VATNIK SOUP / HISTORICAL MEMORY DOSSIER / NO. 1

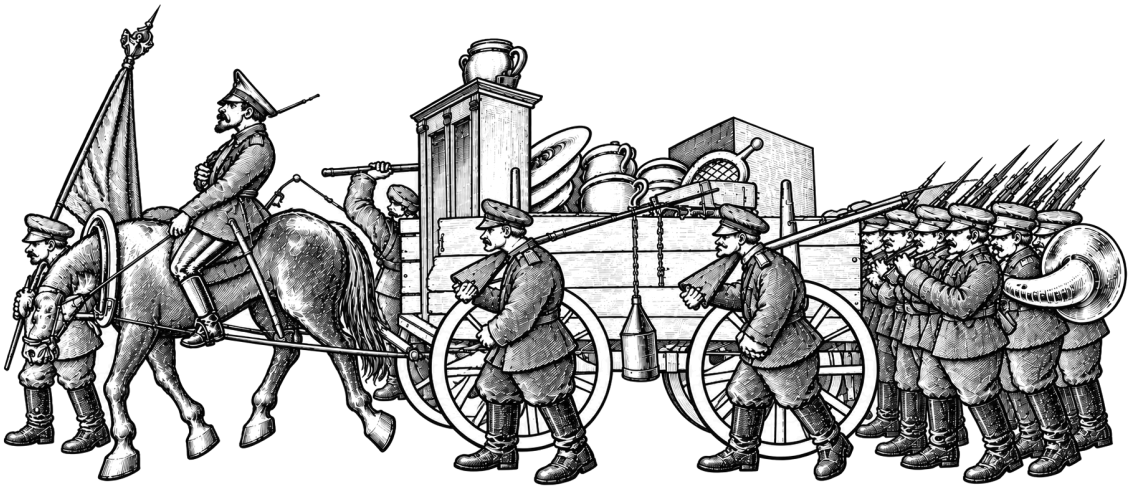
The Holodomor Genocide

Starvation and the Erasure of a Nation

Historical Memory Dossier by Vatnik Soup

November 2026





VATNIK SOUP

HISTORICAL MEMORY DOSSIER

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Introduction

Today, 28 November 2026, Ukraine marks Holodomor Remembrance Day, honouring the victims of the famine of 1932–33.

On Wednesday 30 November 2022, four days after that year's Holodomor Remembrance Day, the Russian Foreign Ministry's official account circulated remarks by Maria Zakharova claiming that the famine's main cause was "an extremely bad harvest" and denying that it had been intended to suppress Ukrainian national identity. On Saturday 25 November 2023, that year's remembrance day,[1] the Russian Embassy in Washington rejected as a "false thesis" the claim that Soviet leaders deliberately starved millions of Ukrainians. It attributed the catastrophe to crop failure and shortages, presenting it as a shared Soviet tragedy. The same statement disputed connections with Russia's war and rejected accusations concerning Ukrainian agriculture and global food security.

More recently, on 17 March 2026, the Russian MFA's official channel circulated a passage describing a "fabricated Holodomor". The passage came from Dmitry Medvedev's article of 24 December 2025 and appeared in a post portraying Ukrainian nationalism as a Western instrument and connecting that account to present Western support for Ukraine. Acknowledging the famine while denying that it deliberately targeted Ukrainians as a nation is one form of Holodomor denial; claiming that the Holodomor itself was fabricated goes further.

Denial has also taken physical form. Occupation authorities dismantled the Holodomor memorial in Mariupol on 19 October 2022. In occupied Luhansk, they destroyed the monuments to Holodomor victims and victims of Stalinist repression on 17 July 2024.

Why does Russia's diplomatic service still contest the destruction inflicted under Stalin more than ninety years ago? Why can Russian occupiers not tolerate memorials to the victims of Stalinist terror, when millions of Russians were also its victims? These questions concern responsibility for mass death, Ukraine's right to interpret its own past, and the relationship between control of food and control of national life.

[1] Ukraine observes Holodomor Remembrance Day each year on the fourth Saturday of November, under Presidential Decree No. 1310/98 of 26 November 1998. In 2022 it fell on Saturday 26 November; in 2023, on Saturday 25 November.

Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014[2], the war in the Donbas and the full-scale invasion of February 2022 make these questions immediate. Grain has become part of the struggle: appropriation from occupied territory, attacks on production and ports, and restrictions on export routes. In February 2025, the EU's sanctions framework explicitly included vessels transporting stolen Ukrainian grain. UN monitors continued documenting attacks on port infrastructure in March 2026.

On 17 June 2022, Margarita Simonyan, RT's editor-in-chief, told Putin with a broad smile of a "very cynical joke": "Вся надежда на голод" — "All our hope rests on famine". She hoped that a new famine would pressure the West to lift sanctions and befriend Russia.

This Dossier establishes the facts of the Holodomor, examines the evidence of genocidal intent, places it within the wider assault on Ukrainian nationhood, and returns to the present conflict over history and food.



"Bitter Memory of Childhood", a sculpture commemorating children killed in the Holodomor, at the Holodomor memorial in Kyiv, 23 November 2019.

[2] See Vatnik Soup, *Crimea: A Ukrainian Destiny*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming.

1. The Facts

1.1 The Holodomor in Context

The Holodomor devastated Soviet Ukraine in 1932–33. Millions died as coercive procurement, food confiscation and restrictions on escape deprived households of the means to survive. A demographic reconstruction published in 2015 estimates 3.9 million excess deaths in Soviet Ukraine over 1932–34, with almost nine tenths occurring in 1933. This count excludes lost births and deaths in other Soviet republics. The destruction reached beyond those who died: families lost children, parents, livelihoods and the communities on which everyday life depended. Its scale places the Holodomor among the twentieth century's greatest catastrophes, while the policies and people behind that destruction require examination in their own right.

Dates	Event	Scope and population base	Death toll	Share of initial population	Main type
1958–62[3]	Great Leap Forward famine[4]	China (~647m, 1958)	≈36 million	~5.6%	Famine; coercive policy
1928–30	Famine	Five northern Chinese provinces (~113m, 1923[5])	≈10 million	~9%	Famine
1933–45	Holocaust	European Jews (~9.5m, 1933)	≈6 million	~63%	Genocide
1921–22	Famine	Famine zone in southern Russia and Ukraine (~33–37m, 1921)	≈5.2 million	~14–16%	Famine; requisitions, drought, war aftermath
1934–37	Famine	Sichuan, China (~50–70m, c. 1934)	≈5 million	~7–10%	Famine

[3] Twenty selected twentieth-century famines, genocides, democides and cases of mass mortality in detention, ordered by the cited estimate (range midpoint where applicable). Sources combine Rummel's tables and the World Peace Foundation's famine compilation with specialist estimates linked in the rows. Overall war and civil-war casualty totals, standalone epidemics and natural disasters are excluded; wartime famines and targeted killings remain eligible. Categories can overlap, and inclusion of a famine does not presume intent. The selection is not exhaustive. Approximate percentages relate cumulative deaths to the population at the event's outset, using the stated opening-year estimate or nearest clearly dated pre-event benchmark. They are not annual mortality rates. For the Gulag and Soviet POWs the denominator is all Soviet residents. Chinese regional baselines are historical provincial estimates; the Sichuan and Cambodian ranges reflect uncertainty in their populations. Unrounded research totals are used where available. A minimum death toll also implies a minimum share. The Asharshylyq row gives both ethnic Kazakh losses relative to the Kazakh population and total losses relative to all residents of Soviet Kazakhstan; the Kazakh deaths are included in the overall toll.

[4] For a fuller discussion of Mao's famine, see Vatnik Soup, *The Great Leap Backwards: China's Maoist regime, then and now*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming.

[5] H. G. W. Woodhead (ed.), *The China Year Book 1926–7*, p. 3.

Dates	Event	Scope and population base	Death toll	Share of initial population	Main type
1937–45	Wartime famines	Henan, Hebei and Shandong, China (~99m, c. 1937)	≈5 million	~5%	Famine
1949–53	Land reform killings	China (~542m, 1949)	4.5 million[6]	~0.8%	Democide
1941–44	Nazi starvation policies	Soviet territories occupied during the war (~88m, 1941)	≈4.1 million	~5%	Famine / genocide
1918–20	Famine in northern Russia	Territory later forming the USSR, all residents (~142m, 1917)	≈4 million	~3%	Famine
1932–34	Holodomor	Soviet Ukraine (~31.4m, 1932)	≈3.9 million[7]	~12.6%	Famine / genocide
1941–45	Nazi murder of Soviet POWs	USSR, all residents (~197m, 1941[8])	≈3.3 million	~1.7%	Democide; includes starvation
1942–44	Famine	Undivided Bengal, British India (~60.3m, 1941)	≈3 million	~5%	Famine; wartime policy and food access
1942–45	Famine	Java, Japanese-occupied Indonesia (~50.5m, 1942)	≈1.8 million	~3.6%	Famine
1939–45	Nazi murder of non-Jewish Polish civilians	Non-Jewish population of prewar Poland (~32m, 1939)	≈1.8 million	~6%	Democide
1975–79	Khmer Rouge rule	Cambodia (~7.3–7.9m, 1975)	1.5–2 million	~19–27%	Democide; includes genocide

[6] Estimates from R. J. Rummel.

[7] The Holodomor estimate counts excess deaths in Soviet Ukraine over 1932–34, excluding lost births and other regions. The Holocaust estimate concerns Jewish victims; the Soviet POW and non-Jewish Polish estimates concern separate victim groups. Cambodia's total includes deaths beyond the groups covered by genocide findings. The figures describe different populations and overlapping events and cannot be added together.

[8] Ю. А. Поляков (ред.), *Население России в XX веке, том 2: 1940–1959* (2001), pp. 12–13.

Dates	Event	Scope and population base	Death toll	Share of initial population	Main type
1964–75	Political killings around the Cultural Revolution	China (~692m, 1964)	1.613 million[9]	~0.2%	Democide
1930–53	Gulag: Stalin-era camps and colonies[10]	USSR, all residents (~157m, 1930)	≥1.6 million[11]	~1%	Mass mortality in detention
1930–33	Asharshylyq	Ethnic Kazakhs; all residents of Soviet Kazakhstan	≈1.3m Kazakhs; ≈1.5m total	>⅓ of Kazakhs; ~25% of all residents	Famine; forced collectivisation; genocide
1971	Mass killing	East Pakistan / Bangladesh (~72.3m, 1971)	1.5 million[12]	~2.1%	Genocide / democide
1974	Famine	Bangladesh (~76.2m, 1974)	≈1.5 million	~2%	Famine

1.1.1 The Holodomor, Asharshylyq, the Hunger Plan and the Holocaust

Holodomor (Ukrainian **Голодомор**) combines *голод* (*holod*, hunger or famine) and *морити* (*moryty*, to cause suffering or death). The related expression *морити голодом* (*moryty holodom*) means to cause suffering and death through starvation. The name thus conveys killing by starvation. As an established historical name, the Holodomor denotes the famine-genocide in Soviet Ukraine in 1932–33.[13]

Ukraine experienced three major famines under Soviet rule: in 1921–23 under Lenin, in 1932–33 under Stalin, and again in 1946–47. Their recurrence raises questions about extraction, political priorities and whose lives the authorities were prepared to sacrifice. But

[9] Estimates from R. J. Rummel. His Cultural Revolution figures cover 1964–75; the conventional period is 1966–76.

[10] See Vatnik Soup, *The Gulag: Soviet-Russian concentration camps, then and now*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming. Anne Applebaum estimates that around 18 million Soviet citizens experienced the camps in 1930–53 ("Inside the Gulag", 15 June 2000). For scale, this is equivalent to roughly 11% of the USSR's 157.4 million residents at the start of 1930: a cumulative total over 24 years, rather than the number confined at one time. The highest 1 January count in the camp-and-colony series was 2,561,351 in 1950 (Edwin Bacon, 1992, Table 2, p. 1071), about 1.4% of that year's 178.5 million Soviet residents (official Soviet population statistics, 1967, p. 15). These imprisonment figures exclude the separately recorded special settlements and other forms of forced labour. The main table's death toll is a separate measure.

[11] Minimum Gulag mortality estimate reported by Steven Barnes, cited in Erik van Ree's 2012 review.

[12] Estimates from R. J. Rummel.

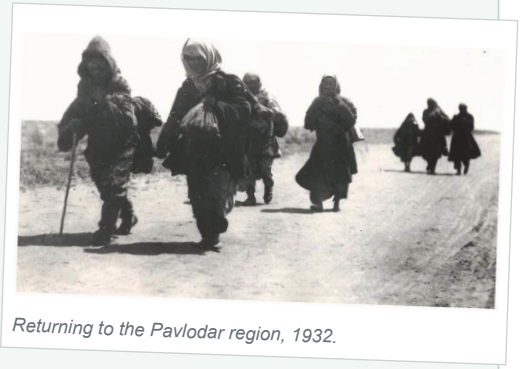
[13] Some sources propose a Czech origin for *Holodomor* as a calque: a word formed from Ukrainian elements but following a Czech model for its meaning. Czech *hladomor* denotes famine and also has a recorded sense equivalent to *hladomorna*, a prison in which captives were deliberately starved to death. Under *hladomorna*, *Ottův slovník naučný*, vol. 11 (1897), p. 330, describes prisoners condemned to death by starvation. This sense offers a possible model for the Ukrainian term's deliberate-starvation meaning, although direct transmission of this particular sense has not been established. Shtepa's *Знадібки до словника чужослів* (Toronto, 1967), p. 26, explicitly gives *holodomor* for *holod navmysnyi* ("deliberately caused hunger").

their circumstances and the evidence of intent differ. The Holodomor Museum distinguishes the genocide of 1932–33 from the other Soviet mass artificial famines.

The plural **голодомори** (*holodomory*, "Holodomors") also appears in Ukrainian historical usage for all three famines. The Ukrainian Institute of National Memory's bibliography includes works using the term in this broader sense. Here, **the Holodomor** refers specifically to 1932–33; the earlier and postwar famines are identified by their dates.

Asharshylyq: the Kazakh famine, 1930–33

The closest Soviet comparison is the Asharshylyq (Ашаршылық), the Kazakh famine of 1930–33. Forced collectivisation, livestock extraction and settlement shattered pastoral livelihoods. Animals supplied food, transport and the means to reproduce an economy; their destruction exposed people to more than a temporary shortage of meat. Kazakhstan lost roughly nine tenths of its livestock; more than a third of ethnic Kazakhs died.[14]



Returning to the Pavlodar region, 1932.

The shared mechanism is direct: remove the food base on which a population depends, and people starve.

Population and principal food base	What Soviet policy took or destroyed	Consequence for survival
Ukrainian rural households: grain and bread, alongside other foods	Grain and household food reserves; access to replacement food and routes of escape	People lost the food they depended on and could be prevented from obtaining it elsewhere.
Kazakh pastoral households: livestock supplying meat, milk and goods to exchange for grain	Herds, through requisitions and the destructive remaking of pastoral life under forced collectivisation and settlement	People lost food, purchasing power, transport and the animals needed to sustain the next season.

[14] Sarah Cameron, "The Kazakh Famine of the 1930s", Library of Congress interview, 24 August 2016; 26 March 2012 lecture, reported by Elena Volkava, Wilson Center, 2 May 2012; interview with Iaroslav Kovalchuk, *Commons*, 22 November 2024. Cameron distinguishes approximately 1.5 million deaths among Kazakhstan's population from about 1.3 million ethnic Kazakh deaths, and stresses demographic uncertainty. More than a third of ethnic Kazakhs died, compared with approximately a quarter of all residents. The ethnic Kazakh toll is part of the overall total. Deaths during flight mean that refugees and fatalities cannot be counted as mutually exclusive groups.

Asharshylyq: the Kazakh famine, 1930–33 (continued)

Grain and livestock were people's means of staying alive. The authorities did not need a sophisticated economic model to know that taking away those means could kill them. These were different food systems, not exclusive diets; in both cases, state coercion removed the basis of subsistence.[15]

Pastoralists also depended on trade for grain. Grain quotas forced some to sell livestock to buy grain for the state. Requisitioned animals chiefly fed Moscow and Leningrad, while reports of famine reached the leadership. Slaughter, disease and inadequate fodder compounded the losses; without herds, many survivors could no longer sustain mobile life.[16]

Flight became a means of survival, while the violent transformation of Kazakh society also changed the conditions in which national life could continue. Sarah Cameron's *The Hungry Steppe*[17] places famine, violence and the making of Soviet Kazakhstan within the same history. Agricultural specialists had warned that forced settlement could destroy the pastoral economy; those who defended nomadism were subsequently denounced. The danger was recognised before the catastrophe.

Flight and the treatment of refugees also form part of the case for recognising the Asharshylyq as genocide. A judicial report of 27 June 1932, reproduced in an account of Kazakh refugees in western Siberia, recorded worse housing and food provision for Kazakh mineworkers than for Russians. The same account records violence, attempts to send refugees back, and efforts by some officials and neighbours to help.



Memorial marker, Almaty, 2009.

The Kazakh catastrophe has its own history of destroyed livelihoods, national transformation and survival. Across the USSR, the state's power over food and movement exposed several national communities to lethal policies. The comparison broadens the history of responsibility while keeping the experience of each population in view.

Nazi Germany's genocidal programme likewise extended beyond one victim group. In the Holocaust, Germany and its allies and collaborators murdered approximately six million Jews,

[15] For Kazakh diets, seasonal reliance on meat and milk, and the growing role of grain acquired through trade, see Sarah Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan* (Cornell University Press, 2018), chapter 1, pp. 39–40. On requisitions and the broader destruction of pastoral livelihoods, see the sources in the surrounding Asharshylyq discussion. The comparison describes major sources of subsistence, not exclusive diets or identical policies.

[16] Cameron, "Mounting Socialism on Camel's Back", 22 November 2024, on grain quotas, livestock losses and reports to Moscow; Isabelle Ohayon, "La famine kazakhe : à l'origine de la sédentarisation", "Le contexte" and "Les victimes"; Niccolò Pianciola, "Sacrificing the Qazaqs", *Journal of Central Asian History* 1(2) (2022), pp. 225–272, abstract. Pianciola identifies unsustainable requisitions supplying the capitals; animal losses also included slaughter, disease, deficient care and herds taken across borders.

[17] Sarah Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan* (Cornell University Press, 2018).

around two thirds of Europe's Jews. Europe had approximately 9.5 million Jews in 1933; the worldwide Jewish population was about 16.6 million in 1939. The Nazi regime sought the destruction of the Jewish people in the genocide now known as the Holocaust, or Shoah.[18] Its other campaigns targeted Roma, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, psychiatric patients,[19] and populations marked for dispossession, enslavement or destruction.

The 1941 Hunger Plan (*Hungerplan*) connected the conquest of Soviet territory with feeding Germany and its armed forces. Food would be diverted from the conquered population, with mass starvation accepted as a consequence. The projected scale was roughly thirty million starvation deaths. Ukraine's agricultural resources were central to the project, but its geography extended into Russia and Belarus. Nazi occupation policy deliberately starved civilians and Soviet prisoners of war.

The occupiers also planned to take over Soviet collective and state farms. Retaining these units offered a way to requisition harvests, but did not hand Germany the Soviet system's entire local apparatus. Hans-Joachim Riecke, a senior agricultural official in the occupation administration, later described having to replace evacuated personnel and being unable to restore the Soviet supervisory machinery.

The related *Generalplan Ost* schemes envisaged German settlement through the removal and subordination of existing populations. Erhard Wetzel's commentary of 27 April 1942 on an SS security-office plan records the following proposed expulsions:

Population specified in the plan	Share proposed for expulsion
Poles	80–85%
"Western Ukrainians"	65%
Belarusians	75%

[18] *Holocaust* derives from a Greek term for a sacrificial offering wholly consumed by fire. Writers used the word to describe Nazi crimes against Jews during the war; it became established as the standard English name afterwards. *Shoah* (Hebrew שׁוֹאָה, "catastrophe"; השואה, *HaShoah*, "the catastrophe") also has wartime usage. These names describe the persecution and destruction suffered by the victims. Nazi officials used the euphemism "Final Solution to the Jewish Question" (*Endlösung der Judenfrage*) for the systematic murder of Europe's Jews, implemented from 1941. This killing programme was the culmination of the wider persecution encompassed by the term Holocaust. See the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's terminology guidance and account of the "Final Solution"; Dan Michman, "Why Is the Shoah Called 'the Shoah' or 'the Holocaust'?", *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 35(4) (2021), pp. 233–256.

