Chapter 1

HOLODOMOR IN UKRAINE 1932–1933: AN INTERPRETATION OF FACTS[1]

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In November 2008 after protracted battles the Verchovna Rada, the Ukrainian parliament, adopted the 'Law on the Holodomor in Ukraine in 1932–1933', characterising the national tragedy of the Holodomor as an 'act of genocide against the Ukrainian people'. In the course of 2008, Ukraine appealed to the United Nations and requested the recognition of this crime committed by Stalin's regime as an act of genocide under the terms of the United Nations Convention. Scholars were called upon to advance the academic discussion on this issue, and the government appealed to a broader public to intensify educational efforts in order to convince the international community as well as the citizens of their own country, Ukraine, that this assessment of the past is valid.

Having gained her independence only recently, Ukraine has to revisit her own past and free it from the norms of historical interpretations that have been prescribed by the *Short course of the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)* published in 1938. Ignorance of what happened to Ukrainian citizens in the early 1930s is simply unacceptable. Since Khrushchev's secret speech at the 20th Party Congress we have learned many details about what happened in 1937.[2] Forgetting about the events of 1933 means suppressing the citizens of Ukraine, dividing their historical consciousness and creating obstacles for the nation's consolidation.

The Holodomor as an Act of Genocide

Interpretation of the Holodomor has been politically charged from the very beginning. Striving for clarity in this question, members of the Ukrainian diaspora in North America requested the creation of the special commission

in the US Congress for the investigation of the Ukrainian Famine of 1932–33. Due to favourable circumstances and the unanimous support of the Senate and despite the American administration's unwillingness to trouble the already complicated relationship with the Soviet Union any further, a commission was set up in 1986. At the final meeting on 19 April 1988, the commission concluded its work with a report comprising nineteen findings. Among them was the following: Joseph Stalin and his henchmen committed an act of genocide against Ukrainians in 1932–33.[3]

In the same year, 1988, comprehensive research on all aspects of the 1932–33 Famine began in Ukraine. On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Holodomor, the Institute of the History of Ukraine at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences published a survey jointly authored by 30 researchers.[4] The authors presented their book in Moscow in March 2004 on the occasion of a round-table discussion organised by the Institute of Global History at the Russian Academy of Science. It was attended by the best-qualified agrarian historians. In all but one aspect the Russian reviewers agreed with the conclusions of the authors, and summing up the discussion, Viktor Danilov and Ilia Zelenin published an article which concluded: 'If we were to characterise the 1932–33 Holodomor as an "intentional act of genocide against the Ukrainian peasantry", as some historians of Ukraine suggest, this would imply that it was no less a genocide against the Russian peasantry'.[5]

As a matter of fact, the 'Law on the Holodomor' in Ukraine did not achieve any stabilisation in historical interpretation. On the contrary, polemic debates about this tragic period in Ukrainian history intensified within the most heavily politicised parts of society, especially among politicians and political scientists. While accepting the facts (which would have been difficult to deny anyway as millions of Ukrainians undoubtedly died), many discussants rejected the conclusion of genocide.

The 1932–33 Famine in the Light of Historical Research

Discussions on the highly politically charged problem of the Holodomor should avoid emotional interpretations. Furthermore, the task of Ukrainian scholars consists of showing what exactly happened. This is by no means an easy task if we take into consideration that Stalin's most terrible crime was carefully planned and masterfully covered up. All participants should base their historical analysis on a previously agreed terminology. Finally one should make the best possible use of the expertise and experience of Western fellow scholars who approach the problem in a more objective manner.

The author of this chapter published his first scientific study on the Holodomor in 1991.[6] After the meeting with Moscow based scholars in March

2004, it seemed necessary to reinforce the position first taken up in 1991, i.e. the interpretation of the Holodomor as an act of genocide. I have elaborated on my case in two studies published in 2007; the following theses are based on evidence discussed in these books.[7]

It might be helpful to begin at the time when an influential school of interpretation emerged in the West, the school of the so-called 'revisionists'. Their aim was to free the history of the USSR from the critical assessments characteristic of the Cold War era. The revisionists disagreed above all with the prevailing interpretation of the 1932–33 Famine in Ukraine as an act of genocide, an interpretation which was instantly supported in the works of Robert Conquest and James Mace. The revisionists claimed that the grain confiscated from the peasantry was sacrificed for the inviolable cause of industrialisation, and many Russian scholars since have followed this interpretation.

