

## The Holodomor: Genocidal Industrialization

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The famine in Ukraine from 1932-1933 remains one of the most important events in the history of the Soviet Union. While studied extensively, one of the first things readers will take notice of is the lack of consensus surrounding how the famine is understood. Whether or not the famine is considered a genocide is still contested and debated. Some historians argue that it was the unintended results of Stalin's economic policies.<sup>1</sup> Some claim millions perished due to the mismanagement of agriculture, overinflated procurement targets, and insufficient aid provided by the Soviets.<sup>2</sup> By adhering to the United Nations (UN) definition on genocide, I contend that these interpretations egregiously downplay the harm inflicted on the Ukrainian nation, religion, and culture. To facilitate their new agricultural policy of collectivization which financed their ambitious industrialization goals, the Soviets first attacked the Ukrainian intelligentsia, liquidated the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and arrested, deported, or killed hundreds of thousands of kulaks. Soviet attacks on the Ukrainian intelligentsia, the Church, and the peasants were intentional, pre-emptive strikes against the Ukrainian people to facilitate Stalin's economic policies, but also to minimize the risk of Ukrainian secession. The Holodomor, therefore, was a genocide.

After Stalin consolidated power, he began to transform his vast, populous, but backward, empire into a modern military power with a strong industrial base, and he was largely reliant on exports of grain to finance these plans.<sup>3</sup> In the period between the fall of the Tsarist government and Stalin's First Five-Year Plan, agricultural production in the USSR had drastically fallen, and grain purchased from privately owned farms was too expensive and inefficient for Stalin.<sup>4</sup> The Soviets needed a more efficient way to produce and export large amounts of marketable grain, and collectivization was the solution. Collectivization turned independent and privately run farms into large-scale, state-operated farms, and facilitated the collection of far greater quantities of grain to export.

In November 1929, only 10.4% of the total 5,144,800 Ukrainian households were members of collective farms.<sup>5</sup> Through violent policies that cost many lives, a few months later in March 1930, that number rose to 68.5%.<sup>6</sup> Vigorous campaigns of collectivization and food requisitions incited the peasantry to mass protests, and peasants, especially Ukrainian peasants who were mostly unfamiliar with the Russian *obshchina*, opposed collectivization in any way they could.<sup>7</sup> The Russian *obshchina* was a peasant institution and a form of collective administration for

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<sup>1</sup> R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia, 5: The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture 1931-1933*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 441.

<sup>2</sup> Ihor Stebelsky, "Did Weather Play a Part in the Great Famine of 1932-1933?," in *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, ed. Lubomyr Y. Luciuk and Lisa Grekul, (Kingston: The Kashtan Press, 2008): 14; Davies and Wheatcroft, *Industrialisation of Soviet Russia*, 441.

<sup>3</sup> Roman Serbyn, "Holodomor: The Ukrainian Genocide," *Central and Eastern European Online Library*, no. 1, (2010): 207.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 207.

<sup>5</sup> Serbyn, "Holodomor," 209.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 209.

<sup>7</sup> Stebelsky, "Did Weather Play a Part," 9; Serbyn, "The Ukrainian Famine."

villages and farms, which made decisions for the village as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Farmers slaughtered their animals to prevent them from being confiscated by authorities or used on collective farms. Some refused to work or fled, and Soviet officials were attacked and driven out of villages.<sup>9</sup> Nearly half of the peasant uprisings against collectivization in the USSR occurred in Ukraine alone.<sup>10</sup>

In response to protests and unrest, Stalin initiated a retreat in March 1930. In a *Pravda* article, Stalin placed the blame on local cadres for the excesses and errors in the drive towards collectivization.<sup>11</sup> Stalin pulled back on his policies, allowing some farmers to keep small plots of land to operate as they saw fit, and even some animals were retained. In September 1930, after Stalin's retreat and the pressure was lifted, peasants began to leave collective farms, and only 34.8% of arable land in Ukraine remained as collective farms.<sup>12</sup> When local administrators resisted, conflicts began, and entire districts took up arms. Skirmishes between Soviet authorities and peasant rebels left many dead on both sides. However, by late 1931, through much of the same violence during the previous year, 72% of arable land was back in the collective farm system.<sup>13</sup> While similar policies were undertaken in other areas of the Soviet Union, there seems to have been a particular focus in Ukraine.