[19] The Nazi murder programme euphemistically called "euthanasia" targeted institutionalised patients, including people diagnosed with schizophrenia and other psychiatric or neurological conditions. In the central Aktion T4 programme, medical assessors selected victims from registration forms; a red plus sign recorded a decision for death. Patients were transferred from their institutions to killing centres and gassed. Medical selection could thus amount to a death sentence. In an affidavit presented at the Doctors' Trial, T4 organiser Viktor Brack acknowledged: "The decision was purely within the discretion of the doctors." Killings by medical staff, including through drug overdoses and starvation, continued after the central T4 programme was halted in August 1941. Personnel and killing methods from the T4 programme were subsequently used in the mass murder of Europe's Jews, including at the Operation Reinhard killing centres. See the T4 memorial's account of the selection procedure, Brack's affidavit, paragraph 11, and USHMM's history of the programme.

The plans combined expulsion, forced labour, racial selection and destruction; the German Historical Museum describes their colonial purpose. Their full projected scale was not realised, although occupation brought mass killing and displacement.

The Ukrainian connection is concrete: both Stalinist and Nazi projects treated control of food, producers and territory as instruments of power. Their decisions made populations disposable in pursuit of those objectives.

Relief reveals further differences in the choices the authorities made. The American Relief Administration (ARA) eventually operated in Ukraine in 1921–23 after initial Soviet obstruction; international relief offers were rejected during the Holodomor. Yet private remittances, charitable missions, Soviet-financed seed purchases and postwar UNRRA supplies were different channels. Admitting help, restricting its recipients and obscuring its foreign origin were themselves exercises of political power. The ARA's publicity records show that the struggle over aid's meaning accompanied the struggle to deliver it.

1.1.2 The Famine under Lenin, 1921–23

Ukraine had already experienced mass starvation under Bolshevik rule a decade before the Holodomor. In 1921–23, drought and the destruction left by war struck an agricultural economy subjected to requisitions and coercion. But environmental hardship does not explain why grain continued to leave Ukraine or why relief was delayed. The Encyclopedia of Ukraine describes the combination of crop failure, heavy extraction and the movement of Ukrainian food to Russia. The question was also who could claim food and whose survival took priority.

Foreign assistance exposed that hierarchy. The ARA's Ukrainian operations initially faced Soviet obstruction while relief was directed towards Russia's Volga region. A separate agreement for Ukraine took effect on 10 January 1922. The American Relief Administration and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee subsequently helped people across religious communities. Aid was eventually admitted, but the delay had consequences: willingness to permit relief was itself a political choice.

The grain-export problem also preceded Stalin's collectivisation. The Soviet decision to resume exports while hunger persisted and relief organisations protested connected the pursuit of foreign capital with the removal of food from people who needed it. This was an earlier instance of the conflict between state economic objectives and the survival of Ukraine's population.

Lenin's instructions, 1921–22

On 18 May 1921, to Mikhail Frunze, with copies to Petrovsky, Rakovsky and the Ukrainian party leadership: "The main question for the whole of Soviet power, a life-and-death question for us, is to collect 200–300 million poods in the Ukraine." His note began from Bukharin's report of an excellent southern crop and instructed Frunze to place salt supplies under military control to support collection.



Lenin addressing troops in Sverdlov Square, Moscow, 5 May 1920. Leon Trotsky and Lev Kamenev stand at the right.

On 26 August 1921, he called for dissolving the public famine-relief committee and arresting or exiling its non-Bolshevik organisers.[20]

On 9 November 1921, in a draft Politburo resolution sent to V. M. Mikhailov, Lenin again insisted on food collection in Ukraine and "the delivery to us of 57 million poods". He demanded energetic measures and twice-monthly reports on collection and shipment to the RSFSR. This was a demand for delivery, rather than a record of the quantity actually shipped.

In a secret letter of 19 March 1922 to Molotov for the Politburo, Lenin sought to exploit hunger and weakened resistance to seize church valuables in Russia: "Now and only now, when people are being eaten in famine-stricken areas, and hundreds, if not thousands, of corpses lie on the roads, we can (and therefore must) pursue the removal of church property with the most frenzied and ruthless energy and not hesitate to put down the least opposition." He also sought funds for government operations, economic reconstruction and Soviet diplomacy at Genoa.

In the same letter, he demanded that resistance be crushed through executions: "The greater the number of representatives of the reactionary clergy and the reactionary bourgeoisie that we succeed in shooting on this occasion, the better".

The continuities are concrete: coercive extraction, unequal priorities, obstruction of relief and the political use of hunger.

[20] Lenin, to Stalin and the Politburo, 26 August 1921, *Collected Works*, vol. 45 (Progress Publishers, 1976), pp. 268–270. He proposed Prokopovich's arrest, the dispersal of other non-Bolshevik members under surveillance, and a two-month campaign of press ridicule and harassment. The public All-Russian Famine Relief Committee included Bolshevik officials and a non-party majority; it was distinct from the ARA. See also Lord Emmott's contemporary account, 11 August 1921, *HL Deb*, vol. 43, cols. 508–509.

1.1.3 The Postwar Famine, 1946–47

Another famine struck Ukraine in 1946–47, under Stalin, after the devastation of the Second World War. A severe drought aggravated the collapse of agriculture. But the Soviet authorities continued to enforce onerous delivery quotas and threatened officials who failed to obtain the required food. The Encyclopedia of Ukraine records requisitioned supplies being exported to Soviet-controlled countries in Eastern Europe while Ukrainians went hungry. War damage and harvest conditions were real; decisions about procurement, distribution and exports determined how those pressures fell on the population.

People travelled west in search of food, towards areas where collectivisation was less advanced. The authorities tried to obstruct that movement and the sale of food to newcomers. Soviet public denial again concealed a catastrophe for which state policy bore responsibility.

A US diplomatic memorandum of 27 May 1948 records UNRRA supplies sent to Ukraine and Belarus through a programme largely financed by the United States. Postwar international assistance thus accompanied the famine, through a different programme from the ARA mission of 1921–23.

1.2 Chronology, Mechanisms and Human Consequences

The Holodomor grew out of the forcible remaking of rural life. The First Five-Year Plan, introduced in 1928, concentrated investment on heavy industry. Grain was to feed the expanding urban workforce, while exports helped pay for imported machinery. Agricultural production became subject to industrial priorities set by the state, with peasant households expected to surrender the resources needed to meet them.

NEP and the Five-Year Plans

Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP; Russian: *новая экономическая политика*, НЭП) in March 1921 amid economic collapse, peasant resistance and the exhaustion of the Civil War. In *The Tax in Kind* (April 1921), he called for restoring peasant production: a tax would replace compulsory requisitioning, and peasants could trade the surplus left after paying it. Small-scale private production and exchange revived, while the party retained political power and the state controlled the principal industries. The retreat acknowledged that coercive extraction had undermined the capacity to produce.

NEP and the Five-Year Plans (continued)

Stalin's First Five-Year Plan, covering 1928–32, directed investment towards rapid industrialisation and displaced the NEP settlement with forced collectivisation. In his report of 7 January 1933, Stalin presented heavy industry and the transformation of agriculture as central achievements. Plans were meant to coordinate resources and build future productive capacity. The pressure to fulfil their targets could instead consume that capacity, suppress unwelcome information and reward a reported achievement over a sustainable one.



Yakov Guminer, 1931. "The arithmetic of an industrial-financial counter-plan: 2 + 2 plus the enthusiasm of the workers = 5." The arrows read "1929, 1930" and "1931, 1932" (translation from Russian).[21]

Ukraine's industrial history did not begin with Stalin. In the nineteenth century, British, French and Belgian capital and expertise helped develop the Donbas and southern Ukraine; the Welsh entrepreneur John Hughes's ironworks at Yuzivka, later Donetsk, produced pig iron in 1872. Stalin's industrial expansion therefore built on an existing industrial base, although its scale and organisation changed profoundly.[22]

Industrial growth and the necessity of collectivisation are different questions. Robert C. Allen's *Farm to Factory* (2003)[23] credits Soviet industrial investment with substantial growth. His model compares collectivisation with continued individual farming and market sales under the New Economic Policy (NEP), finding a small increase in modelled total GDP and a larger increase in non-agricultural output. This comparison measures production; a judgment

[21] Guminer's 1931 poster came eighteen years before George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). It advertises five years' output in four. Eugene Lyons's *Assignment in Utopia* (1937), a memoir of his work as a United Press correspondent in the Soviet Union and his growing disillusionment with Stalinism, describes the same campaign (part II, chapter XV, p. 240). Orwell reviewed the book on 9 June 1938. In January 1939, he wrote that "two and two will make five when the Leader says so". In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the equation becomes a demand for submission to Party authority (part III, chapters II and IV). Soviet censorship kept *Nineteen Eighty-Four* out of general circulation, although an official translation restricted to senior Party officials appeared in 1959. Authorised excerpts from the novel appeared in 1988; a complete Soviet edition followed in 1989.

[22] Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), chapter 16, "On the Move". See also Glamorgan Archives, "Founding the New Russia Company (1868–1871)".

[23] Robert C. Allen, *Farm to Factory: A Reinterpretation of the Soviet Industrial Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 2003), chapter 8, pp. 153–171.

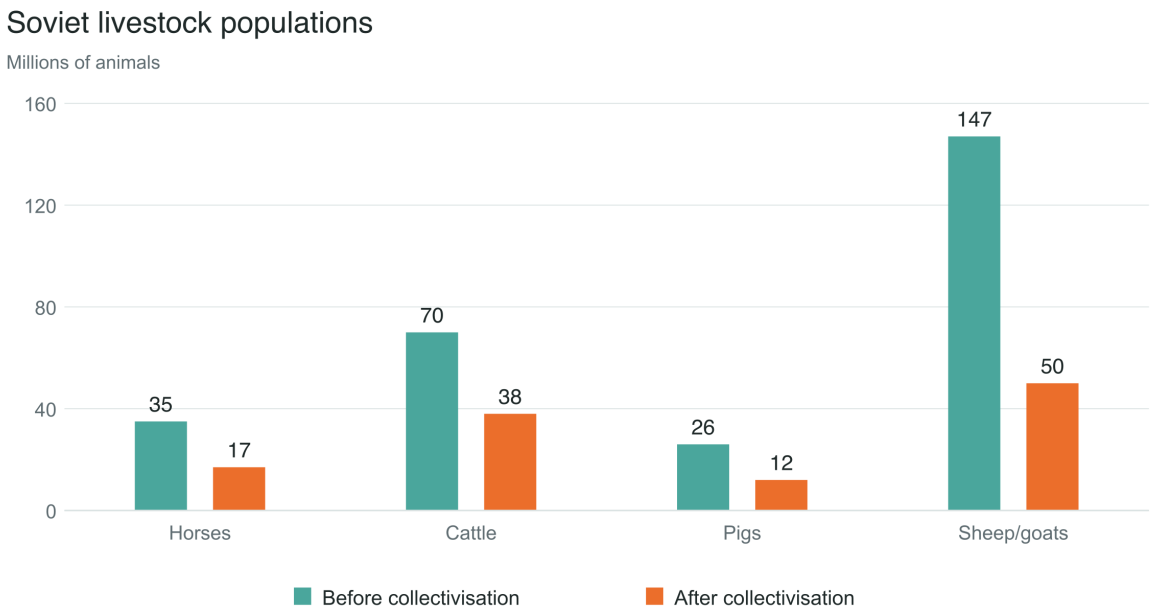
of welfare must also account for the lives lost and communities destroyed. Industrial achievements therefore cannot, by themselves, establish that the destruction of independent agriculture was indispensable.

From 1929, mass collectivisation pressed households to surrender control of land, equipment and livestock to collective farms. The campaign against the so-called kulaks targeted more prosperous farmers, but the label also served to punish resistance. Confiscation, arrest and deportation broke up families and removed cultivators from their communities. Joining a collective farm offered no guarantee of food: deliveries to the state took precedence over what members could retain for themselves.



A grain cart beneath the Ukrainian banner "ПЕРШИЙ ХЛІБ ДЕРЖАВІ" — "The first bread to the state". "Bread" here means grain from the harvest. The 18 November 1932 resolution explicitly subordinated collective-farm seed, fodder and food reserves to fulfilment of grain procurement quotas.

Collectivisation also weakened the countryside's ability to withstand a food crisis by destroying livestock. Animals were productive capital and household reserves: horses supplied draught power, cows supplied milk, and animals could be sold or consumed when other food failed. The collapse of Soviet herds therefore damaged both agricultural production and families' means of survival. Some peasants slaughtered animals rather than surrender them, but those choices occurred under threatened expropriation.



Rounded Soviet Union totals quoted by Stephen Kotkin for the transformation of 1928–33; not figures for Ukraine alone. The dates of the individual livestock series may vary.

A report to Sergo Ordzhonikidze of 9 April 1932 described famine, seed shortages and emaciated livestock in Western Siberia. Its author, Feigin, attributed poor animal condition primarily to insufficient fodder and warned that official statistics overstated the position. He also described sowing plans that disregarded differences between fields, although officials understood that revision was necessary. Warnings about damaged productive capacity and defective planning circulated before the famine's peak.

Disarming the countryside



"Peasant! Give your weapons to the Red Army soldier. He will better protect you, your property and land." Poster, 1919.

The Bolsheviks claimed a monopoly over armed force while promising to defend the people they disarmed. Lenin's decree of 10 December 1918 required civilians and civilian institutions in Soviet Russia to surrender rifles, machine guns, revolvers, ammunition and sabres. Concealment or resistance could bring one to ten years' imprisonment. The accompanying instruction permitted approved Communist Party members to retain one rifle and one revolver each: political trust determined who could remain armed.

In Ukraine, the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee's declaration of 22 January 1920, section 4, made disarming those it called "kulak" and "bandit" elements its first military task. It specifically denounced the armed Ukrainian rural population associated with Petliura, Makhno or other movements. Military commissariats were to achieve complete disarmament through planned raids, rewards for information about hidden weapons and ruthless punishment of concealment. The intended result was the destruction of independent armed resistance in the countryside.

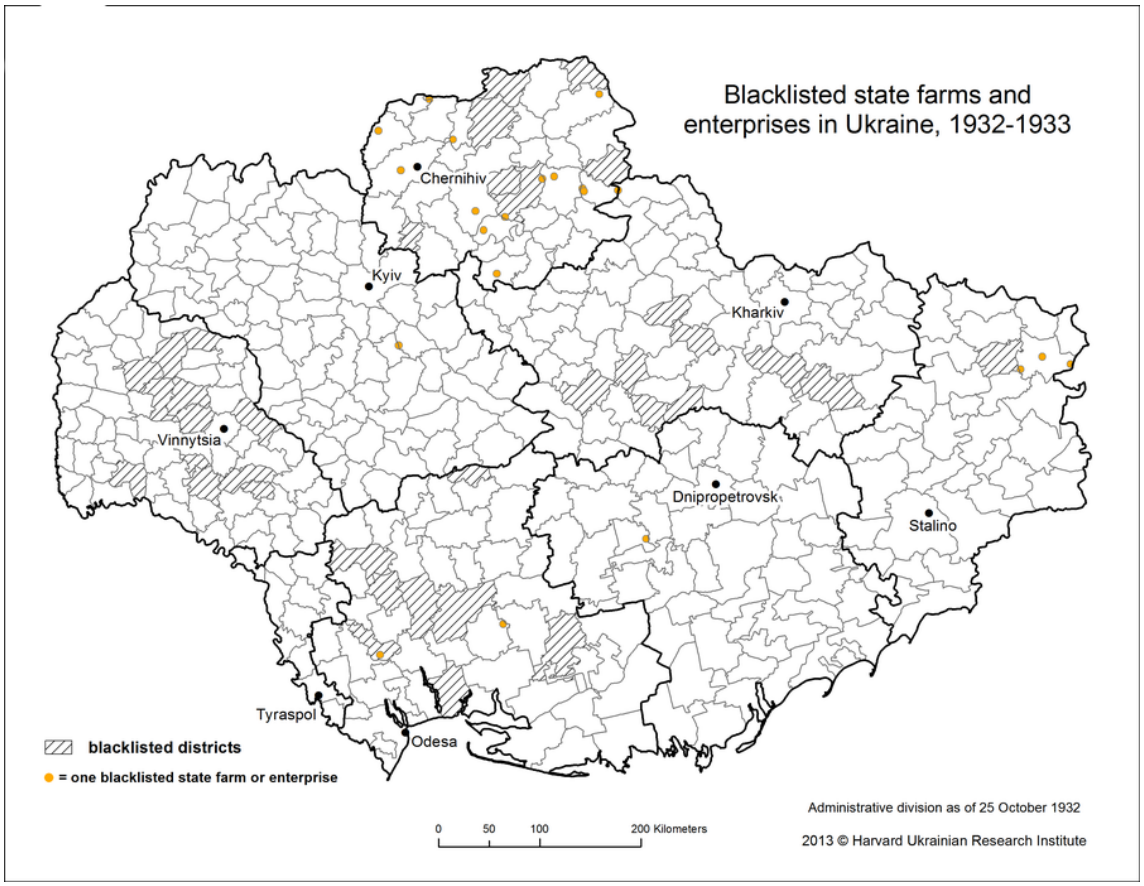
The campaigns continued through the 1920s. During the unrest surrounding collectivisation in 1929–30, Ukrainian security-police chief Vsevolod Balytsky credited earlier seizures with leaving the countryside "completely disarmed", in an assessment reproduced in a 2024 archival study, pp. 95–96. This was an official's claim of success; the same account records uneven enforcement and weapons that remained hidden. Disarmament nevertheless helped create the imbalance between armed requisition teams and the households whose food and property they seized.

By June 1932, senior officials in Soviet Ukraine were reporting starvation. In letters of 10 June, Hryhorii Petrovsky and Vlas Chubar described excessive procurement to Stalin's leadership. Hunger was already a present emergency, not merely a risk attached to the next harvest.

The law of 7 August 1932 gave the protection of socialist property extraordinary punitive force. Theft from collective farms and cooperatives could bring execution and confiscation; under mitigating circumstances, the sentence was at least ten years' imprisonment with confiscation. The law applied across the USSR. For a hungry family, taking grain from a field could therefore become a criminal act carrying a penalty grossly disproportionate to the food obtained.

Nor were warnings confined to officials. In September 1932, collective farmer Yurko Shvets protested that his cooperative's procurement demand would leave nothing to eat. He reported that the village board threatened those raising objections with the police and the GPU security service. Members could work the fields yet be denied both their produce and a safe means of challenging its removal.

The Ukrainian party resolution of 18 November 1932 subordinated collective-farm reserves to procurement, stopped advance payments of grain on farms with unmet procurement targets, and authorised fines payable in meat. Blacklisting suspended trade and the delivery of goods to designated farms and villages. These measures narrowed access to food while punishing the failure to supply it.



Blacklisted state farms and enterprises in Ukraine, 1932–1933. Hatched areas show districts containing blacklisted state farms; orange dots identify enterprises. The map uses 1932 administrative boundaries. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, MAPA Digital Atlas of Ukraine.

Requisition teams searched homes for grain and other foodstuffs. Party officials, the political police and local activists brought the campaign into kitchens, storerooms and household reserves. Families tried to hide food, resist seizures or find help elsewhere, but discovery could expose them to further punishment. The loss of vegetables, meat or potatoes mattered even when a household had no grain left to surrender: what was being removed was also its remaining means of surviving the winter.

A Union-wide decree of 19 January 1933 replaced contractual grain procurement with fixed compulsory deliveries, with collective-farm obligations calculated per hectare. It prohibited unauthorised local increases and promised producers control over grain remaining after their obligations were met. Yet deliveries to the state still took priority, and collective-farm grain trading depended on regional delivery plans being met and seed reserves filled. The new rules concerned the 1933 harvest; families already starving still had to survive the intervening months.