The question remains: was the starvation of hundreds of thousands of people in various regions of the USSR, including Ukraine, triggered by the procurement of grain and its subsequent sale to third countries? And can this policy be considered an act of genocide? We may leave this question to future generations of historians. It is beside the point here. Instead we should concern ourselves with the death of millions of people resulting from the requisition of all edibles under the guise of grain procurement. Up to the last months of 1932 people in Ukraine and in other regions died because their grain was taken away. This led to the death of up to 150,000 peasants in Ukraine during the first half of 1932.[8] From November 1932 onwards, peasants died because they were deprived of other kinds of foodstuffs. At least 3.5 million people died from hunger during the Ukrainian Famine of 1932–33.

Our opponents in the West usually follow certain lines of argumentation to discard the thesis that the Holodomor was an act of genocide. First, they contend that people of different nationalities starved to death in Ukrainian villages. Secondly, they argue that Ukrainians were not persecuted on grounds of their ethnic descent. Thirdly, they ask whether it would be sensible to interpret the Famine as a genocide given the fact that at the same time the Soviet government in 1933 organised large-scale food relief programmes particularly for the populations of Ukraine and the Kuban region.

To differentiate between the victims of different nationalities in Ukrainian villages is not very convincing. It does not provide an answer to the question as to why the number of victims of the Famine was much higher in Soviet Ukraine and in the Kuban region than in other European regions of the USSR in 1933. The answer is fairly simple: this terror was directed against rural regions of Ukraine which were not exclusively inhabited by ethnic Ukrainians.

Whom did Stalin want to annihilate, then? James Mace was among the first to state that Stalin's terror in Ukraine did not target people of a certain

nationality or occupation. According to Mace, it was rather directed against the citizens of a Ukrainian state which had emerged from the ruins of the Russian Empire; a state which had only briefly existed during the Civil War and which had been revived in the 1920s under Soviet auspices. As early as 1983, Mace presented a paper at a conference in Montreal dedicated to the Famine in which he put forward his thesis about the destruction through starvation of a Ukrainian civic nation (as opposed to Ukrainians as an ethnic group).[9]

Our opponents argue that the organisation of genocide through famine is incompatible with the provision of massive food relief. Indeed it is indisputable that such help was organised. Robert Davies' and Stephen Wheatcroft's 2004 study on this problem lists 35 governmental decrees dealing with the provision of food to the starving regions of the USSR. The first of these decrees dates from 7 February 1933, the last from 20 July the same year. In total, food relief amounted to 320,000 tons of grain, of which 264,700 tons were dispatched to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic and to the Kuban region. All other regions together received a total of just 55,300 tons.[10]

This data convinced Robert Conquest that the thesis about a genocidal famine must have been wrong. And indeed, a blurb on Davies' and Wheatcroft's books asserted that their conclusions 'differ from earlier ones by many historians, including Robert Conquest'. Conquest himself had reviewed the manuscript at an early stage and his verdict appeared on the same blurb: 'This is really an outstanding contribution to the research on such an important problem'. In their study, Davies and Wheatcroft quote from a letter which they had received from Conquest after the latter had read the draft. In this letter dated September 2003 Conquest asserted that Stalin did not plan the Famine of 1932–3 intentionally, yet he also 'would not have done anything to prevent the tragedy'.[11]

In the light of new evidence about the relief for the starving peasantry of Ukraine which recent research has unearthed, Conquest's dismissal of his own concept of *terror-famine* (in the subtitle of his own seminal study) seems understandable. Yet we should not rush to conclusions.

Peasants, Nationalities, Republics

In my opinion, genocide can occur in two different variants: in the form of ethnic cleansing and as terror through starvation. The genocides against Armenians or Jews are typical examples of the former. What, then, was the Holodomor? Many patriotic Ukrainians tend to describe the Holodomor as the 'Ukrainian Holocaust'. They have no doubts about the validity of the comparison with this universally acknowledged act of genocide; beyond that

they are convinced that such comparison will further stimulate the recognition of the Holodomor as a tragedy of similar dimensions.