Along with collectivization, in January 1930, the Central Committee in Moscow approved a resolution for the 'dekulakization' and the deportation of Ukrainian peasants.<sup>14</sup> Kulaks, or "wealthy" peasants, were peasants who might have been able to employ labour on their farm or owned a certain amount of private land.<sup>15</sup> As they had material interests, they opposed collectivization to the utmost. In the winter and spring of 1930 alone, over 115,000 men, women, and children were deported from Ukraine and were either sent to work camps or to live in inhospitable regions of the Empire.<sup>16</sup> The luckier victims of dekulakization got to remain in their regions, but their land was taken away and placed into collective farms.<sup>17</sup> Dekulakization deprived Ukraine of its most successful farmers, the "custodians of its national culture and spirit," but also of some of their most natural leaders in the event of a conflict with a repressive regime.<sup>18</sup>

With dekulakization and collectivization underway, a "Struggle for Bread" was launched, and forced confiscation of grain from the collective farms began. In 1929, Soviet grain exports amounted to a mere 180,000 tons. The following year however, through collectivization, Soviet grain exports reached 5,832,000 tons.<sup>19</sup> Stalin's

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<sup>8</sup> Alan Kimball, "The Russian Peasant Obshchina in the Political Culture of Great Reforms: A Contribution to Begriffsgeschichte," *Russian History*, 17, no. 3. (1990): 259.

<sup>9</sup> Serbyn, "Holodomor," 210

<sup>10</sup> Hiroaki Kuromiya, "The Great Famine: The Issue of Intentionality," in *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, ed. Lubomyr Y. Luciuk and Lisa Grekul, (Kingston: The Kashtan Press, 2008): 123.

<sup>11</sup> Serbyn, "Holodomor," 210.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 211.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 211.

<sup>14</sup> Serbyn, "The Ukrainian Famine."

<sup>15</sup> Serbyn, "Holodomor," 209.

<sup>16</sup> Serbyn, "The Ukrainian Famine."

<sup>17</sup> Serbyn, "Holodomor," 209.

<sup>18</sup> Serbyn, "Holodomor," 209.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 211.

assurance that collectivization would provide more marketable grain was numerically correct, but the human cost that it would come at would affect millions of Ukrainians for generations.

By 1931, production had fallen mostly due to confrontations between state authorities and agricultural producers.<sup>20</sup> Peasant conditions had not improved, incompetent chairmen of collective farms had little to no experience running large-scale farms, cattle were poorly taken care of and died in large numbers, and thousands of acres were never plowed and were left to rot.<sup>21</sup> In 1931, and 1932, Stalin had overestimated how much grain would be produced, and he imposed grain procurement quotas based on that overestimation.<sup>22</sup> Collectivization, dekulakization, unrealistic grain procurement quotas, and agricultural production in decline made clear that starvation was looming, and by 1931, reserves of grain had already been depleted.<sup>23</sup> Ukrainians were left without enough food, animal feed, and seed material for the following season.

By the end of 1931, famine had broken out in the Ukrainian countryside and by the summer of 1932, hundreds of thousands of peasants were starving to death. Many fled to neighbouring regions, like Byelorussia (now Belarus) in search of food, worsening the situation in Ukraine as any remaining peasants still capable of farming and producing whatever food possible were leaving.<sup>24</sup> Deaths by poisoning after eating rotting animal carcasses rose, and “[c]annibalism became commonplace.<sup>25</sup> As Donald Rayfield notes, we will never know the exact number of deaths as death by starvation is much harder to define than say, a bullet wound.<sup>26</sup> In official reports, deaths from starvation could be easily disguised as disease caused by malnutrition or even suicide.