On 22 January 1933, Stalin and Molotov ordered the prevention of peasant flight from Ukraine and the North Caucasus. Police in receiving regions were instructed to arrest those arriving and return them after screening. The measure closed a route to food after household reserves had been depleted. Remaining at home and trying to leave could both expose a family to death.



"Hunger drives the farmers to migrate." Alexander Wienerberger, 1933; reproduced as plate 10 in Ewald Ammende's Muss Russland hungern? (1935).

Food allocations nevertheless continued, including Soviet food and seed loans to Ukraine. A memorandum of 15 March 1933 discussed further assistance in connection with spring sowing. A 31 March 1933 instruction to Kyiv-region hospitals[24] called for more food for recovering starvation patients so they could return to work quickly. Allocations also covered children and, in Crimea, some elderly invalids. Such help could save particular recipients while leaving others without access. Exports also continued, although sharply reduced from 1931. The allocation of food among households, workers, reserves, seed and foreign sales therefore remained a series of decisions about whose needs would be met.

Church closures also weakened the means of organising local help. Applebaum notes that Ukrainian priests and church institutions had helped organise famine relief in 1921; their suppression removed independent centres of assistance. Individual teachers, local officials and relatives nevertheless saved lives in 1932–33, sometimes through schools, hospitals and orphanages.[25]

[24] R. W. Davies, Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), revised edition, pp. 220–223.

[25] Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (Toronto: Signal/McClelland & Stewart, 2017; ISBN 978-0-7710-0930-3), chapter 5, "Collectivization: Revolution in the Countryside, 1930", p. 136 and chapter 12, "Survival: Spring and Summer, 1933", pp. 269–270.

For some families, survival depended on relatives abroad or valuables they could surrender. Torgsin shops sold food for foreign currency and precious metals; remittances could be converted into purchasing vouchers. Wedding rings and family possessions became payments for flour. These transactions allowed people with the necessary assets or connections to obtain food while transferring their resources to the state. They offered an uneven means of survival, distinct from an international relief operation and inaccessible to those who had nothing acceptable to exchange. Across the USSR in 1933, Torgsin took in about 45 tonnes of pure gold, almost as much as Soviet gold mining produced. Under government pressure, Torgsin twice raised prices for flour, bread and groats in the winter of 1933. Families had to surrender more wealth for the same food, helping the state finance industrialisation.

On 24 October 1932, teacher Oleksandra Radchenko recorded how a small foreign remittance had enabled food purchases at Torgsin. Her diary also describes starving children and bodies left by the roadside. Adam and Rosina Ketterling's letter of 23 April 1933, from a German community in southern Ukraine, tells of a relative's death and appeals for help abroad. Adam worked in vineyards and guarded a building containing food while his own household struggled to eat.



Kharkiv, spring–summer 1933: a man lies dead while a seated man watches a companion near death. Alexander Wienerberger's photograph, preserved on an Innitzer Album leaf.



Oleksandra Radchenko, teacher and diarist whose account preserves everyday experiences of the famine.

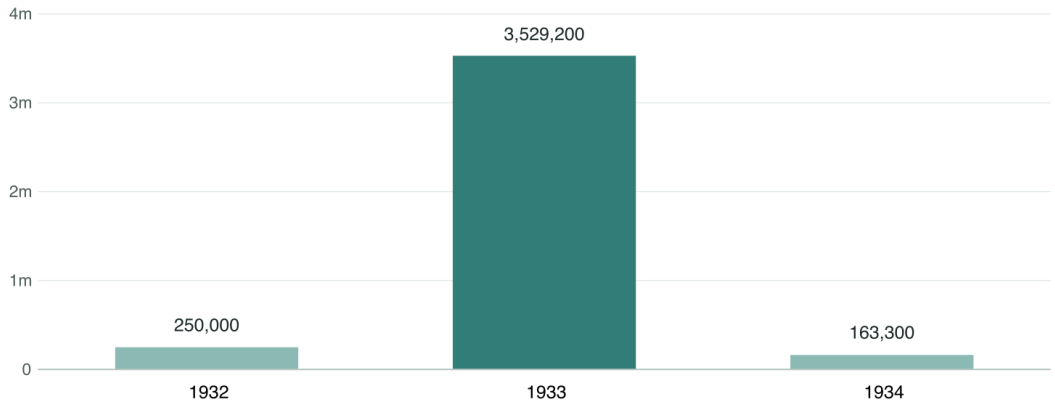
The surge in deaths during the first half of 1933 followed this tightening of deprivation and restrictions on movement. As winter gave way to spring, people who had exhausted their reserves still had to survive until another harvest. Hunger weakened the capacity to work, care for children and seek assistance. Deaths within a family could leave its surviving members still less able to obtain food.

The 2015 reconstruction estimating 3.9 million excess deaths in Soviet Ukraine over 1932–34 combines censuses, birth and death registration, and migration estimates, with corrections for incomplete or distorted records.[26] It estimates deaths above those expected without the crisis, rather than simply counting certificates naming starvation. The total excludes lost births and losses outside the republic. Most deaths occurred in the countryside, although towns also suffered. These excess deaths are equivalent to about 12.6% of the republic's estimated 31.4 million inhabitants at the beginning of 1932. The state's suppression of the 1937 census and persecution of its organisers further obstructed an honest public accounting of the population losses.

[26] Published estimates vary with corrections to incomplete records, migration assumptions, territorial boundaries and the treatment of lost births. The regional analysis by Levchuk et al. (2020) retains the estimate of approximately 3.9 million excess deaths in Soviet Ukraine over 1932–34.

Estimated excess deaths in Soviet Ukraine

1932–34 · reconstructed total: 3,942,500 deaths



Source: Rudnytskyi et al. (2015), Table 6, p. 65.

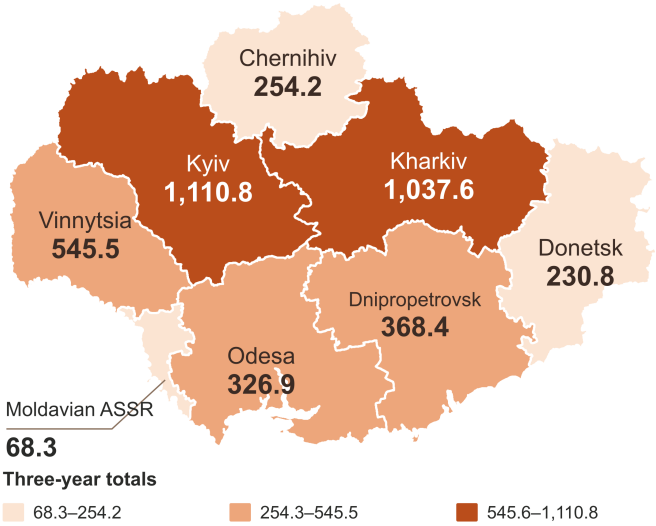
Deaths above the estimated non-famine baseline; lost births are excluded.

Excess deaths in Soviet Ukraine, 1932–34. Almost nine tenths occurred in 1933. Redrawn from Rudnytskyi et al. (2015), Table 6; lost births are excluded.

Regional famine losses

Ukraine, 1932–1934 · Excess deaths, in thousands

Boundaries: 1 April 1933



Three-year totals

68.3–254.2 | 254.3–545.5 | 545.6–1,110.8

Source: MAPA · Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University

Original map © 2018 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Redrawn for Vatnik Soup.

Annual excess deaths

Region	1932	1933	1934	Total
Kyiv	83.9	**991.5**	35.4	1,110.8
Kharkiv	46.9	**969.9**	20.8	1,037.6
Vinnytsia	27.0	**497.3**	21.1	545.5
Dnipropetrovsk	20.6	**331.3**	16.5	368.4
Odesa	19.6	**300.3**	7.0	326.9
Chernihiv	17.6	**205.4**	31.2	254.2
Donetsk	28.7	**175.2**	26.9	230.8
Moldavian ASSR	5.7	**58.2**	4.4	68.3

Rounded estimates, reproduced as published.

Regional excess deaths in Soviet Ukraine, 1932–34, in thousands. Shading shows three-year totals; the table gives annual figures. Boundaries are those of 1 April 1933, including the Moldavian ASSR. Redrawn from Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute's MAPA data and historical boundaries.



"The mass cemetery — a sea of dunes." Alexander Wienerberger, 1933; reproduced as plate 20 in Ewald Ammende's Muss Russland hungern? (1935).

The distribution of deaths also requires explanation. In "The Causes of Ukrainian Famine Mortality, 1932–33", Andrei Markevich, Natalya Naumenko and Nancy Qian report **higher mortality in regions with larger pre-famine ethnic Ukrainian population shares, including outside Soviet Ukraine.** In their regional analysis, mortality was unrelated to food productivity, while planned and actual procurement were higher, and grain retention lower, where Ukrainian population shares were larger.

SURVIVOR TESTIMONY



"… we had no food, just water."

Tamara Orlova — childhood memories of the Holodomor

She recalled her family's dispossession and living with her mother in a windowless storeroom.

Memoir excerpt: HREC sourcebook, p. 43. Published in The Day, 2010; quotation follows the cited English edition.

Kharkiv, 1933. The photograph and testimony concern different people.

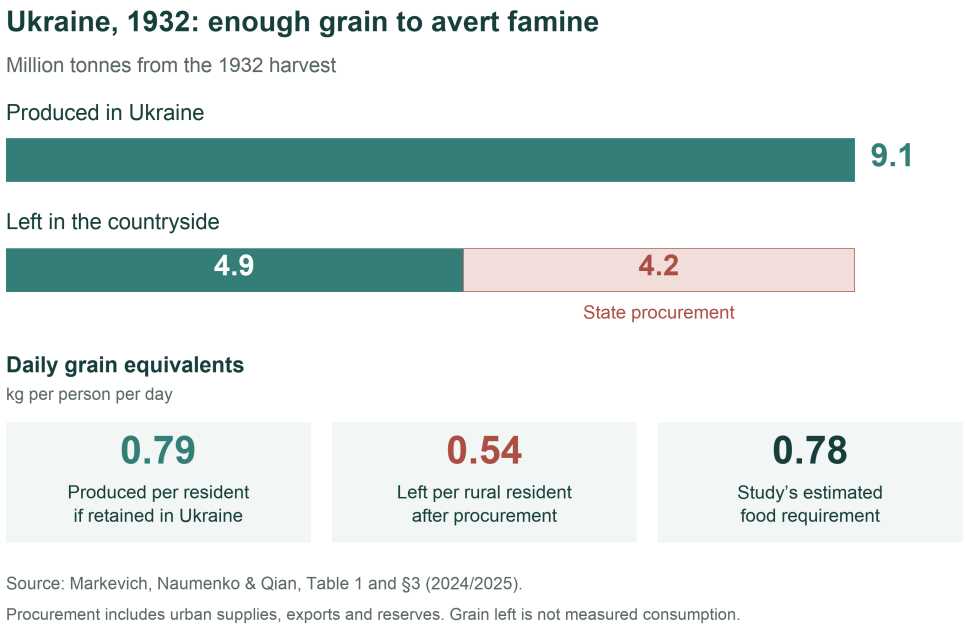
Survival did not restore the world that had been lost. Children lost parents, households were dispersed, and villages lost people whose work and care had sustained them. Memories of hiding food, seeking help and deciding what could be shared remained within families long

after public discussion was suppressed. The loss of control over a harvest had become the loss of relatives, neighbours and the everyday security on which community life depended.

1.3 Grain Exports and State Priorities

Markevich, Naumenko and Qian's food-accounting exercise reconstructs a grain harvest of 9.1 million tonnes. The state procured 4.2 million tonnes, leaving approximately 4.9 million tonnes in the countryside. Production had fallen from 16.8 million tonnes in 1931, but even the reduced 1932 harvest was sufficient to avert famine if allocated to the people who lived in Ukraine.

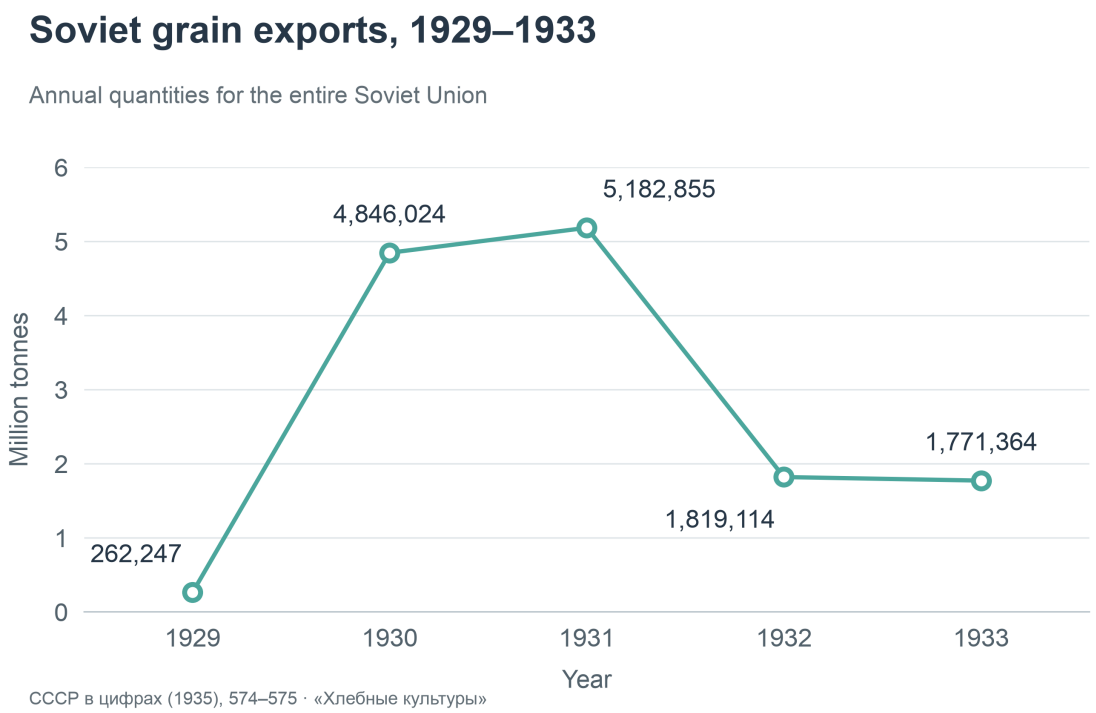
Had that harvest been retained to feed Ukraine's rural and urban population, it would have provided about 0.79 kg of grain per person per day, against the study's estimated food requirement of 0.78 kg. **Ukraine produced enough food in 1932 to avoid famine.** After procurement, rural retention was only 0.54 kg per person per day, roughly 30% below that requirement. The authors also find that the rest of the USSR produced enough to support its own population without grain from Ukraine.[27] The complete abstract and reference appear in section 2.3.



Ukraine's 1932 grain harvest and the amount left in the countryside after state procurement. Retention includes seed grain and does not measure actual consumption. Source: Markevich, Naumenko and Qian, Table 1.

[27] Markevich, Naumenko and Qian, "The Causes of Ukrainian Famine Mortality, 1932–33", section 3, Table 1; author-linked advance-access text, pp. 8–10. Their reconstructed 1932 production is 9.1 million tonnes and procurement 4.2 million; the approximately 4.9 million-tonne remainder is calculated from these rounded figures. Procurement includes supplies for urban consumers, foreign exports and reserves: it is not a measure of grain shipped out of Ukraine, nor may it be added to export totals. Table 1 reports 0.791 kg per day from production per resident and 0.538 kg left per rural resident; the text gives a food-needs benchmark of 0.778 kg, based on official caloric guidelines weighted for demographic composition. These are different population bases. Retention includes seed stocks and is not observed consumption; the accounting excludes unsystematically recorded return allocations and relief and does not deduct storage or transport losses. The authors discuss these limits and the availability of other foods. USSR-wide calendar-year exports below are a separate series, not Ukrainian exports from the 1932 harvest.

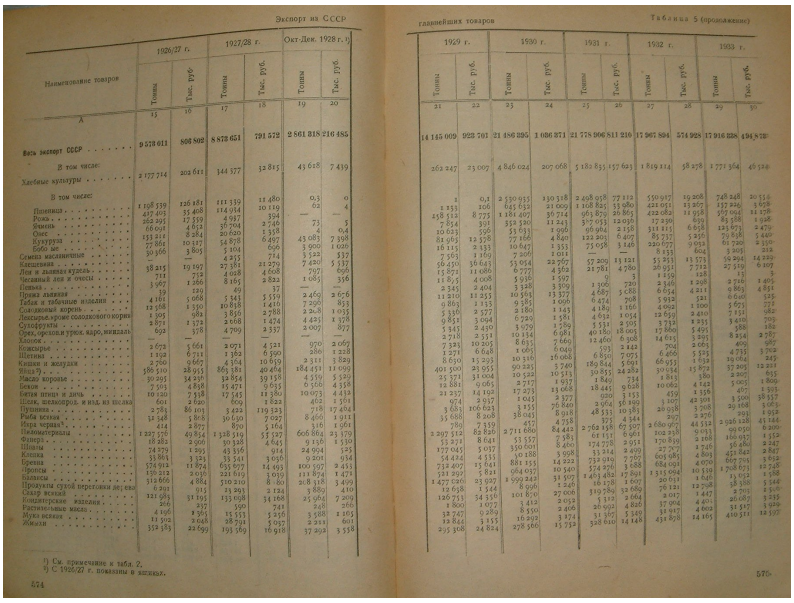
The Soviet Union continued exporting agricultural produce while people starved. Its own published statistics make that fact visible. The 1935 statistical handbook *СССР в цифрах*[28] (*USSR in Figures*), pp. 574–575, records exports under the category "Хлебные культуры" — grain crops — of 4,846,024 tonnes in 1930, 5,182,855 in 1931, 1,819,114 in 1932 and 1,771,364 in 1933. These are Soviet Union totals, rather than exports attributed specifically to Ukraine, and the category is broader than wheat alone.



Soviet grain exports, 1929–1933: annual quantities for the entire Soviet Union in tonnes. The points show five calendar years joined by straight segments.

Exports therefore fell sharply after 1931, but continued during the catastrophe of 1932–33. Both facts matter. A falling export total can coexist with the removal of food desperately needed by particular households. Conversely, an annual export total does not identify when a shipment left, where its contents had been procured, or which starving communities could have received it.

[28] ЦУНХУ Госплана СССР, *СССР в цифрах* (Москва, 1935), pp. 574–575.



Grain exports in Soviet official statistics: two-page spread from СССР в цифрах (1935), pp. 574–575. The "Хлебные культуры" row gives quantities in tonnes; the adjacent column gives monetary values.

Foreign sales formed part of a larger struggle over agricultural resources. In his speech of 9 July 1928 on industrialisation and the grain problem, Stalin identified agricultural extraction as a source of industrial finance. Imports of machinery and expertise had to be paid for, while growing cities and industrial projects also competed for food.[29] But the value assigned to industrial development did not determine how much could safely be taken from producers, or justify depriving them of the means to survive.

Purchases abroad also served Soviet military expansion. The USSR acquired factory designs, equipment, production rights and technical assistance as well as finished machinery. Amtorg's 28 April 1930 contract with the American U.S. Wheel Track Layer Corporation, for example, provided for two Christie tanks, manufacturing rights and technical help with Soviet production.[30]

Export earnings also mattered for payments on earlier purchases. In October 1931, the Politburo linked Soviet orders in Germany to opportunities for Soviet exports and warned that payments due in 1932 were inadequately secured. The NKVT reported in January 1934

[29] Politburo of the Central Committee of the VKP(b), *Директивы к переговорам с Германией о расширении советского экспорта*, approved 15 October 1931, §§ 2–4 (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 11, l. 29); People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade of the USSR (NKVT), *Внешне-торговая политика СССР*, memorandum, 12 January 1934, section III, "Германия" (RGAE, f. 413, op. 12, d. 1366, ll. 16–17). The directives link Soviet orders in Germany to export opportunities; the memorandum describes guaranteed credits and deliveries from earlier orders.

