. Violent arguments ensued because some had grabbed more than their share.

A spectacle I shall never forget was when a 16-year-old boy, who, besides his stepmother, was the only survivor in the family, swollen from starvation, crawled up to the place where the dead stallion had been, and, finding a hoof, snatched it in both hands and gnawed furiously. The boy was never seen again and non-official rumors circulated that he had been eaten by his stepmother. It was forbidden for people to leave their villages. GPU guards blocked all roads and railways. Any food that the farmers happened to be carrying was taken away from them. For picking a stray head of wheat or a frozen potato or beet left

¹⁹ Taken from: S. O. Pidhainy, Editor-In-Chief. *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*. Volume 2. *The Great Famine in Ukraine in 1932-1933* (Detroit: Globe Press. DOBRUS, 1955) pp. 566-567.

in the field a person was sentenced to ten years in prison or concentration camp, according to the ruling passed by the government August 7, 1932.

Thousands of corpses littered the streets, byways and buildings. Deaths occurred at such a rate that the government could not keep up with burying the corpses.

During all this time there was not the slightest sign of any famine in the neighboring Russian territory. The Soviet press never mentioned the famine in Ukraine but on the contrary even printed misleading propaganda about "flowering Ukraine" and her great achievements in industry and collectivization.

To cover up its bloody crime the Soviet government warned all doctors not to state the true cause of death on death certificates. Instead, they stated that a prevalent digestive ailment was the cause.

Questions to Ponder:

- 1. Why did the Soviet government work so hard to cover up the Holodomor and the mass deaths?**
- 2. Do you think it was wise policy for the government to protect all of its farm animals, even a dead stallion? Why do you think Soviet government authorities showed more concern over a dead stallion than their starving people?**

THE UKRAINIAN GENOCIDE/HOLODOMOR PRESS COVER-UP

"The failure of Western newspapers to do all that they could to inform their readers about conditions in Russia was never more apparent than during the Soviet famine of the early 1930's. Although the home newspapers were aware of the travel restrictions placed on their correspondents at the start of 1933, there was no outcry from them. Moreover, while there were clues enough even before the travel ban that conditions were not satisfactory in the countryside, and that there might be a food shortage, only the most conservative newspapers in the West gave the early reports of famine the attention they deserved. It was almost as if the Western press itself was willing to accept a role in the famine cover-up.

The New York Times' role in this dismal press coverage of the Soviet Union seems to have been especially onerous. While the Times was (and is) widely regarded as one of the world's best newspapers, its reputation for accuracy and fairness was clearly not deserved in the case of its coverage of the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1933."

James William Crowl, *Angels in Stalin's Paradise: Western Reporters in Soviet Russia, 1917 to 1937. A Case Study of Louis Fischer and Walter Duranty* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982) p. 198.

During the height of the Holodomor, New York Times Moscow correspondent Walter Duranty wrote: "There is no actual starvation of deaths from starvation but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition, especially in the Ukraine..." According to his biographer, Duranty always printed what the Soviets wanted so as not to be expelled from the country. There is also evidence that he received certain gratuities from the Soviets in return for his cooperation.

S.J. Taylor, *Stalin's Apologist, Walter Duranty: The New York Times's Man in Moscow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) pp.207-208.

"Americans who suppose that editors are inclined to cheer their correspondents in the fearless pursuit of truth have a naively idyllic view of modern journalism. They forget that the principal commodity of the newspapers is news, not truth, and the two do not always coincide."

Interview with Eugene Lyons, July 17, 1972. Cited in *Angels in Stalin's Paradise*, op. cit. pp. 197-198.

Question to Ponder:

America prides itself on having a free and independent press. Do you think the desire to tell "a good story" sometimes gets in the way of truth-telling? Can you think of any examples of journalistic "fudging" in today's newspapers?

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SOVIET DENIALS

The Soviet Union never openly acknowledged the Holodomor in Ukraine.

During an interview in 1986, Viacheslav Molotov, one-time foreign minister of the Soviet Union, was asked about the Ukrainian Holodomor/Genocide:

Q- "Among writers, some say the (*genocide*) famine of 1933 was deliberately organized by Stalin and the whole of your leadership."

A- "Enemies of communism say that! They are enemies of communism! People who are not politically aware, who are politically blind ... I twice traveled to the Ukraine ... Of course I saw nothing of the kind there. Those allegations are absurd. Absurd!"²⁰

In 1983, the year Ukrainians in the West commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Ukrainian Holodomor/Genocide. The following statements were issued by Soviet Embassy officials in North America:

"The representative of the United States had repeated fabrications about an alleged famine which was supposed to have occurred in the Ukrainian SSR fifty years previously. In that connection we wish to...point out that the slander has been perpetrated by Ukrainian nationalist bourgeoisie...They later moved to the United States and, in order to justify their presence in that country, had circulated the lie about the famine."²¹

"Recent stories in the Western news media try to create an impression that there was an artificially created famine in the Ukraine in 1932-1933 because Ukrainian farmers allegedly resisted collective farming..."