The harvest in 1932 was even worse than in 1931. Some historians attribute this to adverse weather, but “[t]he variation in time and place of drought in the Soviet Union did not appear to correlate with the famine of 1932-1933.”<sup>27</sup> Weakened by hunger and discouraged by their unsuccessful struggle against collectivization, farmers either refused to, or physically could not, work as they were expected to on collective farms. The Politburo reluctantly cut back in planned collections of grain in early 1933, but it was too little, too late.<sup>28</sup> Quotas were reduced by 1.15 million tons, but more authorities would now be sent to villages, not to help with famine relief, but to enforce grain collection, prevent farmers from stealing grain, and to purge local officials accused of siding with the kulaks.<sup>29</sup> To meet these quotas, chairmen of collective farms and other local authorities were granted privileges to organize and terrorize the peasants.<sup>30</sup> Those who voluntarily gave up their grain risked starvation, peasants who did not have any grain were already starving to death, and peasants who lied and said they had no grain would have their houses searched, which placed them in an even more risky position. As more and more secretaries of grain producing regions were replaced

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 212.

<sup>21</sup> Lemkin, “Soviet Genocide,” 239.

<sup>22</sup> Davies and Wheatcroft, “Industrialisation of Soviet Russia,” 435.

<sup>23</sup> Serbyn, “Holodomor,” 212.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 212.

<sup>25</sup> Lemkin, “Soviet Genocide,” 239.

<sup>26</sup> Donald Rayfield, “The Ukrainian Famine of 1933: Man-Made Catastrophe, Mass Murder, or Genocide?,” in *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, ed. Lubomyr Y. Luciuk and Lisa Grekul, (Kingston: The Kashtan Press, 2008): 89.

<sup>27</sup> Stebelsky, “Did Weather Play a Part,” 14.

<sup>28</sup> Davies and Wheatcroft, “Industrialisation of Soviet Russia,” 440.

<sup>29</sup> Serbyn, “Holodomor,” 218.

<sup>30</sup> Serbyn, “The Ukrainian Famine.”

by incompetent, yet loyal Soviet appointees, through the spring and summer of 1933, millions of Ukrainians starved to death.<sup>31</sup>

Most historians agree that the Holodomor was a man-made catastrophe.<sup>32</sup> Weather did not seem to play a role until after the worst of the famine was already over, and as such, many historians will agree that it was murder.<sup>33</sup> The real debate surrounds the question of genocide. Many genocide-denying historians will claim that the famine was a result of unintended consequences of agricultural policies and rapid industrialization.<sup>34</sup> Their position being that millions starved to death, not because an intentional genocide was directed against the Ukrainian people, but because the grain being collected was necessary to produce the capital for industrialization. However, the national, religious, and cultural aspects of the attack on Ukraine should not be ignored.

Raphael Lemkin's definition of the term "genocide" would later be used to influence the UN definition of genocide under the Genocide Convention.<sup>35</sup> An overwhelming majority of states recognize the Genocide Convention as legitimate international law, therefore, in considering whether the Ukrainian famine was a genocide, I will be using the UN's definition. According to the UN, to constitute a genocide, there must be an intent to destroy "in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."<sup>36</sup>

Lemkin viewed the famine as a multi-pronged attack on Ukraine.<sup>37</sup> First the Soviets attacked the Ukrainian intelligentsia throughout 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>38</sup> Second, religion in Ukraine came under fire, and thirdly, there was an attack on the peasantry in the form of an artificial famine.<sup>39</sup> These should be considered as one overarching attack on the Ukrainian people, not separate incidents. By first attacking the intelligentsia and the religion, it made it easier for Stalin to attack the peasantry.

Lemkin argued that the attacks against the Ukrainian intelligentsia, "the national brain," was an attempt to "paralyze the rest of the body."<sup>40</sup> Beginning in the 1920s, teachers, academics, artists, and political leaders were arrested, deported, or killed.<sup>41</sup> In the fall of 1929, the State Political Directorate (GPU), arrested 700 intellectuals, including former ministers of the Ukrainian national government, and accused them of belonging to a fictitious Ukrainian liberation organization.<sup>42</sup> Of these 700, 45 were placed on a show trial in the spring of 1930 and charged with encouraging secession from the USSR.<sup>43</sup> The infamous show trial of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine was

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 224.