[30] U.S. Wheel Track Layer Corporation and Amtorg Trading Corporation, contract of 28 April 1930, preamble and §§ 1, 9–10; Russian archival copy transcribed by T-34 Inform (RGVA, f. 31811, op. 1, d. 374, ll. 5–6). The contract specifies tanks, rights to manufacture them within the USSR and technical assistance. For the wider industrial and military context, see Piotr R. Frankowski, *The Secret Red Alliance: How the Soviet Union Planned to Use Germany to Take Over the World*, chs. XX, XXII and XXIV–XXV (forthcoming).

that equipment ordered in 1930–31 had continued arriving in 1932 and that German deliveries in 1933 included 1931–32 orders.[31] Grain was one source of foreign earnings among others; this financing link does not establish that particular grain shipments paid for particular weapons.

Exports must therefore be considered alongside procurement, domestic allocations, reserves, seed and the timing and recipients of relief. A tonne recorded as an export was a tonne not left with a starving household. The factual question is how the authorities allocated resources while hunger developed; the question of responsibility also concerns what they knew and which choices remained available.

1.4 International Knowledge and Action

Evidence of the famine reached the outside world while people were still dying. The Soviet authorities obstructed investigation and denied the catastrophe, but reports, letters and appeals crossed the border. Three questions therefore have to be distinguished: what information became public, what foreign governments knew privately, and what they were prepared to do. Foreign governments and institutions received evidence through channels independent of the press.

Ukrainians were themselves trying to raise the alarm. The Ukrainian National Council in Canada's letter to Prime Minister R. B. Bennett of 2 October 1933 described desperate letters reaching Canada. On 26 September, the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations had appealed to Johan Mowinckel, president of the League of Nations Council, for action over Soviet Ukraine. The victims' relatives and advocates were seeking a response, rather than waiting for foreign observers to discover their suffering.

[31] Politburo of the Central Committee of the VKP(b), *Директивы к переговорам с Германией о расширении советского экспорта*, approved 15 October 1931, § 2(a), (c) (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 11, l. 29); People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade of the USSR (NKVT), *Внешне-торговая политика СССР*, memorandum, 12 January 1934, sections I and III, "Германия" (RGAE, f. 413, op. 12, d. 1366, ll. 1–26; Germany subsection, ll. 16–17). Section I distinguishes orders from deliveries and identifies solvency after the large 1929–31 orders as a central task; section III identifies German deliveries from earlier orders.

Mykola Lemyk: making the famine public

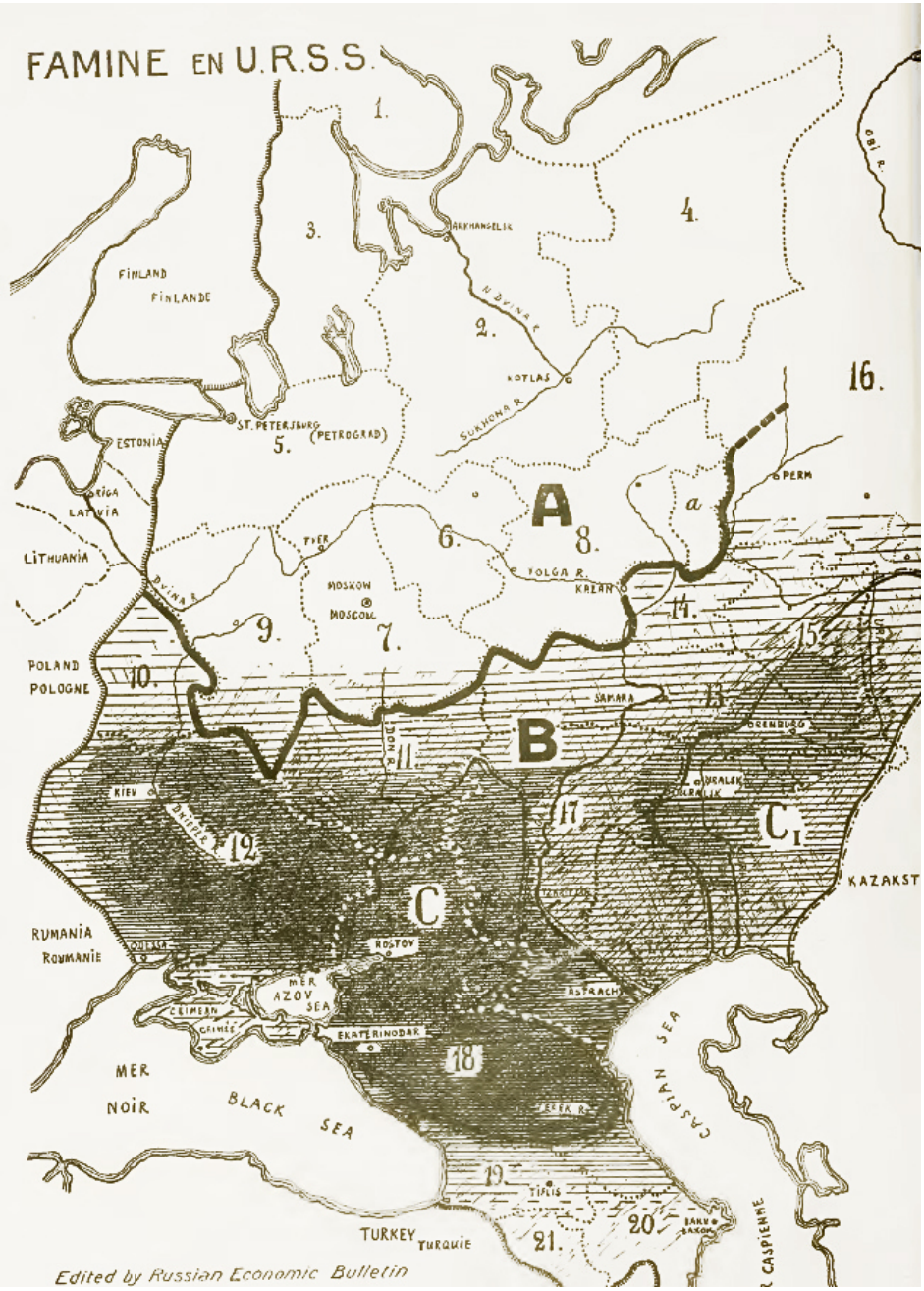
On 21 October 1933, Mykola Lemyk, a young member of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), shot and killed Oleksii Mailov, an official at the Soviet consulate in Lviv. Lviv was then in Poland. The OUN had planned the assassination as a protest against the famine in Soviet Ukraine.

Lemyk surrendered to the Polish police so that he could explain the killing's political purpose in court and draw attention to the famine. His trial attracted press coverage in Galicia and abroad; he was sentenced to life imprisonment. The case illustrates the efforts to break Soviet silence from outside the USSR.[32]



Mykola Lemyk.

[32] On resistance to censorship and enforced silence under Communist rule, see Vatnik Soup, *Jan Palach: Resistance to Tyranny*, Historical Memory Dossier (January 2027). Forthcoming.



Famine en U.R.S.S., published with A. Markoff's Famine in USSR (Paris, 1933). A: grain-consuming regions; B: grain-producing regions; C: former Don, Kuban and Terek Cossack territories; C_1: Ural and Orenburg Cossack territories. Dense shading marks areas identified as suffering the most disastrous famine. The map covers the European USSR, with the Caucasus; it is not a complete map of the Soviet famine.

Independent reporting also challenged the official account. Gareth Jones's Berlin statement of 29 March 1933 brought observations from his journey to an international audience. Malcolm Muggeridge's March articles in the *Manchester Guardian* described starvation in Ukraine and the North Caucasus. In his subsequent reply to Duranty,[33] Jones identified several kinds of evidence: village conversations, displaced peasants, letters, diplomats, journalists and technical experts. Their accounts differed in access and method, but the existence of censorship did not make independent inquiry impossible.

[33] See section 1.5, "Duranty, a Proto-Vatnik", for Duranty's response to Jones and the ensuing exchange.

Canadian journalist Rhea Clyman's 1932 journey through Ukraine and the North Caucasus provided another route for villagers' testimony to reach readers abroad. Her *Toronto Evening Telegram* report of 16 May 1933 described families deprived of food and livestock and villagers asking her to carry an appeal to the Kremlin. The account appeared during the famine's deadliest months, but described conditions she had witnessed the previous year.

William Henry Chamberlin's five-part *Manchester Guardian* series of October 1933 acknowledged exceptional mortality after his tour of Ukraine and the North Caucasus, yet still accommodated Soviet explanations. After leaving Moscow, his *Christian Science Monitor* account of 29 May 1934 described survivors whose testimony contradicted official denials and presented famine as an instrument of policy. Censorship and the wish to retain access could restrict what a correspondent published even after witnessing the famine's devastation. His fuller condemnation reached readers after the peak of deaths.



Series on "Tammany's Poor Relations" Continues Today on Pa

NIGHT EDITION ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Wall Street Closing Prices

New York Evening Post

NIGHT EDITI ★ ★ ★ ★ Wall Street Closing

THREE 3 CENTS — WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 1933 — THREE

FAMINE GRIPS RUSSIA, MILLIONS DYING, IDLE ON RISE, SAYS BRITON

Gareth Jones, Lloyd George Aid, Reports Devastation

TOURS FARM AREAS, FINDS FOOD GONE

Assets Reds Arrest British to Check Public Wrath—Peasants "Wait for Death"

FRANCE HAS BIG DEFICIT

GAMBRILLS TO COME BACK

INSURANCE SAFE BLASTED

S. R. THOMPSON RESIGNS

EXECUTION TOO EXPENSIVE

WOULD BAN FREE LUNCH

CUTS IN VETERAN BENEFITS MAPPED

REICH JEWS ASK END OF PROTESTS

Nazi Boycott Order Puts Victims in Perils — Pupils Barred From Schools

LEHMAN PLEA ON BEER BILL STIRS STORM

Both Parties in Both Houses Launch Bitter Attack

GOVERNOR BLAMES LOBBYISTS' 'SWARM'

In Appeal to Legislature Says Selfish Interests Menace Repeal

ROOSEVELT DEMANDS U CONTROL NEW SECURITI MESSAGE HITS DISHONES

LA GUARDIA SEEKS MAYORALTY AGAIN

Plans Independent Race, With Demand for Full Control of Estimate Board

Summary of the Securities Bill as Submitted by Roosevelt

WASHINGTON, March 29 (A. P.)—Following is an analysis of the proposed Federal security act submitted to Congress today by President Roosevelt. The analysis was prepared by Burton Thompson, one of its framers and a former member of the Federal Trade Commission.

"The Federal securities act in a bill to provide for the furnishing of information and the supervision of traffic in investment securities in interstate commerce.

"Sections 1 and 2 contain the title of the bill and certain definitions as the following subjects: 'Security,' 'Person,' 'Sale,' 'Issuer,' 'Commission' (meaning the Federal Trade Commission, which is to have jurisdiction under the bill), 'Interstate Trade' and 'Interstate Commerce.'

"Requirements Set Forth

"Section 3 sets forth certain requirements in the matter of the sale and advertisement of securities in interstate commerce and forbids such sale or advertisement until certain information shall have been filed with the Commission. This section covers the subjects of—

"(A) The sale or offer to sell domestic securities in interstate commerce;

"(B) The advertisement of domestic securities through interstate medium, including not only newspapers, circulars and magazines but also radio;

"(C) The physical transportation of domestic securities across State lines;

"(D) The sale or offer to sell by persons or corporations of the securities of foreign Governments in the United States.

Sponsors Sign Statement

"Section 4 provides that the promoters, principal officers and directors of corporations shall sign the statement, except in the case of securities issued by foreign Governments, when the statement shall be signed by persons in the United States negotiating or underwriting the loan for the sale in the United States.

"Section 5 designates the information required in the statements to be filed with the commission and consists of (A) Information regarded of importance to investors, and (B) industrial regulars concerning foreign Government securities.

"In the case of domestic securities it requires the names of the issuers of the stock, promoters, trustees, [illegible] the amount of paid-up capital, the numbers and types of shares with the description of their respective voting rights, dividends, profits, the amount of funded debt, a balance sheet showing a detailed list of assets and liabilities, a statement of the amount of the issuers' income, expense and fixed charges during the preceding fiscal year; the plan of the syndicate.

Issuer Background Stored

"In the case of the securities issued by foreign Governments the American representation shall state the purpose, form and terms of the loan, the underwriting agreement, members of the syndicate, bonuses, commissions and amount to be received by the foreign Government, the security pledged with the loan and the general financial condition of the borrowing Government and whether it has ever defaulted on principal or interest on any security sold in the United States together with the proposed method of distribution and price of the security so offered here.

"A fee of one one-hundredth of 1 per cent of the value of the securities will be charged for registration with the commission.

"Section 6 empowers the commission to revise the registration of domestic securities. Some of the grounds stated are insolvency of the issuer, violation of the act, previous or

KNAKNUED ENDS — CITY TODAY OPENS

New York Evening Post, 29 March 1933: front-page extract reporting Jones's warning. The headline's death claim is contemporary reporting, rather than a demographic estimate.

The question of using economic relations to obtain humanitarian concessions was raised at the time. In the House of Commons on 5 July 1933, the Duchess of Atholl discussed famine in Ukraine and other Soviet regions and challenged the prospect of profiting from cheap Soviet food imports. She urged the government to make further credits conditional on measures benefiting the population, including allowing peasants to retain food. Her intervention demonstrates that both the catastrophe and possible economic pressure were matters of public debate during the famine.

Cardinal Theodor Innitzer's appeal published on 19 August 1933 likewise called for relief and urged those expanding economic relations with the USSR to seek a humanitarian clause. He proposed using those relationships to secure access for relief. By then, the spring and early-summer peak of deaths had already passed.

Relief required access as well as money and food. Soviet denial helped sustain the refusal of international assistance: accepting an independent operation would have exposed conditions the authorities were concealing. The large ARA mission of 1921–23 had no equivalent in Ukraine in 1932–33. Private remittances and purchases through Torgsin were different channels, dependent on resources and connections many starving households lacked. Soviet obstruction and foreign governments' unwillingness to press the issue were separate obstacles, although they reinforced one another.

Commercial involvement had meanwhile created a different set of relationships. American machinery, factory design, engineering and technical expertise contributed to Soviet industrialisation; the Ford–Kahn contracts provide a concrete example. Industrial cooperation was a commercial activity, distinct from humanitarian relief. But the presence of foreign specialists also created potential channels of information. Responsibility has to be assessed through what particular participants knew and could influence.



Assembly line at Ford's Moscow plant, 6 November 1930. The 1929 agreement brought Ford factory designs and technical personnel into Soviet industrialisation.

On 10 July 1933, Sergio Gradenigo, Italy's consul in Kharkiv, reported famine and disease to the embassy in Moscow and for the information of the Foreign Ministry. His earlier dispatch of 31 May had predicted that depopulation and Russian settlement would bring Ukraine's Russification, while also repeating antisemitic accusations. On 2 September, Fascist Italy signed a pact of friendship, non-aggression and neutrality with the USSR. Reports of starvation and diplomatic accommodation coexisted; ideological hostility to communism did not prevent engagement with the Soviet state.

The United States recognised the Soviet Union on 16 November 1933. Roosevelt's objectives included commercial opportunities and limiting Japanese expansion in Asia. Those interests existed independently of Duranty's reporting. Recognition placed those diplomatic priorities alongside evidence of Ukrainian suffering that remained without an adequate response.

Duranty also had direct access to Roosevelt. Their meeting at Albany in July 1932 took place while Roosevelt was governor and presidential candidate. A contemporary account in *Time* describes the lengthy consultation. Duranty's authority could therefore reach policymakers as well as newspaper readers.

The financial negotiations show how much Roosevelt was prepared to leave unsettled. A memorandum of 15 November 1933 contemplated a payment between $75 million and $150 million, financed through an additional interest charge on American loans or credits to the USSR, with other claims eliminated. The exact sum remained open. In July 1934, Assistant Secretary of State R. Walton Moore reported claims exceeding $600 million and described the negotiations as having broken down. Recognition had already been granted. These were proposed concessions, rather than a completed repayment settlement. Commercial and strategic objectives had secured a diplomatic result while neither financial performance nor humanitarian relief had first been obtained.

Arthurdale and the Appeal of Social Experiment

Eleanor Roosevelt's Arthurdale project in West Virginia grew from the same Depression-era search for alternatives to economic collapse. The federal government bought the site in 1933; the first families arrived in 1934. Its 165 homesteads combined family plots with cooperative enterprises, schooling and public services. Eleanor's personal involvement helped make it a conspicuous experiment in planned community life.



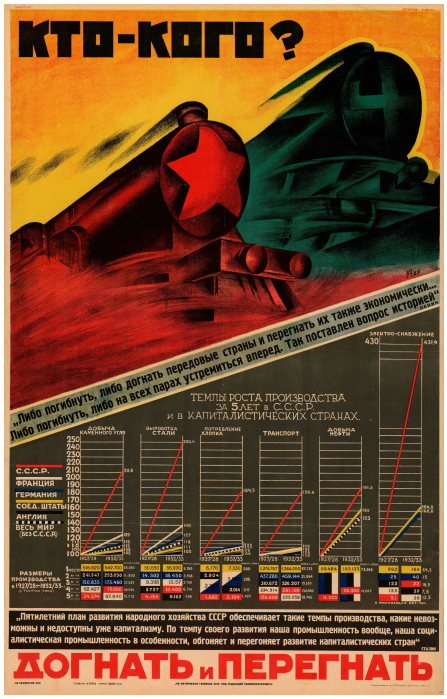
Arthurdale homes, June 1935.

Arthurdale's applicants sought homes and livelihoods. The enthusiasm surrounding the project shows the hope invested in deliberate social reconstruction. In sections of the American left, Soviet industrialisation carried a still greater promise of escape from capitalism's crisis. The American journalist Louis Fischer made that sympathy explicit in a 1935 article for *The Nation*: the Soviet experiment's apparent success was a source of political faith. Once that faith acquired a stake in the outcome, reports of suffering could be received as attacks on the hope itself.

Statistics and Faith in the Soviet Experiment

Official statistics helped give this hope the appearance of measured success. In his report of 7 January 1933, Stalin claimed that national income had risen by 85 per cent since 1928 and that workers' and peasants' material conditions were improving from year to year.

Statistics and Faith in the Soviet Experiment (continued)



Mark Harrison's assessment of the first five-year plan attributes most of the reported national-income increase to unacknowledged price rises and other statistical biases. New industrial capacity coexisted with falling consumption and mass starvation.[34]

The political appeal lay in what the figures seemed to prove: while capitalist economies were in crisis, planning appeared to be delivering an alternative future. That made the choice of measures consequential. Industrial output could expand while peasants lost access to food; the apparent vindication of the experiment rested on which outcomes were counted and whose losses were left out.

"Who will beat whom? Catch up and overtake", 1929. Each country's own 1927/28 output is indexed to 100. The graphs compare projected percentage growth to 1932/33 from different absolute starting levels. Even if accurate, faster growth would not establish that Soviet output would overtake its rivals. The slogan, racing trains and towering red lines encourage that impression.

British diplomatic dispatches of 5 March and 17 July 1933 described conditions in the Kuban and Ukraine, including reports of starvation deaths and deserted villages. A later British debate makes the distinction between knowledge and action especially stark. In the House of Lords on 25 July 1934, Lord Ponsonby opposed parliamentary scrutiny of foreign internal affairs and redirected attention to poverty in Britain, famines in India and conditions in the United States. That diversion supplied no rebuttal to evidence from Ukraine.[35] In the same debate, the government spokesman, Earl Stanhope, acknowledged familiarity with much of the information presented and said the only material available to contradict it was official Soviet propaganda, which conflicted with other sources. He nevertheless declined to provide papers for the discussion. This was a post-famine exchange, but it shows how awareness could coexist with resistance to public action.

The international failure was therefore more complicated than a successful deception imposed on an uninformed world. Warnings could be obstructed, disbelieved, discounted or subordinated to other objectives. Denial could help people avoid the implications of information they had already encountered.

[34] Harrison's study of hidden inflation in Soviet industrial statistics describes incentives for enterprises to obtain high plan prices, making output targets easier to fulfil in roubles. He also records a prohibition from above on reducing results once they had been publicly announced. Measurement bias and political protection could therefore reinforce one another.