Such a comparison, however, does little to further their ultimate aim. This becomes even more obvious when we examine the reaction of Jewish public intellectuals in Ukraine on a possible recognition by the state of Israel that the Holodomor has been an act of genocide. The chairman of the Association of Jewish organisations and communities, Joseph Zisels, stated that:

> it would be up to Ukrainian and foreign historians to decide first whether this tragedy can in fact be called ethnic cleansing or not. It seems unacceptable to claim unambiguously that in Ukraine one people exterminated another consciously […][12]

Obviously Zisels tends to understand the Holodomor as a case of ethnic cleansing, linking it to the corresponding term of Holocaust. Yet this is not the point. We must understand that an act of ethnic cleansing aims to expel a people from a given territory to make space for another. The Nazis used the term *Lebensraum* and based their *Plan Ost* on similar deliberations: its purpose was the elimination of the indigenous populations in a large territory in Eastern Europe up to Crimea for the sake of the creation of *Großdeutschland*.

One could indeed list some evidence that could support the theory of ethnic cleansing in the case of Ukraine, too. Upon arrival in Rostov on the Don on 1 November 1932, Lazar Kaganovich for example addressed the Bureau of the North Caucasian District Committee of the Russian Communist Party[13] and recommended punitive actions against those who did not deliver their quotas during grain procurement. Kaganovich mentioned the possibility of a resettlement of these peasants in the northern territories of the Soviet Union. During a meeting in the Cossack village of Medvedovskaia he openly threatened: 'We will resettle all those to the North who refuse to sow now!' Indeed, during November 1932 more than 60,000 peasants and Cossacks were deported from the Kuban.[14] An All-Union Resettlement Committee was created 15 August 1933. By the end of that year 117,000 collective farmers from Russia and Belorussia were resettled in Ukrainian villages of which the population had vanished during the Famine.[15]

The evidence quoted above does not display one coherent picture. In his study of the different forms of political repression applied by the Kremlin, Ivan Lusiak-Rudnitskyi came to the conclusion that 'Stalin's policy in relation to Ukraine amounted to a massive attempt to break the defiance of the Ukrainian people by the use of physical force. Therefore, it makes obviously no sense to talk about a total extermination of Ukrainians'.[16] This is a position one could agree with. It makes sense to look upon the punitive measure against the

Ukrainian peasantry as a form of terror through hunger rather than as an act of ethnic cleansing. Still, this form of terror corresponds to the norms of the UN Convention on genocide as well. The Convention defines a total or partial annihilation of a human group as genocide. And any form of terror suggests the extermination of a part of a population as a means to terrify the whole entity.

The Kremlin withdrew all foodstuffs from the already starving Ukrainian villages in order to counteract any social unrest. Since an individual deprived of the hope of finding food could hardly be expected to take an active part in protests, the aim was to make starvation as severe as possible. It should be remembered that starvation as a means of terror was first applied in Ukraine as early as 1921, with the aim of crushing the so called 'banditism of kulaks'. At that time such terror occurred in the form of the requisition of foods stocked in the already starving southern provinces. The Famine itself had then been a result of natural circumstances.

Using starvation as a weapon against the Ukrainian peasantry, Stalin at the same time ordered those who were willing and able to participate in agricultural campaigns to be fed through the collective farms. The bulk of food aid sent to Ukraine and the North Caucasus during the first half of 1933 was used first and foremost for this purpose.

Yet another terminological clash complicates an understanding of the core problems of the Holodomor. Basing his interpretation on the evidence of emigrated former Ukrainian citizens, Robert Conquest stated in *Harvest of Sorrow* that this form of terror had been directed against Ukrainians[17]. In a review of this book published in one of the subsequent editions of his *Economic History of the USSR*, Alec Nove insisted that, on the contrary, Stalin's blow had been directed against the peasantry, among which happened to be many Ukrainians, rather than against the Ukrainians, among whom there were many peasants.[18]

Since then scholars have debated whether Stalin annihilated Ukrainians or peasants. But can the question be put as plainly as this? After all it is difficult to imagine that Soviet power persecuted individuals solely on the grounds that they were Ukrainian. Yet it is likewise difficult to imagine that a person could be killed only because he or she belonged to the peasantry. Indeed, the Holodomor of 1932–33 emerged from a specific conjunction of circumstances in place and time. Any attempt at understanding the logic in the Kremlin's activities requires a thorough examination of the intersection between socio-economic and nationalities policies.