<sup>32</sup> Rayfield, "Man-Made Catastrophe," 90.

<sup>33</sup> Stebelsky, "Did Weather Play a Part," 6; Rayfield, "Man-Made Catastrophe," 90.

<sup>34</sup> Davies and Wheatcroft, "Industrialisation of Soviet Russia," 441.

<sup>35</sup> United Nations General Assembly, "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," (Resolution 260 A (III), 1948).

<sup>36</sup> United Nations General Assembly, "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," (Resolution 260 A (III), 1948).

<sup>37</sup> Lemkin, "Soviet Genocide," 237.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 237.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 237.

<sup>40</sup> Lemkin, "Soviet Genocide," 237.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 237.

<sup>42</sup> Serbyn, "Holodomor," 208.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 208.

an attempt “to terrorize the Ukrainian intelligentsia and prevent it from siding with the peasantry during the regime’s attack on the latter’s way of life.”<sup>44</sup>

Ukrainians, Lemkin argues, due to their history of racial murders, were highly susceptible to Russian threats.<sup>45</sup> To say nothing of the harm experienced by Ukraine under Tsarist regimes, the beginning of Soviet hostility started with the Red Army’s invasion of Ukraine in 1918 and the murders of Ukrainian nationals in Kyiv.<sup>46</sup> Ukraine had overwhelmingly voted in favour of Ukrainian national parties during the 1917-1918 constituent assembly elections, and during the civil war, fought against both Red and White forces.<sup>47</sup> The Ukrainians saw themselves as a separate people, and as such Ukrainian opposition to the Soviets cannot simply be labeled as a socio-economic dispute. By first preventing the intelligentsia – the natural leaders of the nation – from siding with the peasants, collectivization would have been more easily facilitated, and opposition would have been less likely. By deliberately destroying perceived enemies who might or might not have contributed to a Ukrainian nationalist movement would be a direct attack on Ukraine as a nation and therefore would be considered a genocide under the UN’s definition.

Following the attacks on the intelligentsia were attacks on the Ukrainian religion. The GPU forced the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church to proclaim its own liquidation in 1930.<sup>48</sup> Fearing its influence on the Ukrainian national movement, the Soviets declared the Church “a society detrimental to the welfare of the Soviet state, [and] its members were marked down in the Soviet police files as potential enemies of the people.”<sup>49</sup> According to the UN definition of genocide, and as I have argued hitherto, if we are to view the attacks on the religion as a pre-emptive strike before the famine began, then the Holodomor would constitute a genocide.

Dekulakization should be considered as a pre-emptive strike before the famine began, much like the attacks on the intelligentsia and the Church. Serbyn makes a similar argument when he claims that when historians write of “victims of dekulakization,” they are erroneously placing the victims of dekulakization and the victims of the famine into two different categories, implying two separate events.<sup>50</sup> For the Soviets, it was a way to rid themselves of the loudest voices in opposition to collectivization, and in this sense, facilitate the larger goal of rapid industrialization. Ukrainian kulaks in particular presented the strongest opposition, as they not only had material interests, but were unfamiliar and hostile to the Russian *obschchina*.<sup>51</sup> A socio-economic interpretation might argue that the victims of the dekulakization policy were defined by a social and class approach, not a national one. However, only a minority of peasants who died during dekulakization could be considered as belonging to the kulak class.<sup>52</sup>

In a speech Stalin gave to the Executive Committee of the Communist International on March 30, 1925, he states:

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 208.

<sup>45</sup> Lemkin, “Soviet Genocide,” 236.

<sup>46</sup> Serbyn, “Holodomor,” 207.

<sup>47</sup> Kuromiya, “The Great Famine,” 123.

<sup>48</sup> Serbyn, “Holodomor,” 208.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 238.

<sup>50</sup> Serbyn, “The Ukrainian Famine.”