Indeed the situation in the Ukraine as well as in other parts of the USSR in 1932 was quite difficult. Yet it was not as critical as portrayed in the West. And, of course, it was not because somebody wanted to make it bad, but because of a number of reasons, drought being the major one."²²

²⁰ Albert Reiss, editor, *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics, Conversations with Felix Chuev* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993) pp. 243-244.

²¹ Taken from a statement by Ivan Khmil, representative of Soviet Ukraine at the United Nations, on October 19, 1983.

²² Taken from News Release, Office of the USSR Embassy in Canada, April 28, 1983.

RUSSIAN DENIALS TODAY

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, Russia, even today, is unwilling to admit that Stalin perpetrated a genocide against the Ukrainian people.

The famine in Ukraine was “the result of criminal policy”...of course, no one planned any famine...the famine was the result of the errors in the course of the realization of collectivization. The Russian archives [which are closed to foreign research scholars], offer not “a single document” showing that Stalin planned a “terror famine” in Ukraine.

Vladimir Kozlov, Head of the Russian Federal Archives Agency

“Kozlov’s comments came as he presented a new collection of documents, entitled ‘The Famine in the USSR’ and a DVD which contained a selection of those documents...which he said undercut all Ukrainian claims to the contrary...”²³

Question to Ponder:

Why do you think Soviet leaders then, and Russian leaders now, deny the Holodomor as an exaggerated fabrication?

²³ Veronica Khokhlova, “Russia, Ukraine: History and Denial, *Global Voices Online* (March2, 2009).

UKRAINE IN RECENT TIMES

Ukrainian suffering did not end with the Holodomor. When Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, the Ukrainian people bore the brunt of the devastation that followed. Ukrainians were designated "*untermenschen*" (subhuman) by Hitler and his followers. Before they retreated from Ukraine in 1944, the Nazis exterminated 3,898,457 civilians (including 900,000 Jews). Some 2,240,000 Ukrainians were sent to work as slave laborers in Germany.²⁴

Despite Nazi cruelty in Ukraine, millions of Ukrainians fled to Germany during the German retreat in 1943 preferring an uncertain future rather than life under Soviet rule. When the war ended, they were designated "displaced persons" by the United States and other Western nations. Stalin, however, demanded they be returned to the USSR, by force if necessary. Most Ukrainians, especially the homesick forced laborers, returned voluntarily, believing Soviet promises of a better future in Ukraine. They never saw their families in Ukraine. Almost all ended up in the Gulag. Some Ukrainians were forcibly repatriated with the assistance of American and British soldiers. They too were sent directly to the labor camps and mines of Siberia, never to see Ukraine again.²⁵

Stalin died in 1953 and life improved slightly under Nikita Khrushchev who, nevertheless, as a militant atheist, destroyed and closed churches allowed to be open during the Second World War. Churches were converted into museums of atheism. For the next forty years, Moscow gradually returned to the centuries-old policy of Russification and repression. Ukrainian dissidents protesting human and national rights violations were arrested and sentenced to long terms in the Gulag. Free and open criticism of the regime was severely punished. Few Ukrainians were allowed to emigrate out of the country and travel within the USSR and the Soviet bloc was restricted. Only select members of the Communist party enjoyed the good life with separate stores, separate vacations, spas, separate schools, separate hospitals, and relatively free travel.

Economic stagnation, the "rollback" policy of the Reagan administration, secret assistance to Poland's Solidarity movement by Pope John Paul II, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and an ill-fated attempt by Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev to make Soviet society more open and democratic, eventually toppled the Soviet regime.

On August 24, 1991, the Soviet Ukrainian Parliament voted for independence by a vote of 346 to 1. A national referendum to confirm the vote for independence was held on December 1, 1991. With a voter turnout of 84%, an amazing 93.1 % of Ukraine's people voted in favor of independence.²⁶

During the winter of 2004-2005, Ukraine experienced a peaceful "Orange Revolution". The Orange Revolution centered around Presidential contender Victor Yushchenko's orange colored campaign for political reform and unity. Ukraine inaugurated Victor Yushchenko on

²⁴ Myron B. Kuropas, "One More Calamity," U.S. News and World Report, (May 26, 1986).