[35] An early case of *whataboutism*. See Vatnik Soup, *Debunk of the Day 4: Whataboutism*, 1 February 2026.

1.5 Duranty, a Proto-Vatnik

Walter Duranty's reporting illustrates how apparent independence could give a regime's account authority abroad. He also helped cover up one of the twentieth century's worst mass killings—the Holodomor genocide—as it unfolded. His standing as an experienced foreign correspondent and Pulitzer winner helped lend credibility to his public assurances.

The modern analogy of a *proto-vatnik* concerns a practice: a foreign commentator lends the authority of expertise to the regime's preferred account while discounting contrary witnesses. Gorky likewise lent his literary prestige to the celebration of forced labour through the 1934 White Sea Canal propaganda book (see the insert in section 2.5.2). Duranty's published conduct can be examined without assuming that he was a paid Soviet agent. Censorship, dependence on access, ideological sympathy, apologetics and covert recruitment are different relationships.

In "Russians Hungry, But Not Starving", published on 31 March 1933, Duranty acknowledged deaths connected with malnutrition while denying famine. He challenged Jones's evidence and associated famine reporting with mistaken predictions of Soviet collapse. But a government's survival says little about whether the people it rules are starving.

More revealingly, the article combined **minimising suffering with justifying suffering**. Duranty invoked the omelette metaphor and compared Bolshevik indifference to casualties in socialist transformation with generals' willingness to sacrifice soldiers. The argument offered two defences at once: the



Portrait published in 1919.



complimentary mini-soup

Walter Duranty

In today's Vatnik Soup, we introduce **Walter Duranty**, a British-born journalist. He's best known for winning a Pulitzer Prize for his Soviet reporting—and for denying the Holodomor while millions of Ukrainians starved.

Born in Liverpool in 1884 and educated at Cambridge, he became *The New York Times*'s Moscow correspondent. His 1932 Pulitzer rewarded reporting published in 1931.

In his March 1933 dispatch, he belittled Gareth Jones's eyewitness reporting as a "scare story", admitting deaths from malnutrition while denying famine.

Months earlier, he had reassured readers that Russians had "tightened their belts". Starvation was presented as hardship people could endure while Soviet progress continued.

His infamous use of the omelette-and-eggs metaphor justified the regime's casualties. Denial and justification reinforced each other: minimise the suffering, then excuse it as the price of building socialism.

The New York Times has never returned his Pulitzer Prize. In 2003, the Pulitzer Board declined to revoke it.

catastrophe was supposedly exaggerated, while casualties were normalised as a cost of the project. People's survival became subordinate to the regime's achievement. His account thus supplied a rationale for tolerating suffering as well as a reason to doubt its extent.

This is the moral problem Hayek later examined in chapter X of *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), "Why the Worst Get on Top"[36]. His argument concerns institutions that reward ruthlessness when a collective objective overrides restraints on how people may be treated. Duranty's defence shows how an outside observer could help make that ruthlessness acceptable. The claim that a great transformation required sacrifices also left those directing it to decide whose lives could be sacrificed.

Hayek and The Road to Serfdom, 1944

Friedrich August von Hayek (1899–1992) was an Austrian-born British economist and political thinker, trained in Vienna and a teacher at the London School of Economics from 1931 to 1950. He completed *The Road to Serfdom* during the Second World War, when the LSE was evacuated to Cambridge. Its first British publication was on 10 March 1944, while Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union still existed and the latter was Britain's wartime ally.



Friedrich August von Hayek, undated portrait.

Dedicated to "the socialists of all parties", the book challenged collectivism across political camps[37]. Hayek connected fascism, Nazism and Soviet communism through their subordination of individual choice to collective purposes enforced by concentrated power. He argued that comprehensive economic planning required authorities to impose priorities on people who did not share the same ends. His immediate audience was British: he feared that the appeal of wartime direction would carry extensive controls into peacetime.

The American edition followed in September 1944; a *Reader's Digest* condensation in April 1945 brought it a much wider public. Its reception was sharply divided, and it became a lasting reference in liberal arguments about planning, political coercion and the rule of law.

Hayek shared the 1974 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences with Gunnar Myrdal. In his acceptance remarks at the Nobel banquet on 10 December, he warned that the prize conferred "an authority which in economics no man ought to possess". The following day, his lecture *The Pretence of Knowledge* developed the danger of treating limited expertise as a warrant to direct society.

[36] F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Routledge, 1944), chapter X, "Why the Worst Get on Top".

[37] F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944).



RUSSIANS HUNGRY, BUT NOT STARVING

Deaths From Diseases Due to Malnutrition High, Yet the Soviet Is Entrenched.

LARGER CITIES HAVE FOOD

Ukraine, North Caucasus and Lower Volga Regions Suffer From Shortages.

KREMLIN'S 'DOOM' DENIED

Russians and Foreign Observers In Country See No Ground for Predictions of Disaster.

By WALTER DURANTY.
Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

MOSCOW, March 30.—In the middle of the diplomatic duel between Great Britain and the Soviet Union over the accused British engineers there appears from a British source a big scare story in the American press about famine in the Soviet Union, with "thousands already dead and millions menaced by death from starvation."

Its author is Gareth Jones, who a former secretary to David Lloyd George and who recently spent three weeks in the Soviet Union and reached the conclusion that the country was "on the verge of a terrific smash," as he told the writer.

Mr. Jones is a man of a keen and active mind, and he has taken the trouble to learn Russian, which he speaks with considerable fluency, but the writer thought Mr. Jones's judgment was somewhat hasty and asked him on what it was based. It appeared that he had made a forty-mile walk through villages in the neighborhood of Kharkov and had found conditions sad.

I suggested that that was a rather inadequate cross-section of a big country, but nothing could shake his conviction of impending doom.

Predictions of Doom Frequent.

The number of times foreigners, especially Britons, have shaken rueful heads as they composed the Soviet Union's epitaph can scarcely be computed, and in point of fact it has done the Soviet Union incalculable harm since the day when William C. Bullitt's able and honest account of the situation was shelved and negatived during the Versailles Peace Conference by reports that Admiral Kolchak, White Russian leader, had taken Kazan—which he never did—and that the Soviet power was "on the verge of an abyss."

Admiral Kolchak faded. Then General Denikin took Orel and the Soviet Government was on the verge of an abyss again, and General Yudenich "took" Petrograd. But where are Generals Denikin and Yudenich now?

A couple of years ago another British "eyewitness" reported a mutiny in the Moscow garrison and "rows of corpses neatly piled in Theatre Square," and only this week a British news agency revealed a revolt of the Soviet Fifty-fifth Regiment at Dauria, on the Manchurian border. All bunk, of course.

This is not to mention a more regrettable incident of three years ago when an American correspondent discovered half the Ukraine flaming with rebellion and "proved" it by authentic documents eagerly proffered by Rumanians, which documents on examination appeared to relate to events of eight or ten years earlier.

Saw No One Dying.

But to return to Mr. Jones. He told me there was virtually no bread in the villages he had visited and that the adults were haggard, gaunt and discouraged, but that he had seen no dead or dying animals or human beings.

I believed him because I knew it to be correct not only of some parts of the Ukraine but of sections of the North Caucasus and lower Volga regions and, for that matter, Kazakstan, where the attempt to change the stock-raising nomads of the type and the period of Abraham and Isaac into 1933 collective grain farmers has produced the most deplorable results.

It is all too true that the novelty and mismanagement of collective farming, plus the quite efficient conspiracy of Feodor M. Konar and his associates in agricultural commissariats, have made a mess of Soviet food production. [Konar was executed for sabotage.]

But—to put it brutally—you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, and the Bolshevist leaders are just as indifferent to the casualties that may be involved in their drive toward socialization as any General during the World War who ordered a costly attack in order to show his superiors that he and his division possessed the proper soldierly spirit. In fact, the Bolsheviki are more indifferent because they are animated by fanatical conviction.

Since I talked with Mr. Jones I have made exhaustive inquiries about this alleged famine situation. I have inquired in Soviet commissariats and in foreign embassies with their network of consuls, and I have tabulated information from Britons working as specialists and from my personal connections, Russian and foreign.

Disease Mortality Is High.

All of this seems to me to be more trustworthy information than I could get by a brief trip through any one area. The Soviet Union is too big to permit a hasty study, and it is the foreign correspondent's job to present a whole picture, not a part of it. And here are the facts:

There is a serious food shortage throughout the country, with occasional cases of well-managed State or collective farms. The big cities and the army are adequately supplied with food. There is no actual starvation or deaths from starvation, but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition.

In short, conditions are definitely bad in certain sections—the Ukraine, North Caucasus and Lower Volga. The rest of the country is on short rations but nothing worse. These conditions are bad, but there is no famine.

The critical months in this country are February and March, after which a supply of eggs, milk and vegetables comes to supplement the shortage of bread—if, as now, there is a shortage of bread. In every Russian village food conditions will improve henceforth, but that will not answer one really vital question—What about the coming grain crop?

Upon that depends not the future of the Soviet power, which cannot and will not be smashed, but the future policy of the Kremlin. If through climatic conditions, as in 1921, the crop fails, then, indeed, Russia will be menaced by famine. If not, the present difficulties will be speedily forgotten.

Walter Duranty, "Russians Hungry, But Not Starving", The New York Times, 31 March 1933, p. 13.

Belts and Bodies

In his dispatch of 26 November 1932, Duranty reassured readers that Russians had previously "tightened their belts".[38]

[38] Walter Duranty, "Food Shortage Laid to Soviet Peasants", The New York Times, 26 November 1932, p. 9, quoted in Marco Carynnyk, "The New York Times and the Great Famine", The Ukrainian Weekly, 11 September 1983.

Belts and Bodies (continued)

The familiar expression suggests a manageable reduction in consumption: people economise, endure discomfort and eventually recover. Applied to famine, however, it turns coercive deprivation into a routine exercise in perseverance. For a person wasting away through lack of food, the belt could become brutally literal. The loss of body mass was evidence of harm, rather than a reassuring sign of an ability to endure it.

The metaphor also obscures agency. A household choosing to spend less is making a decision; a household deprived of food and prevented from escaping is being subjected to decisions made by others. Praising the population's endurance shifts attention from those imposing the deprivation to those expected to survive it. The reassurance concerned the durability of the Soviet programme. It offered the starving no protection.

On 6 April 1933, Duranty presented reported increases in industrial output as evidence that the food shortage was less serious than believed, or that distribution had improved sufficiently to amount to the same thing. But this inference did not follow. Factories could receive workers and supplies while villages were deprived. Industrial production measures a different outcome from whether particular people can obtain food. Treating achievement as an answer to starvation displaced the question of whose welfare counted and whose losses were being excluded from the assessment of success.

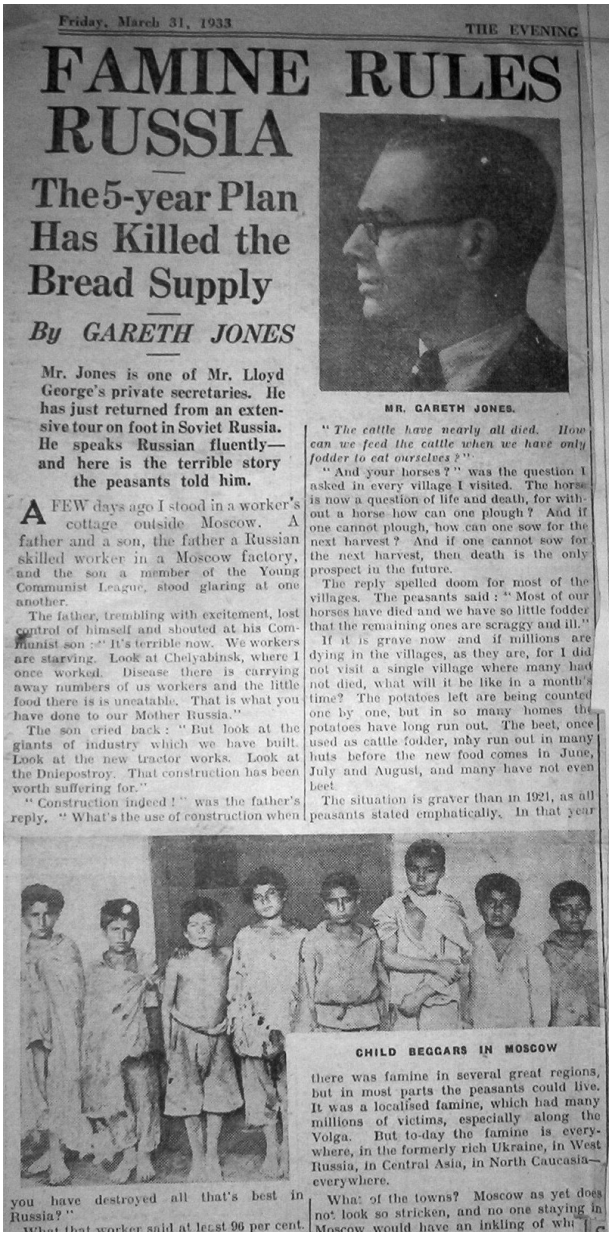
Jones's reply published on 13 May 1933 exposed the dispute over methods. He rejected the suggestion that he had predicted the regime's collapse and explained that his conclusions rested on several kinds of evidence, including interviews conducted in Russian and conversations with diplomatic representatives. He also challenged the euphemisms encouraged by censorship. The *Times* published that reply: contradictory evidence reached the newspaper and its readers. The issue was therefore also the weight and credibility given to competing accounts.

The pressures on the Moscow press corps extended beyond Duranty. In his 1937 memoir *Assignment in Utopia*[39], Eugene Lyons described the correspondents' repudiation of Jones and a meeting with the Soviet press official Konstantin Umansky. According to Lyons, preserving access during the Metro-Vickers trial of British engineers helped induce the correspondents to accommodate the authorities. The account identifies a concrete institutional mechanism: competition for official access could encourage journalists to protect their working relationships at the expense of the people whose suffering they were supposed to report.

[39] Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia* (Harcourt, Brace, 1937), chapter XV, "The Press Corps Conceals a Famine", pp. 575–576.

A British diplomatic report of 26 September 1933 records Duranty privately considering ten million deaths linked to food shortages across the USSR possible. This was his estimate, not an established death toll or a Ukraine-only figure. A September conversation cannot by itself establish his knowledge in March. It does, however, make the difference between his public reassurance and private assessment a documented question.

Prestige outlived the reporting. On 21 November 2003, the Pulitzer Board declined to revoke Duranty's award. Its review concerned the thirteen articles submitted from 1931 and its standard of clear and convincing evidence of deliberate deception. The Board criticised those reports and acknowledged the famine's gravity. Its decision did not vindicate the famine coverage of 1933. The award's institutional history matters because recognition can continue to confer authority long after the work that authority protects has been discredited.



Friday, March 31, 1933 THE EVENING

FAMINE RULES RUSSIA

The 5-year Plan Has Killed the Bread Supply

By GARETH JONES

Mr. Jones is one of Mr. Lloyd George's private secretaries. He has just returned from an extensive tour on foot in Soviet Russia. He speaks Russian fluently—and here is the terrible story the peasants told him.

A FEW days ago I stood in a worker's cottage outside Moscow. A father and a son, the father a Russian skilled worker in a Moscow factory, and the son a member of the Young Communist League, stood glaring at one another.

The father, trembling with excitement, lost control of himself and shouted at his Communist son :" It's terrible now. We workers are starving. Look at Chelyabinsk, where I once worked. Disease there is carrying away numbers of us workers and the little food there is is uneatable. That is what you have done to our Mother Russia."

The son cried back : " But look at the giants of industry which we have built. Look at the new tractor works. Look at the Dniepostroy. That construction has been worth suffering for."

" Construction indeed ! " was the father's reply. " What's the use of construction when you have destroyed all that's best in Russia? "

MR. GARETH JONES.

" *The cattle have nearly all died. How can we feed the cattle when we have only fodder to eat ourselves ?* "

" And your horses ? " was the question I asked in every village I visited. The horse is now a question of life and death, for without a horse how can one plough ? And if one cannot plough, how can one sow for the next harvest ? And if one cannot sow for the next harvest, then death is the only prospect in the future.

The reply spelled doom for most of the villages. The peasants said : " Most of our horses have died and we have so little fodder that the remaining ones are scraggy and ill."

If it is grave now and if millions are dying in the villages, as they are, for I did not visit a single village where many had not died, what will it be like in a month's time? The potatoes left are being counted one by one, but in so many homes the potatoes have long run out. The beet, once used as cattle fodder, may run out in many huts before the new food comes in June, July and August, and many have not even beet.

The situation is graver than in 1921, as all peasants stated emphatically. In that year there was famine in several great regions, but in most parts the peasants could live. It was a localised famine, which had many millions of victims, especially along the Volga. But to-day the famine is everywhere, in the formerly rich Ukraine, in West Russia, in Central Asia, in North Caucasia—everywhere.

CHILD BEGGARS IN MOSCOW

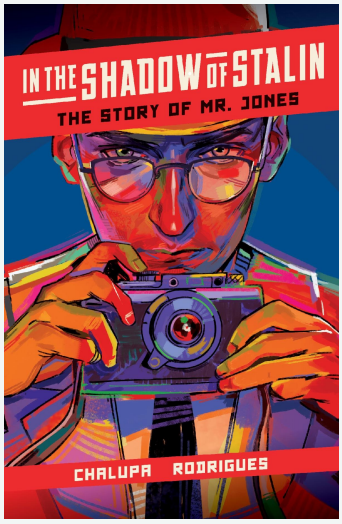
What of the towns? Moscow as yet does not look so stricken, and no one staying in Moscow would have an inkling of wh

Gareth Jones, "Famine Rules Russia", Evening Standard, 31 March 1933. The clipping's inset photograph is captioned "Child Beggars in Moscow"; it is not identified as a photograph of Ukraine.

Mr. Jones: film and graphic novel



Mr. Jones (2019). Samuel Goldwyn Films.



In the Shadow of Stalin: The Story of Mr. Jones (2024). Oni Press.

Agnieszka Holland's film *Mr. Jones* (2019), written by Andrea Chalupa, dramatises Gareth Jones's reporting from famine-stricken Ukraine and the campaign to discredit him, including Duranty's denial. Chalupa returned to the story in *In the Shadow of Stalin: The Story of Mr. Jones* (Oni Press, 2024), illustrated by Ivan Rodrigues. Both bring the conflict between eyewitness reporting and Soviet propaganda to a wider audience.

1.6 The Stalinist Propaganda Network

Duranty operated within a wider environment of Soviet publicity, sympathetic cultural authority and organised influence. Some of these connections were directed and financed; others depended on conviction, ambition or the desire to retain access.[40] Their combined effect could be to make criticism of the Soviet state appear ignorant, malicious or hostile to progress. A network of influence could function through several forms of participation, with different degrees of knowledge and commitment.

Willi Münzenberg supplied an organised example. As described in Sean McMeekin's *The Red Millionaire* (2003)[41] and Stephen Koch's *Double Lives* (revised edition, 2004)[42], he built an international media apparatus and front organisations that recruited prominent political and cultural figures to Soviet causes. Such organisations could reach audiences beyond the

[40] Vatnik Soup's "MICE" (21 May 2023) discusses Money, Ideology, Compromise and Ego as overlapping motives for influence work. Payment, political conviction and ambition correspond to money, ideology and ego; compromise refers to blackmail using damaging personal information. Privileged access can offer professional rewards and personal validation, helping explain cooperation sustained by more than direct payment.

[41] Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willy Munzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (Yale University Press, 2003).

[42] Stephen Koch, *Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Münzenberg, and the Seduction of the Intellectuals* (Enigma Books, 2004; ISBN 9781929631209), revised edition. Chapter 1, "Lying for the Truth", **p. 15** and **pp. 24–27**, especially **pp. 25–26**, on cultural authority, recruitment beyond party membership and the value of apparently independent supporters.

Communist Party's own membership. The value of a respected writer's endorsement lay partly in the authority that person had acquired elsewhere: the message could appear to come from an independent conscience rather than a party office.