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

But it is also beyond doubt that, after all, the peasant question is the basis, the quintessence, of the national question . . . that there is no powerful national movement without the peasant army, nor can there be. That is what is meant when it is said that, in essence, the national question is a peasant question.<sup>53</sup>

Stalin saw the peasants as an essential element of the national movement. He emphasized the importance of dealing with the peasant question, as “there [could be] no powerful national movement without the peasant army.”<sup>54</sup> It seems as if Stalin was implying that to deal with nationalist movements within the USSR, or Ukrainian nationalism specifically, one must first deal with the peasant question. If one of Stalin’s goals was to put an end to nationalism in Ukraine, we should assume that the starvation of the peasants – a solution to the “peasant question” – was, in his mind, a simple step towards the overarching goal of solving the “national question.” While this speech was made seven years prior to the famine in Ukraine, it should not be taken out of context as an indication of Stalin’s long-term objectives. Serbyn presents a similar argument when addressing the speech, as he writes that “Stalin’s convoluted explanation made one thing clear: [the] peasantry’s potential in constituting a national army had to be reckoned with.”<sup>55</sup> The starvation of Ukrainian peasants was not only an attack on peasants opposing collectivization, but an attack on those who would have formed the body of resistance that might have fought for secession.

A report sent by Genrikh Yagoda, assistant director of the OGPU (formally the GPU) to top Chekists in January 1933 highlights the national, rather than the class or social aspects of their intentions in Ukraine. Asserting that the exodus of peasants from the countryside was organized by counterrevolutionary movements led by supporters of Symon Petliura (Petliurites), Ukraine’s first sovereign president, Yagoda blamed the exodus of peasants, not on the fact that they were starving and searching for food, but that they were motivated by nationalist sentiments.<sup>56</sup> It is hard to believe Yagoda’s assertion that starving peasants fleeing Ukraine would have been driven by politics over the desire to eat for the first time in days. In this particular example, the Soviets were taking actions not against Ukrainian nationalists, but rather Ukrainians who were simply hungry.

On December 14, 1932, Stalin issued the decree “On Grain Procurement in Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and the Western Oblast.” The decree outlined three tasks of importance: first, to solve problems of grain procurement; second, to fight infiltration by counterrevolutionary elements; and third, to curtail Ukrainization.<sup>57</sup> Local authorities were instructed to expel Petliurite and other bourgeois nationalist elements from the party and government and replace them with strictly vetted Bolsheviks.<sup>58</sup> Further, the Ukrainian language came under attack. On December 15, it was banned in local administration, cooperative society, schools, and print media across the entire Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR).<sup>59</sup> This was a direct attack on the Ukrainian national language and culture.

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<sup>53</sup> J. V. Stalin, “Concerning the National Question in Yugoslavia: Speech Delivered in the Yugoslav Commission of the E.C.C.I.,” (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Serbyn, “The Ukrainian Famine.”

<sup>56</sup> Serbyn, “Holodomor,” 225.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>59</sup> Serbyn, “Holodomor,” 222.

For all the reasons already mentioned, Stalin was concerned about the peasants and their opposition to his new economic policies. I have argued that the attacks on the intelligentsia and the Church were pre-emptive strikes to terrorize who would have been Ukraine's natural leaders in a potential nationalist revolt against the Soviets. If the attacks on the intelligentsia and the Church are considered as pre-emptive strikes to prevent any possible opposition to collectivization, then a genocide has been committed, even if the goal was not to destroy the Ukrainians as a people, but to destroy any voice against the Soviet regime. They destroyed, "in whole or in part" Ukrainian "national, ethnical, racial, and religious group[s]" on their way to achieve collectivization.<sup>60</sup> Stalin was concerned with opposition to collectivization, but he was also concerned with Ukrainian nationalism. While the overarching goal might have been rapid industrialization, the Soviets were also able to curtail any hope of Ukrainian independence in the meantime and as such, deal with the "national question".<sup>61</sup> Ukrainians posed a threat to the Soviet regime as the largest ethnic-minority group in the USSR.<sup>62</sup> They had a different language, culture, religion, and way of life. The famine, as well as events leading up to the famine, were carried out both to facilitate Stalin's economic policies, and to quash the threat of Ukrainian secession.