A Crisis of Soviet Socio-economic and Nationalities Policies

During the upheavals of 1918–20 the Bolsheviks successfully built up the foundations of a command economy. From 1929 onwards Stalin embarked on

a new assault on the peasantry with the aim of executing what Lenin had not achieved earlier: locking up millions of small-scale producers in communes. During the first quarter of 1930 this resulted in massive social unrest. Stalin had to retreat and ordered a temporary halt in the collectivisation campaign.[19] During the next half year the idea of communes was given up and collectivisation was limited to the creation of the less binding *artel*.[20]

It would seem that the history of collectivisation has been fairly well studied. Yet the publication of new documents in five volumes edited by Victor Danilov under the title *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni* (The tragedy of the Soviet village, 1999–2006) substantially altered our understanding. It turned out, for example, that between 1930 and 1932 the Soviet state did not differentiate between state farms (*sovkhozy*) and collective farms (*kolkhozy*): everything produced in the joint economy of collective farms was taken away. While the workers of a state farm (peasants like the *kolkhozniki*) were given a kind of salary, the collective farmers had to content themselves with what they grew on their remaining household plots.

We know that the concept of a workday unit was developed precisely during these three years. The same period witnessed the campaigns against egalitarianism in salaries and discussions on economic and organisational measures to strengthen the collective farms. Still, the law on grain procurement passed in April 1930 had prescribed the amount of grain a collective farmer had to deliver to the state: between a quarter and a third of the total harvest. The larger part of the harvest ought to have been distributed among the farmers according to the amount of workday units they had laboured.[21]

It should have been distributed, but actually it was not. In the wake of the deep global economic crisis between 1929 and 1933 prices for industrial equipment fell worldwide and the Soviet foreign trade organisations bought up what was available at very advantageous prices. Prices for agricultural products, however, declined even more steeply. As nobody was willing to grant long-term loans to the Soviet Union as long as the Tsars' foreign debts were not acknowledged, it became necessary to sell more and more grain to earn foreign currency and to earmark it for the payment of imported machinery. Grain procurement plans grew out of proportion. In the attempt to raise the quantity of grain available for export, the state stripped the collective farms completely of their harvests.

When it became clear that the state would take away all the grain anyway, the peasants displayed little inclination to work seriously for the common good. Nobody bothered to do anything about the weeds that were growing and reducing the amount of grain to be harvested. The peasants started too late to reap the harvest, and the grains were already falling from the stalks. More grain was lost during transportation. On the threshing floor the peasants

left a good amount of grain on the stalk, because the only part they could expect to keep was what was left in the straw.

Thus the loss of grain resulted from a lack of material incentives to the collective farmers. But to the Kremlin the catastrophic decline of grain procurement seemed to be explicable only through organised sabotage, or the hiding and pilfering of grain by the peasants themselves. On 7 August 1932 Stalin personally signed a decree of the Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR and the USSR's Council of People's Commissars 'On the protection of the property of state enterprises, *kolkhozes* and cooperatives, and strengthening of the public (socialist) property'. Theft of collective property was threatened with execution, or with imprisonment for no less than ten years in cases with 'mitigating circumstances'.

Despite the measurements taken, the economic crises in the Soviet Union deepened. The Kremlin was forced to cut back sharply on the military budget and on expenses for industrial capacity building. It was the activity of extraordinary procurement commissions, dispatched hastily to the main grain producing regions (Ukraine, North Caucasus and the Volga region) in autumn 1932, which actually caused the Famine. Starvation also occurred in the non-black soil regions; here it was the result of the discontinuation of centralized supply in the wake of the grain shortage.

The state propaganda machine presented these 'food difficulties' as a consequence of the sabotage conducted by kulaks in collective farms. Beyond terror measures, which due to specific reasons were directed primarily against two districts in Ukraine, the Kremlin also resorted to economic measures in its efforts to restore order. The pace of industrialisation was significantly slowed down, and the stocking of food reserves was brought to a halt.