Public endorsement, campaign membership and covert intelligence work[43] were different forms of involvement in this wider environment of influence. Cultural reputation made an endorsement valuable even when its author acted from conviction.

Koch describes Münzenberg's press-agency model as capable of distributing legitimate journalism alongside fabricated stories while also providing cover for clandestine activity. That combination could give planted material credibility derived from genuine reporting. He also describes how opinions promoted through organised cultural circles could spread among people who were not directly managed.[44]

Louis Fischer's reporting for *The Nation* illustrates this ideological commitment. The US Commission on the Ukraine Famine's 1988 account traces a shift from his warnings about procurement and food conditions in late 1932 to his defence of deportations in February 1933. He adopted accusations against Ukrainian nationalist "wreckers" and presented coercion as a response forced upon the authorities. The victims of the policy could thus be blamed for its failure. The reasoning offered sympathisers a way to acknowledge difficulties while treating them as grounds for greater repression.

Fischer's own "Hearst's Russian Famine", published on 13 March 1935, makes the political investment particularly clear. He challenged Thomas Walker's claimed itinerary and photographs, questions that required investigation. But exposing an unreliable report could not dispose of independent evidence concerning 1932–33. Fischer also explained the appeal of Soviet economic progress to the American left and portrayed Hearst's coverage as an attempt to destroy its confidence. The defence now concerned the future of a political cause as well as the reliability of particular evidence. A commitment to that cause could shape which witnesses deserved belief and which questions appeared hostile.

In April 1932, the Canadian journalist Rhea Clyman warned Sidney and Beatrice Webb in London that people were starving and collective farms were failing. Beatrice Webb's diary entry of 9 April records these warnings alongside attacks on Clyman's intelligence, morals and sexual respectability. Clyman had initially sympathised with communism before becoming disillusioned. The Webbs heard contrary evidence before their Soviet visit. Personal prejudice could thus reinforce political commitment by undermining an unwelcome witness's credibility.

[43] Stephen Koch, *Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Münzenberg, and the Seduction of the Intellectuals* (Enigma Books, 2004; ISBN 9781929631209), revised edition. Chapter 1, "Lying for the Truth", **p. 17**, **pp. 19–20** and **p. 24**, distinguishing professional organisers, sincere supporters with limited knowledge and covert activity.

[44] Stephen Koch, *Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Münzenberg, and the Seduction of the Intellectuals* (Enigma Books, 2004), revised edition, chapter 1, "Lying for the Truth", **p. 24**, on legitimate journalism, fabricated stories and clandestine cover within the press-agency model; **pp. 26–27**, on the wider spread of promoted opinions and the maintenance of belief.

Maxim Gorky offers a parallel from within Soviet cultural life. His 1929 visit to Solovki and participation in the White Sea–Baltic Canal book lent literary authority to the camp system.[45] The collective volume appeared in Russian in 1934; its English adaptation, *Belomor*[46], followed in 1935. Its presentation of prisoners' transformation through labour helped recast coercion as moral and social improvement. The cultural defence went beyond denying brutality: it supplied an uplifting purpose through which brutality could be explained away.

Gorky's use in Gulag newspapers and magazines also shows how a writer's reputation could be repeatedly mobilised within institutions of coercion.

A later example connects denial more directly to Soviet institutions. Applebaum describes how drafts of Douglas Tottle's *Fraud, Famine and Fascism* (1987) circulated between party-history institutes in Moscow and Kyiv and the party Central Committees for corrections and comment; Soviet diplomats promoted the book. Its exposure of some mislabelled photographs and unreliable reporting did not invalidate the independent evidence of the famine.[47]

These cases reveal a recurring way of making state violence defensible: promote the achievement, discredit the witness, concede selected hardships and present the human cost as necessary for a higher purpose. For Ukrainians trying to obtain recognition and relief, the consequences extended beyond a misleading newspaper article. Their testimony had to compete with an international system of reputations and political commitments that could turn knowledge of their suffering into reasons to tolerate it.[48]

[45] See the insert "Gorky and the White Sea Canal propaganda book", p. 55, in section 2.5.2.

[46] Maxim Gorky, L. Averbakh, S. G. Firin (eds.), *Belomor: An Account of the Construction of the New Canal Between the White Sea and the Baltic Sea* (H. Smith & R. Haas, 1935), English adaptation by Amabel Williams-Ellis, introduction, pp. vii–ix.

[47] Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (Toronto: Signal/McClelland & Stewart, 2017; ISBN 978-0-7710-0930-3), chapter 15, "The Holodomor in History and Memory", pp. 338–339. Note 59, p. 416.

[48] The credibility of apologetics still depends partly on who appears to be speaking. Vatnik Soup's work follows contemporary networks of commentators, politicians and other public figures whose reputations help Kremlin narratives reach audiences beyond official Russian media. See Pekka Kallioniemi and Morten Hammeken, *Vatnik Soup: The Ultimate Guide to Russian Disinformation*, on the narratives, their promoters and the interests and affiliations behind them.

2. The Genocidal Intent

Mass death establishes the scale of the catastrophe. The case for genocide concerns the decisions that produced it and the national group against which those decisions were directed. In Ukraine, the evidence joins control over food to restrictions on survival and an assault on the institutions of national life.

2.1 Man-Made Famine, Genocide and Democide

Raphael Lemkin: Naming Genocide

Raphael Lemkin (1900–1959) was a Polish-Jewish jurist who coined "genocide", introducing the term in his 1944 book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. He had studied law in Lwów, now Lviv.

Having escaped Nazi-occupied Poland, he worked to make the destruction of national, ethnic, racial and religious groups an international crime. His campaigning helped secure the Genocide Convention, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1948.



Raphael Lemkin (1900–1959). Undated photograph.

In his 1953 address, "Soviet Genocide in Ukraine", Lemkin applied the concept to Ukraine. He linked the famine to attacks on intellectuals, churches and national institutions and to changes in settlement: an assault on the Ukrainian nation's capacity to continue as a community.

An authority does not need a precise forecast of the final death toll to know that removing people's principal means of subsistence can kill them. In Ukrainian villages this meant taking grain and other food; among Kazakh pastoralists it meant stripping away livestock and undermining the pastoral economy. Such knowledge matters when assessing deliberate starvation. The additional question for genocide is whether lethal deprivation was used to destroy a national group, wholly or partly; that must be assessed through the targeting, decisions and wider assault documented in each case.

The Genocide Convention defines genocide through specified acts committed with the intention of destroying a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, wholly or partly. Killing is one means; deliberately imposing conditions calculated to bring about physical destruction is another. Starvation can therefore be a method of genocide. The relevant group here is the Ukrainian nation, with its rural population a central part of the community subjected to destruction.

Genocide Convention: Article II

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;

(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.[49]

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 9 December 1948.

Intent and motive answer different questions. Industrialisation, procurement, the punishment of resistance and the preservation of Soviet power could supply motives for policies that also sought national destruction. Conversely, hostility towards Ukrainian independence does not make every economic decision genocidal. The connection must be established through the people targeted, the measures imposed and the leadership's conduct as their consequences became clear.

Nor does genocide require the attempted murder of every member of a nation. The question is whether the destruction of part of that group was intended. A peasant could be targeted through an economic category and as a member of a national community at the same time. Treating class and nationality as mutually exclusive explanations would obscure the way Soviet power understood the Ukrainian countryside.

Famine, Democide and Genocide

Famine describes catastrophic deprivation and its human consequences; **"man-made famine"** identifies human causes. Coercive extraction, destruction of livelihoods, restrictions on movement and obstruction of relief can create a famine or make it far more lethal. Adverse harvest conditions can coexist with those causes. Human causation, however, does not by itself establish an intention to kill or destroy a group.

R. J. Rummel's concept of **democide**[50] covers government killing, including deaths caused by deliberately imposed lethal conditions and knowingly reckless disregard for life. A famine intensified through such decisions can fall within it even when the specific intent required for genocide is disputed. Ordinary planning mistakes do not automatically constitute democide: the authorities' actions, knowledge and conduct towards the endangered population remain decisive.

[49] Russia's deportation and Russification of Ukrainian children raise this question directly. The ICC's war-crime warrants do not settle whether the additional element of genocidal intent is present. See section 3.6, "Deporting and Russifying Ukrainian Children".

[50] R. J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (Transaction Publishers, 1994), chapter 2, "Definition of Democide".

Famine, Democide and Genocide (continued)

These descriptions can overlap. A famine may be man-made, democidal and genocidal. But a deliberately enforced policy, knowledge of its consequences, reckless indifference, an intention to kill, and an intention to destroy a protected group are distinct findings. Democide supplies an analytical category; it is not itself a separate offence under the Genocide Convention. An explicit written order is not indispensable: genocidal intent may be established from the combined evidence of conduct and surrounding circumstances.

2.2 Knowledge, Orders and Escalation

The leadership received warnings before the peak of deaths in 1933. In letters to Stalin and Molotov on 10 June 1932, Hryhorii Petrovsky and Vlas Chubar described starvation and the consequences of excessive procurement. Chubar reported the removal of grain and seed reserves, with further quotas imposed even after earlier targets had been met. The information came from senior Soviet Ukrainian officials, within the regime's own chain of authority. An explanation based on an uninformed centre cannot account for what happened afterwards. Writing to Kaganovich on 15 June, Stalin dismissed the appeals and judged that Ukraine had already received enough. The Politburo's decision of 23 June ruled out further grain deliveries beyond those already approved. On 6 July, Molotov and Kaganovich told Stalin that they had rejected the Ukrainian Politburo's request to reduce the procurement plan.

But information was also treated as a political threat. Reports of deprivation could be recast as evidence of sabotage or disloyalty, while the famine was concealed from public scrutiny. Suppression damaged the means by which a failing policy might be corrected: witnesses risked punishment, officials had incentives to report success, and victims lacked independent institutions through which to compel a response. The leadership's knowledge and its destruction or discrediting of contrary information must be considered together.

Coercion then reached beyond demanding a share of the harvest. The law of 7 August 1932 prescribed execution, or at least ten years' imprisonment under mitigating circumstances, for theft of collective and cooperative property. The state's claim over food acquired extraordinary punitive force. Food fines and blacklisting further restricted households' ability to feed themselves and communities' ability to trade. Such measures converted a procurement failure into punishment affecting the conditions of survival. The 6 December decree ordered the withdrawal of goods, suspension of trade and credit, and early repayment of debts in named villages. A 19 December resolution acknowledged that Ukraine's procurement plan had been reduced twice, but demanded stronger enforcement. On 22 December, Kaganovich and Chernov urged Stalin to cancel the rules protecting reserves on collective farms that had not fulfilled their procurement plans. The orders of 24 and 29 December required collective farms below their procurement targets to surrender all grain reserves, including sowing seed, reversing its earlier protection.

The directive signed by Stalin and Molotov on 22 January 1933 ordered the prevention of peasant flight from Ukraine and the North Caucasus. Those who had escaped were to be intercepted and, after screening, returned. Its significance lies in the combination: the state was taking food while closing a route by which people could seek it elsewhere. This was an organised restriction imposed after starvation was known, not a shortage beyond the authorities' control.

Stalin's reply of 6 May 1933 to Mikhail Sholokhov shows how knowledge of starvation could coexist with hostility towards its victims. Responding to reports from the Don region, he said relief had been supplied and an investigator would be sent. He acknowledged that officials could descend into sadism but accused the grain growers of waging a "quiet" war against Soviet power. The exchange concerns the North Caucasus, beyond Soviet Ukraine.[51]

The 1934 trial of Andrii Richytskyi provides a concrete link between leadership pressure and local violence. Defending his brutal grain collections in Arbuzynka, he invoked Kaganovich's demands for harsher methods and Zatonskyi's approval of fines, evictions and arrests. Applebaum's account of this testimony shows how an enforcer understood encouragement from above; it does not establish identical conduct in every village.[52]

Grain exports continued, although volumes fell sharply. Their existence identifies a choice over resources, but the wider allocation also included urban rations, reserves, seed and internal relief. The relevant alternatives were practical as well as economic: reduce seizures, leave food with households, permit movement, admit outside assistance and respond to warnings. The assessment of intent depends on which choices were made, when they were made, and against whom the resulting deprivation was enforced.

2.3 Ukraine, the Kuban and National Targeting

In his letter of 26 April 1926, Stalin endorsed Ukrainisation of party and state institutions, but demanded Communist control of the wider cultural movement. He attacked Mykola Khvylovy's call to turn away from Russian literary models. Suspicion of cultural independence thus preceded the procurement crisis.

Stalin's letter to Kaganovich of 11 August 1932 connects procurement resistance with his fear of losing Ukraine. He distrusted the republic's leadership, invoked Ukrainian nationalists and Polish agents, and urged changes in political and security control. Economic objections became evidence of a threat to Soviet possession of the republic. The national dimension appears in the leadership's own discussion of how the crisis should be handled.

[51] Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (Toronto: Signal/McClelland & Stewart, 2017; ISBN 978-0-7710-0930-3), chapter 13, "Aftermath", pp. 293–295. Note 43, p. 410; Stalin to Sholokhov, 6 May 1933.

[52] Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (Toronto: Signal/McClelland & Stewart, 2017; ISBN 978-0-7710-0930-3), chapter 10, "Famine Decisions, 1932: The Searches and the Searchers", pp. 237–240. Notes 93–95, pp. 398–399.

The resolution of 14 December 1932 brought grain procurement and nationality policy together. It sanctioned party purges and the reversal of Ukrainisation in the Kuban, alongside restrictions in Ukraine. Food delivery and the institutions sustaining Ukrainian public life were placed within the same campaign against alleged national disloyalty. The separate resolution of 15 December ordered several regions outside Soviet Ukraine to end Ukrainisation, switch Ukrainian-language publications to Russian, and prepare schools for Russian-language instruction by autumn 1933. The Kuban matters because Ukrainian communities extended beyond the republic's administrative border: an account confined to that border can miss the national geography of repression.

The 14 December decree also ordered inhabitants of Poltavskaya deported north and their settlement repopulated with collective farmers from the Red Army, who were to receive the land, winter crops, buildings, equipment and livestock. Stalin had defended clearing Cossack villages and settling Chechens in their place in November 1920 as punishment for alleged disloyalty in the Terek region. Collective removal and redistribution recur across these campaigns against different populations.

That **Ukraine produced enough food in 1932 to avoid famine** makes continued deprivation a question of political choice. The food balance in section 1.3 establishes the material possibility of prevention. Read alongside punitive seizures, restrictions on escape and the national measures documented here, it makes the leadership's decision to persist central to the evidence of intent.

The quantitative evidence strengthens this connection. In "The Causes of Ukrainian Famine Mortality, 1932–33"[53], Markevich, Naumenko and Qian find anti-Ukrainian bias in mortality and in both planned and actual grain procurement, including outside Soviet Ukraine. Their analysis links ethnic composition to policy, beyond differences in food productivity. Procurement targets, actual collections and regional grain retention—production minus procurement—are distinct measures; retention does not directly measure food reaching each household. However, their procurement-target data leave open when discriminatory extraction became a decision to let Ukrainians die; they do not establish that famine was already planned in 1928.

A prize-winning quantitative study of the Holodomor

Andrei Markevich, Natalya Naumenko and Nancy Qian, "The Causes of Ukrainian Famine Mortality, 1932–33", *The Review of Economic Studies*, vol. 92, no. 5 (October 2025), pp. 3276–3305. Published online 11 September 2024. DOI: 10.1093/restud/rdae091.

Winner of the 2025 Conquest Prize for Contribution to Holodomor Studies.

[53] Markevich, Naumenko and Qian, "The Causes of Ukrainian Famine Mortality, 1932–33", §4.3, Table 2, column 8. Using mortality data for 1885–1913, the authors find no association between Ukrainian population share and mortality in the famine of 1891–92. This comparison weakens explanations of the 1932–33 mortality pattern based on enduring features of Ukrainian communities or the places where they lived.

A prize-winning quantitative study of the Holodomor (continued)

"We construct a novel panel dataset for interwar Soviet Union to study the causes of Ukrainian famine mortality (Holodomor) during 1932–3 and document several facts: (1) ***Ukraine produced enough food in 1932 to avoid famine in Ukraine****; (2) 1933 mortality in the Soviet Union was increasing in the pre-famine ethnic Ukrainian population share and (3) was unrelated to food productivity across regions; (4) this pattern exists even outside of Ukraine; (5) migration restrictions exacerbated mortality; (6) actual and planned grain procurement were increasing and actual and planned grain retention (production minus procurement) were decreasing in the ethnic Ukrainian population share across regions.* ***The results imply that anti-Ukrainian bias in Soviet policy contributed to high Ukrainian famine mortality, and that this bias systematically targeted ethnic Ukrainians across the Soviet Union."***

The study links population, policy and outcome. Higher deaths alone might admit several explanations. Discrimination in the state's own procurement plans, read alongside warnings, coercion and restrictions on escape, makes an account of accidental local mismanagement harder to sustain. It also weakens the argument that famine outside Ukraine disproves targeting: the relevant population was not contained within one republican frontier.

Nor must every other victim be excluded for the Ukrainian case to hold. The Asharshylyq requires its own assessment of Kazakh livelihoods, national transformation and lethal policy. Soviet authorities could devastate several populations and pursue different forms of repression against more than one national group. The existence of other victims expands the history of responsibility; it does not remove the need to explain the measures directed against Ukrainians.

The countryside was more than a source of grain. It sustained families, language, religious practice and the everyday transmission of Ukrainian identity. In his 1953 address, "Soviet Genocide in Ukraine", Raphael Lemkin understood attacks on the peasantry alongside the destruction of intellectual leadership, churches and national institutions. His interpretation joined the physical destruction of people to the dismantling of the community they sustained.

This combination matters for intent. A government seeking deliveries might punish resistance; a government attacking national autonomy could also identify that resistance with the existence of the nation itself. The December measures show those purposes meeting in policy. The assault on Ukrainian institutions helps explain why starvation belongs within a wider national history, while the deprivation of food and prevention of escape establish the physical stakes.

Cultural persecution and physical destruction nevertheless require precise description. Censorship, forced assimilation and the destruction of institutions can reveal objectives and help interpret an attack; the genocide argument must also establish the specified destructive acts and intent. Lemkin's broader account makes these connections visible.

2.4 Objections, Assessment and Recognition

Agricultural disruption, livestock losses and the wider Soviet crisis were real. So were changes in quotas, falling exports and distributions of domestic food aid. An explanation of the famine must account for them. But an account of how a crisis began cannot by itself explain the decisions taken once the leadership knew that people were starving. A destructive agricultural programme and the deliberate intensification of deprivation can form successive stages of the same catastrophe.

The disagreement among historians concerns this development as well as classification. Davies and Wheatcroft[54] interpret the famine as an unwanted consequence of the drive to industrialise, while stressing Stalin's responsibility and full knowledge of its scale. Bohdan Klid's account of the debate contrasts their explanation with arguments stressing the additional punitive and national measures. These are competing explanations of policy and intention. They must be tested against the sequence of decisions, rather than resolved by assuming that either all Soviet famine deaths were intentional from the outset or none could become intentional later.

The extent and coordination of household food seizures require evidence of their own. The documented penalties, blacklisting and restrictions on flight do not establish that every household underwent an identical search or lost every item of food.

The wider record also changes the credibility of an innocent-accident explanation. Stalin's regime repeatedly used mass killing and the uprooting of national communities as instruments of rule. A commitment to preserving Ukrainian lives cannot simply be presumed, with catastrophe attributed to circumstances unless an explicit order to starve appears. Claims of necessity or helplessness must be tested against the capacity to confiscate food, prevent escape and punish resistance. A ruler willing to sacrifice other populations acquires no presumption of benevolence towards Ukrainians.[55]

Selective relief also needs to be understood on its own terms. Some assistance does not establish a general priority to preserve every endangered community. Its timing, recipients and conditions matter alongside the measures still being enforced. Equally, continued exports cannot alone identify the national group targeted or settle the leadership's purpose. The genocide case rests on the convergence of evidence: known starvation, punitive extraction, blocked escape, discriminatory policy and attacks on Ukrainian national life. Together, these support the conclusion that hunger became an instrument of national destruction.