However, if we are to follow the UN's definition of genocide, there must be proven intent, which is by far "the most difficult element to determine."<sup>63</sup> Most scholars will agree that Ukrainian "national, ethnical, racial, and religious group[s]" were in fact destroyed during the famine.<sup>64</sup> Whether the Soviets specifically intended to destroy the Ukrainian nation, ethnicity, and religion, is debatable. While there is no smoking gun in the Soviet archives which points to Stalin's direct intention to commit a genocide against the Ukrainians, I believe there are several compelling examples which, at the very least, hint at Soviet intent to destroy the Ukrainian people.

The legal definition of genocide requires specific intent by the perpetrator to be considered as such. Evidently, dekulakization, the attacks on the intelligentsia, and on the Church were deliberate, and if these are to be considered together with the famine as one attack on the Ukrainian people, then the Holodomor was a genocide. Genocide denying historians, on the other hand, will regard dekulakization and the attacks on the intelligentsia and Church as separate events from the famine. For the sake of addressing this argument, I will attempt to answer the question of intent by focusing solely on the famine itself.

In June 1932, the Ukrainian leadership asked Moscow for 16 to 33 thousand tons of grain and claimed if assistance did not arrive soon the peasants would begin picking unripe grain.<sup>65</sup> Instead, Stalin rejected the calls for help and in a letter to Lazar Kaganovich, Stalin's deputy in the party secretariat, he blamed local mismanagement and "whining" peasants.<sup>66</sup> Denying his own role in the situation facing Ukraine, Stalin reluctantly made minor concessions. However, these concessions were met with even stricter policies to ensure quotas were met in full. Stalin

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<sup>60</sup> United Nations General Assembly, "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," (Resolution 260 A (III), 1948).

<sup>61</sup> J. V. Stalin, "Concerning the National Question in Yugoslavia."

<sup>62</sup> Serbyn, "The Ukrainian Famine."

<sup>63</sup> United Nations General Assembly, "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," (Resolution 260 A (III), 1948).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Serbyn, "Holodomor," 213.

<sup>66</sup> R. W. Davies et al., *The Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence, 1931-36*, (Yale University Press, 2003), 138.

introduced the infamous “Five-Ears-of-Corn” law, which made collective farm property and crops, equivalent to state property; made theft of either punishable by a minimum of ten years imprisonment, and even death; and revoked the right of amnesty for committing these acts.<sup>67</sup> While the law applied to the entire USSR, just four days later Stalin sent another letter to Kaganovich stating that “[t]he most important issue right now is the Ukraine,” implying that he intended to direct the law against Ukraine specifically.<sup>68</sup> The law implemented such harsh punishments, even death, for people who were simply trying to save themselves and their families from imminent starvation.

Later in 1932, Vyacheslav Molotov forced a resolution through the Ukrainian government which consisted of actions to ensure the collection of grain and the repression of all opposition.<sup>69</sup> Collective farms accused of stealing grain or those that did not meet quotas were fined in a meat tax. As was often the case, if the peasants did not have any meat, any other food that could be found would be taken both to feed the industrial workers, but also to punish the peasants for attempting to eat.

Stalin was depending on the agricultural sector to produce the exports needed to finance industrialization, but also to feed his industrial workers. Presumably, he would have needed the agricultural workers – the peasants – just as much as he would have needed the industrial workers. Claiming that actions such as the Five-Ears-of-Corn law and other crackdowns on grain collections were directed at Ukraine is supported by the fact that Stalin made attempts to save Russian peasants, but not Ukrainians. In the spring of 1932, Stalin imported nearly 50 thousand tons of grain for starving Siberian peasants, but as mentioned, a few months later in June, Stalin denied such a request from Ukraine to deliver far less than what was imported for Siberia.<sup>70</sup>

In a letter sent to Kaganovich in June 1932, Stalin wrote that “despite a fairly good harvest, [Ukrainians] have found themselves in a state of impoverishment and famine.”<sup>71</sup> It is unlikely this would have been the earliest Stalin was aware of the situation in Ukraine, but let us assume it is. At this point, hundreds of thousands were already starving, but Stalin did not take preventative measures. In fact, on June 21, a telegram signed by Stalin and Molotov further instructed regions to carry out “at any cost” the plan for grain deliveries.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the harvest in the fall of 1932 was worse as the Soviets were only able to produce and collect 18.5 million tons of grain.<sup>73</sup> Yet, there is evidence to suggest that they still decided to export enough grain to feed six or seven million people in 1932.<sup>74</sup> At this time, it is beyond doubt that the highest levels of Soviet leadership, including Stalin himself, were aware of the situation in Ukraine and still did not take preventative measures like they did in Siberia.