On 19 January 1933 the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party passed a joint resolution 'On obligatory grain deliveries to the state by collective farms and individual economies'. Can we expect that a single decree could have fundamentally changed the relations between the agricultural producers and the state, holding the 'commanding heights' in the economy? Indeed, we can. The decisions of the tenth Party Congress to replace the system of food confiscation by taxation had been the basis of the New Economic Policies of the 1920s. The 19 January 1933 decree determined that the state could only claim a clearly defined amount of the collective farm's production as natural taxes, and that these amounts would have to be defined at the outset of the agricultural production cycle. The principle of taxation in kind implied that the total amount of grain produced on a collective farm belonged exclusively to the collective farmers, after they settled tax duties with the state in the form of grain deliveries. In that sense the state finally acknowledged collective farmers' ownership over the

grain they produced. After this decree, the collectivised agricultural economy acquired the basic outline that characterised it until very recently.

However, it remains to be seen why Stalin, in order to overcome the crisis of 1932, did not content himself with the implementation of this fully rational policy, but supplemented it with terror inflicted on some regions in Ukraine. The problem indeed does not consist solely of the terror through famine directed against the Ukrainian peasantry. The Communist Party of Ukraine, with its membership of half a million, stood in fact at the epicentre of Stalinist repressions. In the years to follow, its strength was diminished by almost 50 per cent, and its leading circles were almost completely wiped out in 1937. By the same token the regime began to prosecute the Ukrainian intelligentsia which had played a leading role in the struggle for national liberation in the years between 1917 and 1920.

The regime directed the most severe forms of repression against the peasantry, but this should not be understood as an attempt to wipe out a social class without national implications. Stalin perfectly understood that the peasantry constituted the backbone of any nation. 'The national question is *in essence* a peasant question', he had stated already in March 1925.[22]

Stalin's letter to Kaganovich dated 11 August 1932 became known to the broader public only in 2000 and has been quoted frequently since. Alarmed by the situation in Ukraine the general secretary deliberated an unusual casting of cadres: he intended to appoint Kaganovich as general secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian party while retaining his position as a secretary of Central Committee of the Russian party. Likewise he thought of attaching the vice-chairman of the Unified State Political Administration (OGPU), the political police, to this mission to Ukraine, also under the provision that Balitskii could keep his former rank. Summing up his view on the situation in Ukraine and on the plan of cadre exchanges, Stalin wrote: 'Without these and similar measures (the economic and political strengthening of Ukraine, above all its border districts, etc.), I repeat, we may lose Ukraine'.[23]

Meanwhile, we also know of the OGPU reports sent back to the Kremlin. The situation was critical everywhere, but to Stalin it seemed to be nowhere as critical as in Ukraine. Here was a national republic with a massive economic and human potential, bordering on Europe. Stalin had not forgotten that between 1917 and 1919 Ukraine had to be conquered three times. He had not forgotten that in early 1920 the fourth All-Ukrainian party conference had refused to vote for a list of candidates recommended by Lenin for the Central Committee. The Ukrainians had elected their own leaders instead. He remembered of course that during the first months of 1930 he had been forced to stop collectivisation because of the social upheavals in Ukrainian territories on the right bank of the Dnieper. But how realistic was the danger of losing Ukraine, in his own words, 'as soon as things start getting worse?'[24]

Our Western colleagues tend to underestimate the national backdrop of the crisis that evolved in the early 1930s. In the starving Ukrainian peasant they frequently see just a peasant, not a citizen of the Ukrainian Soviet state. They treat the Soviet Union as a union of republics created by the so-called 'titular' (ethnic) nations, deprived of any substantial rights. The USSR, however, took on this shape only after the 1932–33 Famine and the terror of 1937 and 1938. Earlier the Soviet Union had been a real confederation of states.

Soviet statehood is a difficult concept both in its primary, i.e. Russian dimension, and in its secondary dimension as a state of many nations. Subject to the dictatorship of the leaders in the Kremlin, the Soviets embodied executive power. Through this power the Party of the Bolsheviks transformed into something like a state structure. Russia remained a state within the Soviet state and the all-Union centre eluded any amalgamation with it: that would have contravened the constitution. At the same time, it prevented the emergence of a competing Russian authority in Moscow.