²⁵ Marl R. Elliot, Pawns of Yalta: Soviet Refugees and America's Role in Repatriation (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1982).

²⁶ Andrew Wilson, The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) pp.168-169.

January 23, 2005. In February, President Yushchenko pledged to expand awareness of the Ukrainian Holodomor of 1932-1933. Today, the Ukrainian people are free and independent at long last. The official language is Ukrainian as is the language of instruction in Ukraine's schools. Other major languages spoken in Ukraine today include Russian, Belarusian, Polish and Rumanian. Minority language rights are protected by law.²⁷

For many Ukrainians today, the greatest threat to their future sovereignty is the return of Russian imperialistic ambitions under former president and present prime minister Vladimir Putin who has adopted the Czarist definition of Ukrainians as "Little Russians". Ukrainians fear the return of Russian imperialism. Russia's recent aggression against the Georgian republic are troubling to Ukrainians and to the West as well.²⁸

Questions to Ponder:

- 1. Compare and contrast the crimes committed in Ukraine by Hitler and Stalin. What can be done to ensure that such atrocities never happen again?**
- 2. How important is language in the preservation of a national identity? Does the United States have an official language?**
- 2. Do you think the Ukrainian people are proud of their history? Why or why not?**

Extra Credit:

- 1. Write a research paper comparing Hitler and Stalin.**
- 2. What is the single most important thing you learned after completing this unit? Write a research paper to explain your answer.**

²⁷ <http://www.ukrainianguenocide.com/history.html>

²⁸ See Richard Pipes, "Pride and Power," *Wall Street Journal*, August 22-23, 2009.

KEY SOVIET FIGURES IN THE UKRAINIAN GENOCIDE/HOLODOMOR²⁹



Joseph V. Stalin - Bolshevik revolutionary and the second leader of the Soviet Union. Stalin considered the national consciousness and desire for freedom of the Ukrainian people to be an obstacle in the implementation of his policy of collectivization in the Soviet Union. Of particular threat to Stalin were the Ukrainian land-owning farmers whom he branded “kulaks”.

In 1929 Stalin introduced a policy for the liquidation of Ukrainian kulaks as a class and the policy was legalized by the Soviet Central Committee in 1930. Anyone with a Ukrainian national consciousness was branded an “enemy of the State” by Stalin’s regime. This initial campaign was geared toward kulaks

who resisted turning over their private farmland to the Soviet collective. Those kulaks were dealt with through massive arrests and deportations to forced labor camps, often to the concentration camps in Siberia. Those who weren’t arrested or deported were subject to the brutal terror of Stalin’s police and oftentimes firing squad executions.

Despite the arrests, police seizures of their property and livestock, and even death sentences, the kulaks continued to resist being subjugated by Moscow. Stalin reacted by imposing unrealistically large grain quotas on Ukraine in 1931. As planned, Ukraine was unable to deliver on the grain quotas because although it produced 27% of the entire Soviet grain harvest, it was accountable for 38% of the Soviet quota. This intentionally unrealistic goal allowed Stalin to take draconian measures to penalize the kulaks for their failure to meet the quota, and thus Stalin’s artificially imposed Genocide/Holodomor in Ukraine began.

In 1932 Stalin ordered Ukraine’s borders to be sealed to the outside world. In essence, Ukraine became the world’s largest concentration camp. He ordered massive quantities of grain and agricultural products to be exported out of Ukraine to feed the rest of the Soviet Union and for foreign export. This, along with Stalin’s ban on food imports into Ukraine, left insufficient reserves of food in Ukraine to feed the population.

Kulak villages that were considered uncooperative or under-producers were blacklisted and completely blockaded. Anyone found to have foodstuffs in their possession was subject to execution, or in extenuating circumstances, imprisonment for no less than 10 years in a Soviet concentration camp. It was standard practice to be sentenced to 10 years in a concentration camp for being in possession of a potato or a handful of wheat kernels.

²⁹ <http://www.ukrainiangenocide.com/dkeyfigures.html>



Viachislav Molotov - Top aide to Stalin who helped implement the 1932-33 Genocide/Holodomor policy in Ukraine. Molotov was the head of the extraordinary commission for grain delivery (khlebosdacha) in Ukraine. On November 18, 1932, Molotov pushed through a resolution on "fines in kind," which punished kulaks for taking surplus grain (food) for themselves.



Lazar Kaganovich - In 1930 Kaganovich organized and headed a special department of the Soviet secret police. It was referred to as the department of "wet affairs," with "wet" meaning "bloody." It handled clandestine mass executions of the sort carried out later at Vynnytsya in Ukraine and at Katyn Forest and at a thousand other places throughout the Soviet Union over the next two decades. Kaganovich became the commissar in charge of mass murder.