Later recognition expresses an assessment of that record. Ukraine's parliament recognised the Holodomor as genocide in 2006; the European Parliament did so on 15 December 2022. Such

[54] R. W. Davies, Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), revised preface, p. xv.

[55] Under Stalin, more than 1.5 million Gulag prisoners died; the regime also used execution quotas and persecuted political and national groups. See section 2.5.2 and Vatnik Soup, *The Gulag: Soviet-Russian concentration camps, then and now*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming.

decisions matter for public memory and political responsibility. They remain distinct from the historical evidence on which the argument rests and from a criminal judgment determining an individual defendant's liability.

2.5 Who Was Stalin? Power, Ideology and Responsibility

Stalin's responsibility for the Holodomor must be understood through the political order he inherited, his own use of power and his treatment of peoples under Soviet control.[56]

2.5.1 Lenin and the Party-State

Stalin's dictatorship grew within a political order established under Lenin. After seizing power in 1917, the Bolsheviks suppressed rival political organisations and made continued party rule the overriding condition of government. They established the Cheka in December 1917 under its founder and first chairman, Felix Dzerzhinsky, and dispersed the elected Constituent Assembly in January 1918. They had denounced the tsarist secret police, the Okhrana, yet reproduced its methods of surveillance, infiltration and political repression, while unleashing terror on a far greater scale. Political policing and the removal of independent opposition helped give the party a monopoly over public power.



Vladimir Lenin at Gorki in 1923, with his sister Anna and one of his doctors.

Lenin's New Economic Policy in 1921 conceded room for peasant trade and private economic activity. The same party congress that introduced this economic retreat also banned organised factions within the Communist Party. Lenin's resolution ordered the dissolution of groups formed around competing platforms, with expulsion for non-compliance. Economic concessions coexisted with the restriction of political choice, including within the ruling party. On 17 May 1922, he instructed Justice Commissar Dmitry Kursky that courts should legalise terror as a principle.[57]

In *The Foundations of Leninism* (1924)[58], Stalin explicitly invoked Lenin's resolution to defend the party's unity of command and reject freedom of factions. The party's claim to speak for workers and peasants placed its leadership above independent political challenge. Stalin could use the founding leader's authority and rules to strengthen his own position.

The famine under Lenin and his instructions discussed in section 1.1.2 had already shown how coercive extraction and the political use of hunger could reach into Ukrainian lives.

[56] For fuller accounts, see Vatnik Soup, *The Gulag: Soviet-Russian concentration camps, then and now*, Historical Memory Dossier, forthcoming, and Vatnik Soup, *Molotov–Ribbentrop: The Red-Brown Alliance*, Historical Memory Dossier, forthcoming.

[57] Lenin, letter to D. I. Kursky, 17 May 1922, *Collected Works*, 2nd English ed., vol. 33 (Progress Publishers, 1965), pp. 358–359: "The courts must not ban terror". The letter accompanied a draft addition to the Criminal Code.

[58] Joseph Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism* (1924), chapter VIII, "The Party", §5.

Stalin inherited institutions that subordinated food, labour and political opposition to the party's purposes. He subsequently consolidated his personal dictatorship and used those institutions to impose forced collectivisation and the policies that produced the Holodomor.[59]

Dzerzhinsky and the Secret Police

Led by Felix Dzerzhinsky, its founder and first chairman, the Cheka established itself in Moscow's Lubyanka district in 1918. Its successors have remained there through successive reorganisations and changes of name, including the OGPU, NKVD, KGB and today's FSB. The Dzerzhinsky monument outside the Lubyanka headquarters was removed in August 1991, while Mikhail Gorbachev was president of the USSR and Boris Yeltsin president of the Russian republic. Under Vladimir Putin, himself a former KGB officer and FSB director, Sergey Naryshkin, director of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), unveiled a slightly smaller replica at the service's headquarters in Moscow on 11 September 2023.



Felix Dzerzhinsky, 1923.

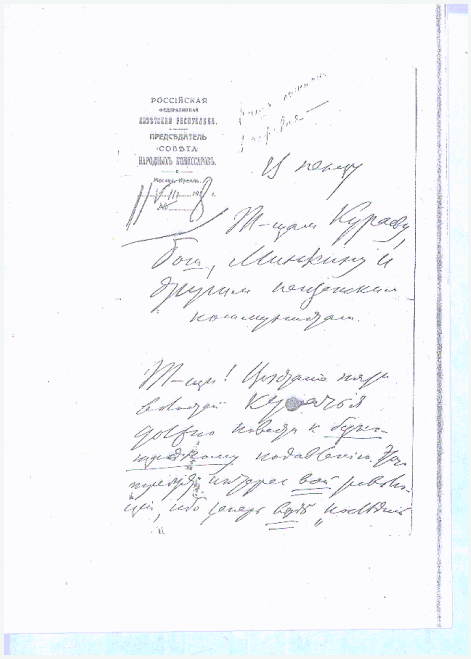


The Dzerzhinsky replica at the SVR headquarters in Yasenevo, Moscow, at its unveiling on 11 September 2023.

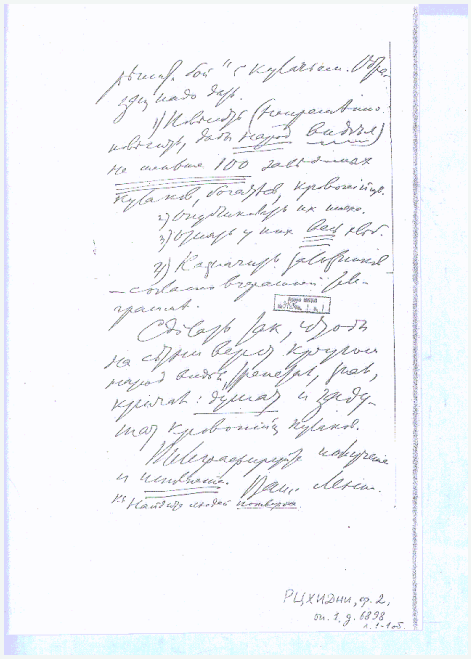
[59] On the political system's origins and development, see Stéphane Courtois, *Lénine, l'inventeur du totalitarisme* (revised and expanded edition, Perrin, 2024); Nicolas Werth, *Un État contre son peuple. De Lénine à Poutine* (Les Belles Lettres, 2025), especially chapters 2–6, including chapter 5, "De Tambov à la grande famine"; and Thierry Wolton, *Histoire mondiale du communisme*, vol. I, *Les bourreaux* (Grasset, 2015).

Forced labour likewise had institutional roots before Stalin's personal dictatorship. Lenin's telegram of 9 August 1918 instructed the Penza authorities to confine people designated as political enemies.[60]

Lenin's Hanging Order, 11 August 1918



Original order, page 1.



Original order, page 2.

Two days after his instructions about confinement in Penza, Lenin ordered local communists to make an example of a peasant revolt. His telegram of 11 August 1918 demanded public executions and confiscation:

"You need to hang (hang without fail, so that the public sees) at least 100 notorious kulaks, the rich, and the bloodsuckers."

"Publish their names."

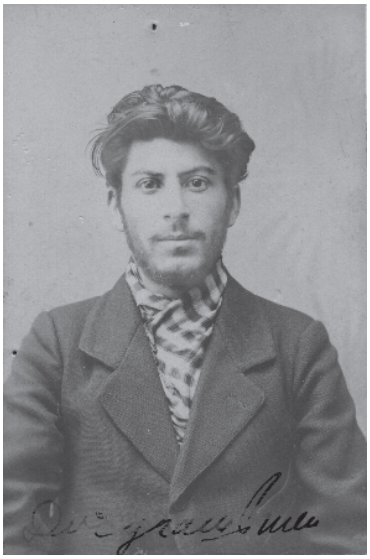
"Take away all of their grain."

The intended audience extended far beyond those condemned: people across the surrounding countryside were to see the punishment and be terrified. Public killing and the seizure of food were explicit instruments of Bolshevik rule during the Civil War.

Lenin's party-state joined an exclusive claim to represent workers and peasants to institutions able to enforce its decisions against them. Its leaders could treat resistance as an obstacle to the people's supposed historical interests, rather than a judgment they had to accept. Stalin made this inherited authority serve his own decisions and ambitions. In Ukraine, the drive to impose communist transformation and the determination to retain control from Moscow reinforced one another: people's livelihoods and national independence could both be subordinated to the party's project.

[60] See Vatnik Soup, *The Gulag: Soviet-Russian concentration camps, then and now*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming.

2.5.2 Stalin's Dictatorship: Terror, Forced Labour and National Repression



Stalin in 1902, aged 23. Police photograph taken in Batum.

Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) was born Ioseb Jughashvili in Gori, Georgia, then part of the Russian Empire. After studying at a theological seminary in Tiflis (now Tbilisi), he entered the Marxist underground, joined Lenin's Bolsheviks and endured repeated arrests and exile. His "work" also included organising armed "expropriations" to finance Lenin's Bolsheviks. Montefiore's account of the June 1907 Tiflis robbery[61] describes an attack on a bank cash convoy with bombs and guns, planned through Stalin's network and authorised by Lenin. He was an experienced revolutionary before 1917. After the Bolsheviks seized power that year, he entered Lenin's government as People's Commissar for Nationalities and held senior party and Civil War appointments.

In April 1922, Stalin became the Communist Party's general secretary, an office that gave him influence over appointments and access to information across the state. Lenin's disabling illness and death in January 1924 left Stalin with a powerful organisational base. Through shifting alliances and the defeat of rivals, including Leon Trotsky, he turned that position into personal predominance. He claimed Lenin's authority while building a dictatorship within the party that Lenin had brought to power.[62]

Stalin's ideological conviction and personal ambition reinforced one another. As Oleg Khlevniuk's biographical assessment explains, he adapted Bolshevik doctrine to his dictatorship and the expansion of Soviet power. The party's claimed historical mission could justify coercion, while resistance could be classified as hostility to progress. Sincerity of belief supplied no protection to those sacrificed to that mission. A ruler could believe in communism and use it to authorise the destruction of people who obstructed him.

By the end of the 1920s, Stalin had concentrated power within the Communist Party and was driving a forcible transformation of the Soviet economy. The limited markets permitted under the New Economic Policy were increasingly displaced by coercive grain collection and forced collectivisation. In his speech of 9 July 1928, Stalin openly defended an additional charge on the peasantry, describing it as a form of "tribute" needed to accelerate industrial development. Agriculture was to supply the resources for priorities set by the state.

[61] Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Young Stalin* (Vintage, 2008; ISBN 9781400096138), prologue, "The Bank Robbery".

[62] For biographies, see Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator* (2015); Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Paradoxes of Power, 1878–1928* (2014) and *Stalin: Waiting for Hitler, 1929–1941* (2017); and Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (2003). Khlevniuk offers a compact archival biography, Kotkin the broader historical setting and rise of Stalin's power, and Montefiore the dictator's inner circle. See also the Stalin group in Recommended Reading.

The programme was presented as a struggle for survival. On 4 February 1931, Stalin demanded that the USSR overcome decades of backwardness in ten years or face defeat. Yet its industrial expansion also depended on expertise from the capitalist world it denounced. Ford and Albert Kahn's firm supplied factory plans, technical assistance and training; the Nizhny Novgorod automotive plant provides a concrete example. Commercial cooperation strengthened industrial capacity[63], while remaining distinct from humanitarian relief.

His understanding of danger extended beyond armed enemies. Kotkin's account of collectivisation emphasises that independent peasant production appeared to the leadership as a political threat, even when it supported economic recovery. Stalin's letter to Kaganovich of 11 August 1932 similarly connected fears of losing Ukraine with suspicions of disloyalty inside its party organisation. Economic independence and national allegiance could both become reasons for coercion. The alternatives discussed in section 2.6 matter because they expose choices within a programme presented as necessity.

Writing in 1936, Trotsky described how Stalin's political opponents were deprived of employment. "In a country where the sole employer is the state," he wrote in *The Revolution Betrayed*, the governing principle had become "who does not obey shall not eat." Stalin had him assassinated in Mexico City in 1940.[64]

Under Stalin, the Politburo decision of June 1929 directed the creation of camps in remote regions to exploit natural resources through prisoner labour; a central OGPU camp administration followed in April 1930. Dispossessed peasant families were also deported to compulsory settlements. They formed a workforce under coercion, but their administrative exile was a different category from a sentenced prisoner's confinement in a camp.

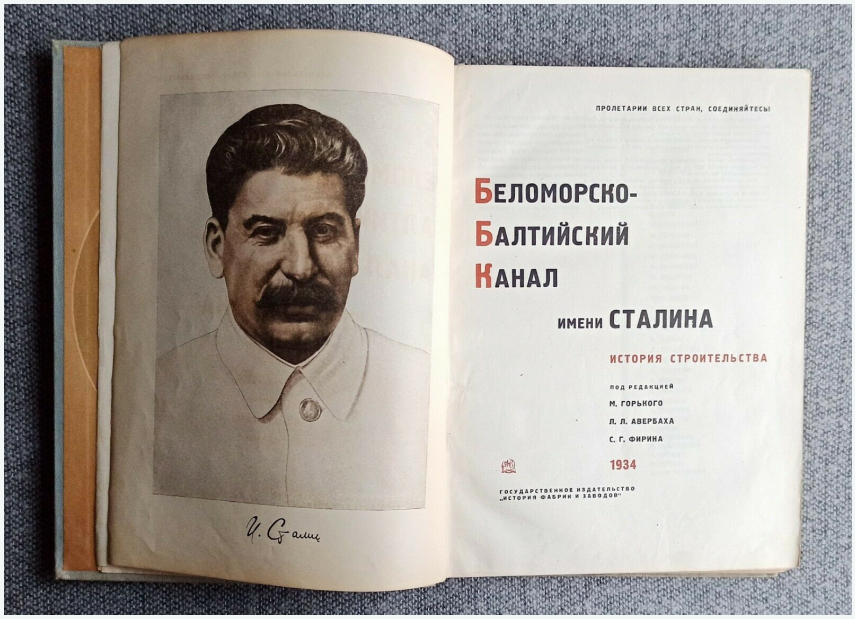
The White Sea–Baltic Canal, completed in 1933, made the combination of production and punishment visible. Prisoners worked with primitive equipment, while food incentives and penalties helped enforce output demands. Exhaustion, inadequate nourishment and the accelerated construction drive endangered the workforce. The state could celebrate the finished project while keeping its human costs outside the public account. The ability to compel labour also allowed political ambition to override objections about cost and usefulness.[65]

[63] Sean McMeekin, *Stalin's War: A New History of World War II* (Basic Books, 2021), chapter 2.

[64] Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, chapter XI, section 2, trans. Max Eastman (1937; written in 1936). Ramón Mercader, a Spanish agent of the Soviet secret police, attacked Trotsky with an ice axe at his home in Coyoacán on 20 August 1940; Trotsky died on 21 August. Mercader served twenty years in a Mexican prison. After his release in 1960, the USSR honoured him with the title Hero of the Soviet Union. See the International Spy Museum's account and UNAM's historical account.

[65] The canal's economic rationale was questioned before construction. Molotov expressed doubts, while budget and deadline pressures led to a reduction in its planned depth. In 1940, freight traffic reached only 44 per cent of design capacity. The canal also had naval uses. Completion alone did not demonstrate economic justification. See Morukov, "The White Sea–Baltic Canal", pp. 154–159 and 161–162. The distinction between fulfilling a construction target and making good use of scarce resources connects with section 2.7's discussion of economic calculation, dispersed knowledge and the ability to act on unwelcome information.

Gorky and the White Sea Canal propaganda book



Stalin's portrait and the title page of the collective history, 1934.

In 1934, Soviet writers published a collective history of the White Sea–Baltic Canal named after Stalin. Its editors were Maxim Gorky, Leopold Averbakh and Semyon Firin, a senior OGPU camp official. The book brought literary prestige and the camp administration together in a celebration of forced labour.

Its central idea was перековка (*perekovka*), or "reforging": prisoners supposedly became useful Soviet citizens through labour. The book's own source list names OGPU orders, camp newspapers, reports and information supplied by security officers. The institution confining people also supplied much of the story presented as their redemption.

The English adaptation, *Belomor* (1935)[66], carried the message abroad. Its editor, Amabel Williams-Ellis, treated the sabotage accusations against imprisoned engineers as credible and praised the canal's story. Gorky's name helped give cultural authority to a system that presented coercion as humane reconstruction of the individual.[67]

During Stalin's rule, some 18 million people passed through Gulag prisons and camps, and more than 1.5 million prisoners died there. At the start of 1953, about 2.5 million people were

[66] Maxim Gorky, L. Averbakh, S. G. Firin (eds.), *Belomor: An Account of the Construction of the New Canal Between the White Sea and the Baltic Sea* (H. Smith & R. Haas, 1935), English adaptation by Amabel Williams-Ellis, introduction, pp. vii–ix.

[67] "Fellow travellers"—what we would today often call vatniks—were sympathisers who could lend apparently independent cultural authority to Communist causes without formal party membership. Stephen Koch's *Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Münzenberg, and the Seduction of the Intellectuals* (revised edition, 2004) examines the mobilisation of writers and intellectuals around Soviet causes. Gorky's position within Soviet cultural life differed from that of foreign sympathisers; the parallel concerns the legitimising use of cultural prestige. See section 1.5 for the proto-vatnik analogy and section 1.6 for the wider network.

held in camps and colonies. Hunger, disease, exhaustion and exposure made forced labour a system of mass death as well as production.[68]

Stalin's purges turned former comrades and defeated political opponents into alleged traitors. The Moscow show trials of 1936–38 presented long-serving Bolsheviks as spies, saboteurs and conspirators plotting assassination. Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev were executed in 1936; Nikolai Bukharin and Alexei Rykov in 1938. Bukharin had been Stalin's ally before opposing his economic course; his alternative is discussed in section 2.6. A political disagreement within the leadership was recast as participation in a criminal conspiracy.

The purges also devastated the armed forces and the institutions administering repression. During the purge of the Red Army's command staff in 1937–38, senior officers were executed, arrested or dismissed, while rapid promotions filled the vacancies.

The Great Terror, 1937–38

The Great Terror of 1937–38 was a concentrated campaign of mass arrest and execution across the Soviet Union. Jansen and Petrov estimate about 1.5 million arrests and roughly 700,000 executions.

Most victims were outside the ruling elite. Secret mass operations targeted former 'kulaks', clergy and other alleged enemies, as well as workers, engineers and collective farmers. Terror was organised through decisions and institutions. During the Great Terror of 1937–38, NKVD Order No. 00447 set regional limits for executions and camp sentences;[69] officials requested increases and Stalin's leadership approved them. Three-person panels called *troikas*—Russian тройка (*troika*), plural тройки (*troiki*)—decided cases without ordinary trials.[70] The order's initial quota table also allocated 10,000 executions to prisoners already held in NKVD camps. Prisoners were deliberately shot as well as dying from hunger, disease and exhaustion under lethal conditions of confinement.

[68] See Vatnik Soup, *The Gulag: Soviet-Russian concentration camps, then and now*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming.

[69] See Vatnik Soup, *The Gulag: Soviet-Russian concentration camps, then and now*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming.

[70] A later parallel appeared in Communist Czechoslovakia. Under Act No. 247/1948, § 3, three-member administrative commissions could assign people to forced-labour camps for three months to two years without an ordinary criminal trial. Their powers concerned internment, whereas Soviet NKVD troikas also imposed death sentences. For fuller treatment, see Vatnik Soup, *Jan Palach: Resistance to Tyranny*, Historical Memory Dossier (January 2027). Forthcoming.

The Great Terror, 1937–38 (continued)

Alongside this operation, the NKVD's "national operations" targeted people through alleged ties to Poland, Germany and other foreign states. National origin and foreign contacts could be turned into evidence of an imagined conspiracy.

The "Polish operation" of 1937–38 makes the scale of national targeting concrete. NKVD Order No. 00485, issued on 11 August 1937, turned supposed Polish espionage into the basis for a mass campaign against Soviet citizens. Archival tallies record 139,835 sentences, including 111,091 death sentences; most victims were Poles, but other nationalities, including Ukrainians, were also caught in the operation. These were categories of alleged enemies selected by the state, not people individually proved to be foreign agents.[71]



Above: Stalin with Nikolai Yezhov (far right), Moscow–Volga Canal, 1937. Below: the retouched photograph, with Yezhov erased.