Regarding the transfer of statehood from the Kremlin to the national republics (among others the RSFSR), which particular risks did the twofold construction of the Soviet state entail? We may distinguish primary and secondary risks: The secondary risk consisted of potential discontent of political functionaries in the republics with the developments in the centre, and their readiness to dissent openly when circumstances would allow for it. For this reason the entire *politburo* of the Ukrainian Communist Party vanished in the repressions, and with them tens of thousands of functionaries and members of the national intelligentsia.

But the primary risk resulted from the particular construction of the vertical authority created by the Kremlin to its own advantage. Soviets, among them also the Soviets in the national republics, held the real executive power in their hands and linked the party with the state apparatus. As long as the Kremlin had full control over these institutions there was no danger of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. If this control were to shift to the regional structures of the party, for example in case of a crisis in the centre, then this threat would become very real indeed. On the grounds of its strong national (non-Soviet) inclination towards traditions of statehood, the Kremlin judged Ukraine to pose the greatest risk.

After the creation of the USSR, the Kremlin embarked on an affirmative nationalities policy (*korenizatsiia*) in the republics, a course of action aimed at a firm anchoring of Soviet power in the non-Russian environment. In Ukraine, *korenizatsiia* quickly transcended the scope of a bureaucratic campaign and turned into an instrument of national revival. At *politburo* meetings on the all-Union level, Ukrainian leaders steadfastly raised the question of incorporation of those RSFSR territories which contained ethnic Ukrainian majorities into

the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, pointing at the results of the 1926 all-Union census. Among these territories was the Kuban district. If these petitions were not successful, the Ukrainian leadership managed at least to obtain concessions in the form of the Kremlin's consent to an Ukrainisation of regions outside of the republic where Ukrainians formed a majority. Within a short period of time, Ukrainian became the language of administration, education and mass media in such regions. The Kremlin observed these achievements with growing distrust. A thoroughly 'ukrainised' Kuban would have to be attached to the Ukrainian SSR and would additionally strengthen the human potential of Ukraine within the USSR.

Hence in the second half of 1932 two crises overlapped – the crisis of the Kremlin's socio-economical policies and that of its nationalities policy. As contemporary documents show, Stalin feared above all the outbreak of social unrest in starving Ukraine. The repressions started soon after, and were directed against the Ukrainian peasantry (in the form of terror through famine) as well as against Ukrainian intelligentsia (in the form of individual terror on a massive scale plus the purging of party cells). Supposedly, these repressions were not aimed at members of a particular nationality, but against all citizens of the Ukrainian republic. However, obviously the majority of these citizens were at the same time Ukrainians. Even after having forced it into the strait jacket of the Soviet republic, the Kremlin continued to consider the sheer existence of a Ukrainian citizenry as a menace.

Can Intentionality be Documented?

Every time we state that the government brought the peasantry to complete dependence through the requisition of their food supplies, we are told to produce documentary evidence. No document – no genocide. People who have lived through the Holodomor describe the activities of special brigades that searched peasant households and took away all provisions. Tens, hundreds, thousands of witness reports from different villages add up to a coherent picture. If this is true, there can be just one possible conclusion: these brigades were ordered to confiscate food even if this order was not issued in written form. Nonetheless, we are still asked to produce a written document!

In fact it is possible to present a written document that is relevant to this issue. In November 1932 Stalin sent out extraordinary grain procurement commissions, one headed by Molotov to the Ukrainian SSR and another one under Kaganovich to the Kuban. Following Stalin's instructions, Molotov drafted two decrees, one in the name of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party, dated 18 November, and one in the name of the Council of People's Commissars of Ukraine, dated 20 November 1932. Both bore

the identical title 'On measures for the improvement of grain procurement'. The final text, approved by Stalin, listed among other points the possibility of punishing peasants through 'fines to be paid in meat or potatoes'.[25]

Taking advantage of the situation emerging in the wake of terrorist action committed by these commissions, the *politburo* of the Russian Communist Party in late 1932 declared the Ukrainisation of the North Caucasus as 'being in the spirit of Petliura'.[26] A joint resolution of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party and the Council of Peoples' Commissars of the USSR from 14 December 1932 demanded in the form of an ultimatum that all paperwork of Soviet and cooperative organs, all newspapers and journals in the 'Ukrainianised' regions of the North Caucasus should immediately switch from the Ukrainian to the Russian language, as the latter would be more comprehensible to the population of the Kuban district. Russian should also replace Ukrainian as the language of instruction in schools from the beginning of the next school year.[27]