Walter Duranty - New York Times journalist who in 1930s misled the world with his mendacious articles on the situation in Ukraine, claiming that there was no famine there. He aided Stalin in covering up the genocide in Ukraine. He was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his fictitious articles which denied that peasants were being intentionally starved to death 1932-1933.

Questions to Ponder:

1. Stalin, Molotov, and Kaganovich died a long time ago. Unlike Nazi war criminals, they escaped being tried for war crimes. Some of the people who were directly involved with the Ukrainian genocide, however - - members of the secret police and local officials - - are very old but still alive. Do you think they should be brought to trial for crimes against humanity. Why or why not?
2. Walter Duranty was a newspaper correspondent who lied in his reporting. He won the Pulitzer Prize. Ukrainians have tried to have the prize revoked. The New York Times and the Pulitzer Prize Committee refused. Why? What do you think the penalty should be for reporters who knowingly misrepresent the news?

FOOD AS A POLITICAL WEAPON

The genocide by forced starvation initiated by Stalin in Ukraine in the 1930's has had many Communist imitators during the 20th century.

Ethiopia was taken over by a Communist regime in 1974. Under the leadership of Mengistu Haile Mariam, thousands, perhaps millions of people, mostly Eritreans seeking independence, were allowed to starve to death while the government spent millions of dollars on military armaments.³⁰

Cambodia was taken over by the Communist Khmer Rouge in 1975. During the next three years the government of Pol Pot was responsible for the death of some 2 million men, women and children through a program of planned execution and forced starvation.³¹

Afghanistan was invaded by the Soviet Union in 1979. Unable to subdue the Afghan countryside, the Soviets began a program of genocidal suppression which included "killing of the civilian support population, terrorizing and driving of the survivors, and creating famine conditions."³²

As in the past, the Western press has paid relatively little attention to these horrors and when it has, as in the case of Ethiopia, the Communist regime's culpability was hardly mentioned. In Ethiopia, the press reported drought as the major cause of the famine.³³ As Western food and medical supplies flooded in, the Soviets sent arms. Grain rotted on docks and in warehouses because the only available trucks belonged to the army which did not consider food transport for the starving a priority. Wheat ships were made to wait at anchor offshore while Soviet freighters unloaded arms, ammunition and tanks.³⁴

Questions to Ponder:

There are still countries in the world where famine erupts from time to time. Where are these countries? How has government neglect led to famine? Do you think government leaders directly responsible for death by starvation should be tried for their crimes?

³⁰ "Murder by Hunger", *Wall Street Journal* (January 10, 1985). Also see Stephane Courtois, *et. al*, *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999) pp. 683-695.

³¹ *The Twentieth Century: An Almanac*, edited by Robert H. Ferrell, (New York: World Almanac Publications, 1985) pp. 435-436; Also see Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Eighties* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983) pp. 654-656 and *The Black Book of Communism*, op. cit., pp. 577-635.

³² Allen K. Jones, "Afghan Refugees: Five Years Later" (Washington: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1984).

³³ "Human Element, Not Drought, Causes Famine" *U.S. News and World* (February 23, 1985).

³⁴ Excerpted from Dr. Rony Brauman, "Famine Aid: Were We Duped?" *Reader's Digest* (October 1986)

STUDENT RESOURCES

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE UKRAINIAN GENOCIDE HOLODOMOR OF 1932-1933

(1) Visit the Ukrainian National Museum's *Ukrainian Holodomor Exhibit*

The Ukrainian National Museum is located in the heart of Chicago's century-old Ukrainian Village. The museum houses an impressive collection of Ukrainian artifacts. The Ukrainian Holodomor Gallery contains a large collection of Holodomor documents, artwork and recently declassified photographs from the former Soviet government. The Museum library contains articles, pamphlets and books in both English and Ukrainian on the topic of the Ukrainian Genocide/Holodomor of 1932-1933. Ukrainian Genocide Famine Foundation-USA brochures are available free of charge at the museum.

Museum hours are: Thursday - Sunday 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Monday - Wednesday By Appointment

School tours may be arranged by calling (312) 421-8020.

The Ukrainian National Museum is located at 2249 West Superior Street in Chicago, IL 60612. The museum has a parking lot and is easily accessible via CTA bus route #66.

(2) Visit the Ukrainian Genocide Famine Foundation – USA Website

www.UkrainianGenocide.com

This recently launched website contains a growing number of witness accounts, a history of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Genocide/Holodomor, a reading list, and recommended websites to assist you with further research.