On January 22, 1933, Stalin sent a directive to Ukraine, Byelorussia, and neighbouring regions to prevent the exodus of peasants fleeing Ukraine.<sup>75</sup> All border crossings between Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and the rest of the USSR were ordered closed, and starving peasants trying to flee in search of food were arrested. By March, 225,024

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<sup>67</sup> Serbyn, “Holodomor,” 215.

<sup>68</sup> R. W. Davies et al., *Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence*, 180.

<sup>69</sup> Serbyn, “Holodomor,” 218.

<sup>70</sup> Stebelsky, “Did Weather Play a Part,” 11.

<sup>71</sup> R. W. Davies et al., *Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence*, 138.

<sup>72</sup> Serbyn, “The Ukrainian Famine.”

<sup>73</sup> Serbyn, “Holodomor,” 220.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 220.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 224.

refugees were detained and of these, 196,372 (87%) were sent back home – into regions the OGPU knew had no food – to starve to death.<sup>76</sup> The Soviets seemed to have been equally, or perhaps more concerned with Ukrainian nationalism as they were with opposition to collectivization. Stanislav Kosior, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, stated that “Ukrainian nationalism is our chief danger.”<sup>77</sup> Another Soviet official commented in 1934, that “[s]tarvation in Ukraine was brought about in order to reduce the number of Ukrainians . . . and in this way kill all thought of independence.”<sup>78</sup> What makes this directive even more indicative of the Soviet intent to commit a genocide is the fact that January 22 was the same day that Ukraine had declared independence in 1918, and the same day that the Ukrainian National Republic and the Western Ukrainian National Republic proclaimed their unification.<sup>79</sup> While there is so direct evidence which points to Stalin’s intent to issue the directive on January 22, it is hard to imagine that he was unaware of the significance of the day.

Hiroaki Kuromiya suggests that if the Soviets had stopped all grain exports and released whatever stockpiles they had, they could have saved up to eight million lives, however, financing industrialization and feeding the industrial workers was a higher priority than feeding the Ukrainians.<sup>80</sup> The Holodomor was a genocide to facilitate industrialization, not a murder. The Soviets intentionally attacked the Ukrainian nationality, ethnicity, culture, and religion to facilitate collectivization, and thus industrialization. The ensuing famine caused by rapid collectivization and harsh crackdowns of procurements then provided an opportunity to curtail Ukrainian nationalism, and any hopes of independence.

The Ukrainian famine of 1932-1933 should be recognized as a genocide, but it does not appear that this debate will be ending anytime soon. Competing interpretations, a lack of dependable data, and limited access to Soviet archives all restrain our ability to gain a full understanding of the story. However, the Ukrainian nation, culture, and religion were all deliberately destroyed, “in whole or in part,” and these attacks should be considered as pre-emptive strikes to facilitate collectivization, and through collectivization, rapid industrialization.<sup>81</sup> Stalin was equally, or perhaps more, concerned with Ukrainian nationalism as he was with peasant opposition to collectivization. The famine was the opportunity Stalin was looking for to quash any hopes for independence coming from the largest ethnic minority in the USSR.<sup>82</sup> According to the United Nations definition of genocide, the Holodomor should be considered as such.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 226.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 206.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 206.

<sup>79</sup> David Saunders, “The Starvation of Ukrainians in 1933: By-product or Genocide?,” in *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, ed. Lubomyr Y. Luciuk and Lisa Grekul, (Kingston: The Kashtan Press, 2008): 99.

<sup>80</sup> Kuromiya, “The Great Famine,” 118.

<sup>81</sup> United Nations General Assembly, “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” (Resolution 260 A (III), 1948).

<sup>82</sup> Serbyn, “The Ukrainian Famine.”

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