On 1 January 1933 Stalin sent a telegram to Khar'kiv demanding the delivery of grain. He suggested that the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party and the Council of Peoples' Commissars should inform, via their village councils, the *kolkhozes*, *kolkhoz* workers and individually operating farmers that:

a. those who voluntarily hand over to the State grain previously stolen and hidden from inventory shall not be repressed;
b. in the case of *kolkhoz* workers, *kolkhozes* and individual farmers who stubbornly persist in keeping grain previously stolen and hidden from inventory, the most severe measures of punishment set out in the Resolution of the Central Executive Committee and Sovnarkom of the USSR from 7 August 1932 'On the protection of property of State enterprises, *kolkhozes* and cooperatives, and the consolidation of socialist property' are to be applied.[28]

This telegram, containing nothing more that the two quoted items, is disconcerting. In the first place, Stalin had never before issued threats against the peasantry of any particular union republic. Moreover, he knew that there was no grain left in Ukraine, since the investigations conducted by the secret police in December had yielded only modest results. The message of the document becomes instantly clear without further explanations if we juxtapose both points: The second point seemingly addressed those who had ignored the first one and who had not delivered grain. But how would you find out who had not delivered hoarded grain? Only by searches! Hence Stalin's telegram was the signal to start those searches.

Those who survived the Holodomor report that during these searches not only potatoes and meat were taken, as laid out in the decree on fines 'to be paid in kind', but all edible products. In this sense, the telegram unmistakably identifies the individual who gave the signal for the requisition of food provisions, as the one who ordered the terror through famine.

Stalin's behaviour has to be analysed in its larger context. At the joint meeting of the *politburo* and *presidium* of the Central Control Commission of the Russian party on 27 November 1932 Stalin had linked the failure of grain procurement not to the methods of forced requisitions[29] but to wrecking and sabotage in collective and state farms. 'Given the fact that collective farms are a socialist form of production', the general secretary declared, 'it would be unwise if communists were not to answer this blow inflicted by some of the collective farmers and collective farms with a devastating counter blow'.[30]

Deflection from the responsibility for the economic collapse which had led to a nationwide famine was the primary reason for the Stalinist leadership's decision to revert to terrorist action. A 'devastating blow' was directed against the largest republic, the one which bordered on Europe, the one which could possibly have used the crisis in the centre ('as soon as things get worse') to put its constitutional right of separation from the USSR into practice.

Stalin, however, was not content with the confiscation of food. On 22 January 1933, he personally drafted a letter (his signature is preserved on the left margin of the document) which opened with the following lines: 'The Central Committee of the Russian Party and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR have gathered evidence according to which large numbers of peasants left the Kuban and Ukraine for the Central Black Earth and Volga regions, Moscow, Belorussia and the Western provinces in the search of grain'. The Kremlin demanded that heads of the neighbouring territories should close the borders to the Ukrainian Soviet republic and the Kuban district.[31]'

To the survivors of the Holodomor it seemed as if the authorities applied ethnic criteria to determine which parts of the population would fall prey to starvation. The reality was more complex, though. The authorities simultaneously killed and rescued Ukrainian peasants. Pavel Postyshev, who arrived in Ukraine provided with dictatorial authority in January 1933, had been assigned two major tasks: he was to organise the spring sowing and he carried orders 'to liquidate the nationalist inclinations' within the party and Soviet organs in Ukraine. In February he released the food reserves stocked in the Ukrainian SSR in order to feed the starving population. At the same time Postyshev began tightening his grip on the Ukrainian Communist Party and non-party intelligentsia. After the Holodomor and the mass repressions of 1937 and 1938, Ukraine lost its potential for resistance. It goes without saying

that this does not apply to the western districts which were incorporated into the USSR in 1939.

The politicians who threw Ukraine into the torment of terrifying repression are no longer alive. Nor does the totalitarian state whose leaders bear responsibility for the Holodomor any longer exist. We should be calm and collected when we revisit the difficult periods of our common past. Yet from the international community we expect the recognition that this crime was indeed an act of genocide. First and foremost we expect this from the Russian Federation, whose population likewise suffered the loss of many millions of lives in the years of Stalin's dictatorial rule.

Notes and References

1 This chapter is a revised and translated version of a brochure originally published in Russian. S. Kul'chitskii, *Ukrainiskii golodomor 1932–1933 gg.: Interpretatsiia faktov* (Kiev: National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Institute of Ukrainian History, 2008).
2 The author alludes to the Great Terror of the second half of the 1930s here [translator's note].
3 Cf. the executive summary of the Report to Congress Commission on the Ukrainian Famine. Adopted by the Commission, April 19, 1988, Submitted to Congress, 22 April 1988. United States Government Printing Office: Washington, DC, 1988.
4 *Golod 1932–33 rokiv Ukrainy: prychyny ta naslidky* (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 2003).
5 V. P. Danilov, I. E. Zelenin, 'Organizirovannyi golod. K 70-letiiu obshchekrestianskoi tragedii', *Otechestvennaia istoriia* 5 (2004): 109.
6 S. V. Kul'chyts'kyi, *Tsina 'velikogo perelomu'* (Kiev: Vydavnytstvo Ukraina, 1991).
7 S. V. Kul'chitskii, *Pochemu O.N.NAS unichtozhal? Stalin i ukrainskii Golodomor* (Kiev: Ukrainiskaia press-gruppa, 2007); S. V. Kul'chyts'kyi, *Holodomor 1932–1933 iak henotsyd: trudnoshchi usvidomlennia* (Kiev: Nash chas, 2008).
8 Kul'chyts'kyi, *Tsina*, 356.
9 'To destroy them as a political factor and a social organism', see James E. Mace, 'The Famine of 1933: A Survey of the Sources', in Roman Serbyn and Bogdan Krawchenko (eds), *The Famine in Ukraine 1932–1933* (Edmonton: CIUS, 1986), 12.
10 Robert W. Davies, Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 481–4.
11 Ibid., 441.
12 Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi, 'Treba vidmovliatysia vid poniattia "Ukrains' kyigolokost"' *Forum Natsii*, 11 (2007).
13 Since 1918 the official denomination of the all-Union party was 'Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)' [translator's note].
14 S. Kul'chyts'kyi, *Holodomor 1932–1933 rr. iak henotsyd*, 291–2.
15 *Kollektyvizatsiia i holod na Ukraini 1929–1933. Zbirnik dokumentiv i materialiv* (Kiev: Naukova Dumka, 1992), 642.
16 Ivan Lusiak-Rudnits'kyi, *Istorychni ese*, vol. 2 (Kiev: Osnovy, 1994), 297.
17 Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow. Soviet Collectivisation and the Terror Famine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 4.
18 Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.*, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), 170.

19 Cf. Stalin's infamous *Pravda* header: 'Dizzy from Success', 2 March 1930, in Stalin, *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1955), 12:197–205 [translator's note].
20 Stalin stated in the same article: 'In the *agricultural artel*, the basic means of production, primarily for grain-farming – labour, use of the land, machines and other implements, draught animals and farm buildings – are socialised. In the *artel*, the household plots (small vegetable gardens, small orchards) the dwelling houses, a part of the dairy cattle, small livestock, poultry, etc., are *not socialised*. They would have been in a commune' [translator's note].
21 Viktor P. Danilov (ed.), *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni: kollektivizatsiia I raskulachivanie; dokumenty i materialy v 5 tomach; 1927–1939, Vol. 2: Noiabr' 1929–dekabr' 1930*. (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2000), 383–4.
22 Stalin, *Works*, 1925 (Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1954), 7:71. Italics added by author, Stanislav V. Kulchytskyi.
23 *The Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence 1931–1936* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 179–81. See also Marples' and Bruski's chapters for extensive quotes from this document.
24 Ibid.
25 Ruslan Pyrih et al. (eds), *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraini: Ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv* (Kiev: Institut istorii partii, 1990), 254, 257.
26 Symon Petliura (1879–1926) headed one of the independent national Ukrainian governments during the Civil War (1918–1920) [translator's note].
27 Pyrih, *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv*, 293–4.
28 Ibid., 308.
29 A policy which was nonetheless abandoned in January 1933 and replaced with the introduction of natural taxation in kind which was to define the relation between state and collective farms in the future.
30 *Tragediia Sovetskoi derevni*, vol. 3 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2001), 559.
31 Ibid., 635–6.