Service in the secret police offered no lasting safety. The apparatus carrying out Stalin's terror was itself subjected to successive purges. Nikolai Yezhov, who headed the NKVD at the height of the Great Terror, was removed in 1938 and arrested in 1939. He was tortured into signing confessions to fabricated conspiracies. The man who had directed the purges and torture was himself purged and tortured, then shot in 1940.

The purges made the destruction of potential opposition a continuing method of government. Previous disagreements could be rewritten as treason; revolutionary service and compliance offered no secure protection.[72] The show trials also sought to make the accused validate the regime's account of their own destruction. Those who survived had reason to demonstrate loyalty by endorsing accusations and withholding unwelcome judgments. Stalin's power was reinforced by institutions whose members could not safely oppose him, while he retained the authority to decide who counted as an enemy. The great trials and mass operations of 1936–38 followed the Holodomor; the earlier defeat of opposition and the

[71] Institute of National Remembrance, "What was the 'Polish Operation' by the NKVD?", 28 November 2017; *NKVD Order No. 00485*, 11 August 1937, bilingual documentary exhibition catalogue. The archival totals distinguish all sentences from death sentences; the operation was directed primarily at Poles and also caught other nationalities.

[72] Even earlier agreement with the party line, and obedience to it, could be recast as treason. Czechoslovakia's 1948 arms deliveries to Israel had Moscow's approval. After the Soviet line changed, earlier cooperation with Israel was recast as evidence of a fabricated "Zionist" conspiracy in the 1952 Prague trial of Rudolf Slánský and thirteen other Communist officials. In the trial's explicitly antisemitic framing, prosecutors repeatedly stressed the Jewish origins of eleven of its fourteen defendants. For fuller context, see section 1.4, "Soviet Antisemitism", of Vatnik Soup, *Jan Palach: Resistance to Tyranny*, Historical Memory Dossier (January 2027). Forthcoming.

procurement-related party purges had already narrowed the space for challenge during the famine.

Later campaigns against Jewish institutions and the fabricated Doctors' Plot of 1953 again made an allegedly disloyal group the target of state persecution.

Stalin's Antisemitism and Anti-Ukrainianism: a Soviet Legacy

Stalin's campaigns against Jewish and Ukrainian institutions made independent collective life a matter of political suspicion. Writers, religious leaders and organisations with foreign contacts could be accused of serving an enemy outside the state. Ukrainian national aspirations and Jewish cultural or communal loyalties were each recast as rival allegiances that the party claimed the right to crush.

The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, established during the war to mobilise support abroad, sent Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer to the West in 1943. Mikhoels was murdered on Stalin's orders in January 1948; the committee was closed that November, and thirteen defendants in its later trial were executed on 12 August 1952. Foreign contacts once encouraged for the Soviet war effort became material for accusations of espionage and Jewish nationalism. The antisemitic Doctors' Plot of 1953 extended the attack through fabricated accusations against physicians.

This persecution overlapped with the USSR's recognition of Israel in May 1948. Diplomatic support abroad coexisted with the destruction of Jewish institutions at home, just as concessions to a useful religious hierarchy coexisted with the suppression of Ukrainian churches.[73] The state claimed the right to decide which forms of national life served its purposes.

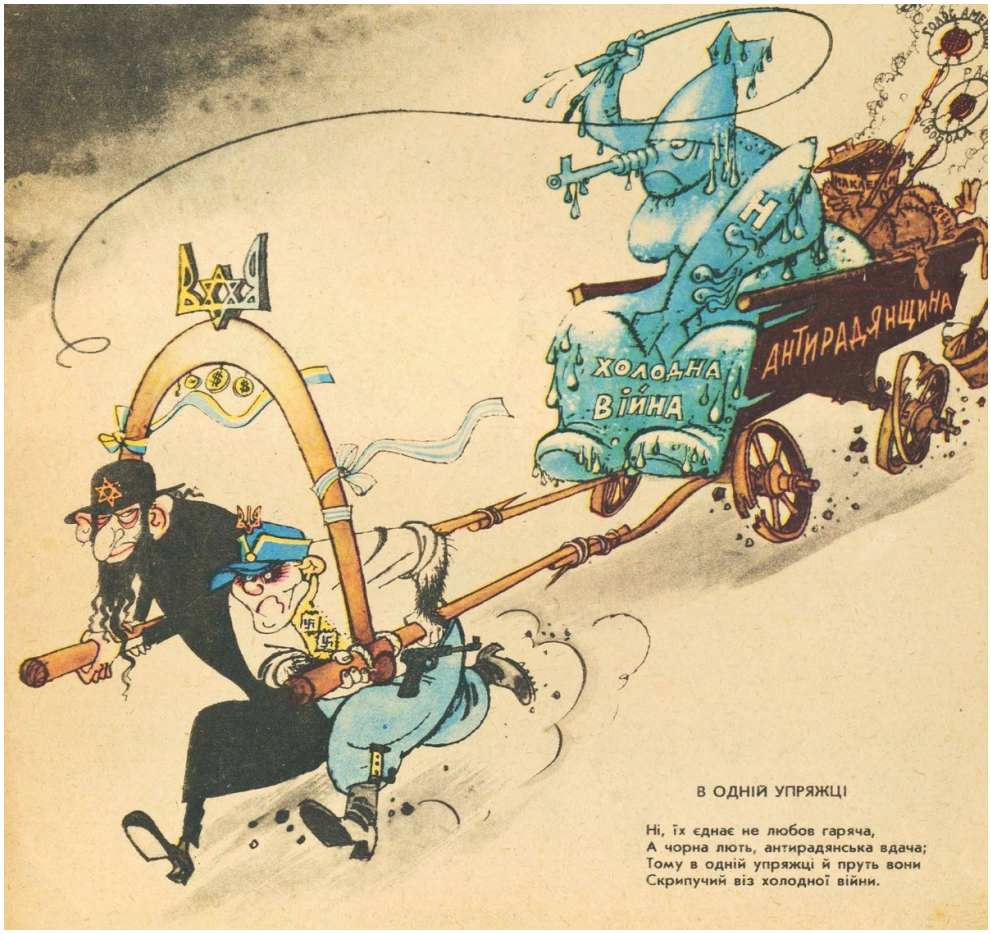
The propaganda continued after Stalin. Later Soviet cartoons paired Jewish and Ukrainian nationalist caricatures as accomplices of the same foreign enemy. One harnessed a stereotyped "Zionist" and a Ukrainian nationalist to a cart marked anti-Sovietism; others made them beasts sharing the same cause. The photograph shows antisemitic imagery displayed as anti-imperialism. The combined message treated Jewish identity and Ukrainian independence as threats while presenting the state that persecuted them as their liberator.



Moscow's May Day parade, 1972: "Zionism is the weapon of imperialism!"

[73] See section 3.2 on Stalin's 1943 accommodation with the Russian Orthodox hierarchy and the suppression and forced incorporation of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in 1946.

Stalin's Antisemitism and Anti-Ukrainianism: a Soviet Legacy (continued)



"In the same harness" (В одній упряжці). A stereotyped Jewish figure and a Ukrainian nationalist pull a cart labelled "anti-Sovietism" (антирадянщина); its passenger is "Cold War" (холодна війна).

Stalin died on 5 March 1953. On 4 April, the Soviet authorities announced that the surviving accused doctors had been released and exonerated, acknowledging that confessions had been obtained by impermissible methods. It was his death, rather than a humanitarian retreat by the dictator, that opened the way to their release. The campaign's collapse shows how much the threat depended on the man at the top.

The danger extended beyond the imprisoned doctors. An official campaign presenting Jewish physicians as murderous foreign agents threatened Soviet Jews more widely and encouraged fears of further persecution and anti-Jewish violence. Stalin's death removed the ruler driving that campaign and interrupted its escalation. What would have followed had he lived cannot be established with the same certainty: historians continue to dispute whether a settled plan for mass deportation existed.

2.5.3 Foreign Policy and Imperial Domination

Stalin could nevertheless negotiate, make concessions and cooperate with ideological enemies. The pact and the attack on Finland show why this flexibility supplies no general assurance of peaceful intentions. Security concerns, territorial ambition and the imposition of political control could coexist. His willingness to bargain over other societies did not make their inhabitants' wishes a constraint on Soviet policy.

During the 1920s, the Soviet Union hosted secret Reichswehr training and weapons testing, including aviation at Lipetsk from 1925. Alongside this military relationship, grain exports helped pay for industrialisation: Soviet exports to Germany of the seven cereal and pulse groups identified in the customs tables rose from 71,970 tonnes in 1929 to 536,664 in 1931, after a peak of 856,218 in 1930[74]. German cabinet minutes of 2 October 1931 explicitly considered purchases of German goods on credit or against Soviet timber, petrol and grain. These dealings with the Weimar Republic preceded the separate agreements with Hitler discussed below.[75]

In foreign policy, practical bargaining could override ideological hostility. On 23 August 1939, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, a non-aggression treaty accompanied by a secret protocol dividing spheres of influence in Eastern Europe. Germany invaded Poland on 1 September; the Red Army invaded from the east on 17 September. Ukrainian-inhabited territories in eastern Poland were subsequently incorporated into Soviet Ukraine. The enlargement brought more Ukrainians under Soviet rule, without giving them an independent choice over the political order imposed on them.

[74] Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (Toronto: Signal/McClelland & Stewart, 2017; ISBN 978-0-7710-0930-3), chapter 7, "Collectivization Fails, 1931–2", p. 162. Note 12, p. 386 (Serhiichuk et al., *Український хліб на експорт: 1932–1933*, pp. 5–6). Applebaum's tripling claim is not supported by the checked calendar-year customs series. The seven listed cereal and pulse groups, commodity codes 1–14, rose about 7.46-fold between 1929 and 1931, after a peak in 1930. Rice and "other grain" are not separately listed for Germany; this is not a reconstructed all-grain total. The 1939 handbook independently confirms the narrower wheat, rye and barley rows. These are USSR exports addressed to Germany, not proof of Ukrainian origin. The 1933 publication uses immediate export-document destinations; before March 1930 gross/net treatment depended on tariff and packing, and thereafter net weight was used. Applebaum's cited secondary source uses unresolved period labels elsewhere and cites a 1936 handbook, pp. 74–75, which remains unexamined. The cause of the discrepancy remains unresolved. Primary sources: *Внешняя торговля Союза Советских Социалистических Республик за первую пятилетку (за период с 1928 по 1933 г.)* (Moscow: Внешторгиздат, 1933), pp. 45, 96–97; V–VIII. S. N. Bakulin, D. D. Mishustin, *Внешняя торговля СССР за 20 лет, 1918–1937 гг.* (Moscow: Международная книга, 1939), pp. 86, 90, 94; statistical definitions.

[75] For a fuller discussion of the pact and Soviet–German cooperation, see Vatnik Soup, *Molotov–Ribbentrop: The Red-Brown Alliance*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming.



Joseph Stalin and German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop in the Kremlin, Moscow, 23 August 1939, at the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact.

The Soviet draft of 19 August 1939 made a special foreign-policy protocol a condition of the pact's validity. Cooperation then acquired a material basis: Soviet grain, oil and other raw materials were exchanged for German industrial equipment and military products. A German memorandum of 26 February 1940 explicitly anticipated weakening the British blockade through this trade. These were reciprocal bargains between governments pursuing their own power, with other societies bearing the consequences.

Finland shows how security claims could accompany an attack on political independence. After negotiations over frontier changes and bases near Leningrad, the Red Army invaded on 30 November 1939. Moscow then recognised a Finnish administration headed by Communist Otto Wille Kuusinen, whose declared first task was to overthrow Finland's government and destroy its armed forces. The League of Nations expelled the USSR on 14 December.

The destruction of Polish independence extended to the people who could sustain it. On 5 March 1940, Stalin and the Politburo approved Beria's proposal to execute Polish prisoners of war and detainees. In the spring of 1940, the NKVD murdered nearly 22,000 Polish citizens in the operation known collectively as the Katyń massacre. The victims included officers, policemen and civilian prisoners; many reserve officers were teachers, doctors, lawyers and other members of Poland's educated society. Katyń names one burial site within a wider killing operation, which also included Kharkiv, Kalinin (now Tver) and prisons in occupied eastern Poland. Soviet authorities blamed Nazi Germany and maintained the lie for decades,

acknowledging NKVD responsibility only in 1990.[76] Murder removed people capable of rebuilding an independent state; denial then protected the institutions that had killed them.

When Germany invaded the USSR on 22 June 1941, Soviet repression left another trail of mass graves. During the retreat, the NKVD murdered thousands of prisoners in western Ukraine, including in Lviv and Lutsk. Victims included Ukrainians, Poles and Jews held under Soviet rule. German occupation then brought further crimes: Nazi propaganda and local antisemites exploited the discovery of the bodies to blame Jews collectively for Soviet repression and incite pogroms.[77] Responsibility for the prison murders belonged to their Soviet perpetrators; responsibility for the pogroms belonged to those who instigated and carried them out. Neither crime justified another, and successive occupations did not give the population a free choice of government.

The Warsaw Uprising of 1 August–2 October 1944 exposed a different means of defeating Polish independence. The non-communist Home Army sought to liberate the capital from German occupation and establish the authority of the Polish government in exile before Soviet control was imposed. German forces massacred civilians, crushed the uprising and systematically destroyed the city. Stalin treated the independent resistance as a political rival. His government withheld permission for American supply aircraft to use Soviet airfields during August; in his message to Churchill and Roosevelt on 22 August, he denounced the uprising's leaders as a "group of criminals".

The military situation also matters: German counterattacks and the Red Army's overstretched advance make an effortless Soviet rescue an unsafe assumption. But these constraints do not explain obstructing Allied air supply. Limited Soviet airdrops, a failed crossing by Soviet-aligned Polish troops and permission for an American supply mission came only in September. The destruction of the Home Army's position in Warsaw removed an organised obstacle to Moscow's control of postwar Poland.[78] Nazi Germany carried out the slaughter and destruction; Stalin's refusal to support an independent Polish force helped leave it exposed to defeat. Fighting Hitler did not mean accepting the right of the peoples between Germany and Russia to govern themselves.

The defeat of the uprising was followed by the removal of independent political leaders. On 27–28 March 1945, Soviet authorities arrested sixteen leaders of the Polish Underground State

[76] Institute of National Remembrance, "The Katyn Massacre — Basic Facts", 5 March 2020, especially the decision, victims and execution sites; US National Archives, "Records Relating to the Katyn Forest Massacre", on the killings and the Soviet attempt to attribute them to Germany. Nearly 22,000 refers to the entire operation, not only the Katyń burial site.

[77] National WWII Museum, "The 1941 NKVD Prison Massacres in Western Ukraine", 7 June 2021; Center for Urban History, "'City scum', nationalists or ordinary people: interethnic violence on the streets of Lviv", especially the prison killings and the anti-Jewish pogrom. No single precise total is assigned to the entire campaign.

[78] Stalin to Churchill and Roosevelt, 22 August 1944, *FRUS*, 1944, vol. III, document 1271; Harriman to the Secretary of State, 22 August 1944, document 1272, reporting the 17 August conversation with Molotov. See also National WWII Museum, "The Allied Responses to the Warsaw Uprising of 1944", 18 January 2022; USHMM, "Warsaw Uprising"; and Eden's confirmation of the 18 September American supply mission, *HC Deb*, 27 September 1944, vol. 403, cols. 217–220. The 1944 citywide uprising is distinct from the Warsaw ghetto uprising of 1943.

after inviting them to talks with assurances of safety. They were taken to Moscow; the proceedings known as the "Trial of the Sixteen" followed that June. Military defeat was reinforced by the suppression of political representatives who might contest Moscow's chosen government.[79] Negotiation under Soviet guarantees had become another route to imprisonment.

After the war, Soviet control was also imposed on Subcarpathian Ruthenia (now Zakarpattia), formerly part of Czechoslovakia. The treaty of 29 June 1945 provided for its transfer to the USSR and incorporation into Soviet Ukraine. An American diplomatic report of 25 January 1945 had described a Communist-controlled local council holding executive power and Czechoslovak government representatives prevented from visiting the main centres or contacting their government. Enlarging Soviet Ukraine's borders did not give the region's inhabitants a choice of the political system that would govern them.

The deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944 (see section 3.2) and the destruction of Baltic independence (see section 3.1) show the same refusal to accept national life beyond Moscow's control. They extend the record from the elimination of leaders to the uprooting of whole communities and the destruction of independent states.

Stalin's wartime allies could recoil from his treatment of human life. At the Tehran dinner on 29 November 1943, he proposed killing at least 50,000 members of the German commanding staff. The American diplomat Charles Bohlen recorded Churchill's vigorous objection to political executions and his insistence on trials for war criminals. Roosevelt answered with a joke about 49,000.

William C. Bullitt, the former US ambassador in Moscow, recalled warning Roosevelt in 1943 about Soviet expansion. He attributed to Roosevelt the expectation that he could "give him [Stalin] everything I possibly can and ask nothing from him in return, *noblesse oblige*": Stalin would then, he hoped, refrain from annexations and help build a democratic peace. This placed faith in the dictator's supposed sense of honour and obligation to reciprocate.[80]

Cooperation nevertheless continued. The US–Soviet repatriation agreement signed at Yalta on 11 February 1945 provided for liberated citizens to be handed over to their own authorities. In its implementation, a US directive issued in December 1945 authorised forced return for defined categories of Soviet citizens, including former Soviet soldiers, under citizenship and residence conditions tied to 1 September 1939. The later British–American Operation Keelhaul formed part of this wider policy of forcible repatriation.

[79] Polish History Museum, "Sowieci walczą o rząd. Dlaczego doszło do procesu szesnastu?"; Harriman to the Secretary of State, 18 June 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, vol. V, document 262. Sixteen leaders were arrested; Antoni Pajdak's case was heard separately later in 1945. The name of the June proceedings does not mean that all sixteen were tried and convicted together.

[80] William C. Bullitt, "How We Won the War and Lost the Peace", *LIFE*, 30 August 1948, p. 94. Bullitt published the recollection after Roosevelt's death. For a different American expression of confidence in deliberate social reconstruction, see the Arthurdale insert in section 1.4, p. 33.



Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at the Yalta Conference, Livadia Palace, Crimea, February 1945.

The fear of return was visible to those carrying it out. In a report forwarded by US political adviser Robert Murphy on 14 February 1946, his staff described suicides and attempted suicides during a forced repatriation at Dachau the previous month. The report called the incident shocking and recorded American officers' and soldiers' dissatisfaction at being ordered to force the men back.

The consequences were not confined to the ordeal of handover. In Nicholas Bethell's account of repatriation to Odesa in June 1945, the British officers James Martin and George Youmatoff watched 31 prisoners being dragged into a warehouse, then heard machine-gun fire. The next morning, Youmatoff saw chipped concrete and dark stains inside. He concluded that the prisoners had been shot: he had heard the gunfire and inspected its aftermath, rather than witnessed the killings themselves.

A separate account appears in Nikolai Tolstoy's *Victims of Yalta* (1977): he describes American guards seeing bodies hanging from trees after the February 1946 handover in the Bavarian forest near Zwiesel. Jeremy Murray-Brown reproduces this passage in his study of the Plattling repatriation footage.

These episodes show the limits of judging Stalin through the assurances he offered useful partners. Allied cooperation could be necessary to defeat Hitler, yet leave the victims of Soviet power exposed. Diplomatic access to Stalin and confidence in an agreement were different from enforceable protection for the people whose fate was being decided.

Stalin's admirers today

The image of a ruler who transformed a backward country still attracts admirers. In *I'm Not the Only One* (2004), vatnik George Galloway used Stalin's industrialisation as a favourable comparison for Saddam Hussein: "Just as Stalin industrialised the Soviet Union, so on a different scale Saddam plotted Iraq's own Great Leap Forward."[81]



Stalin at the May Day parade, Moscow, 1946.

On 9 November 2023, Jackson Hinkle told Alex Jones that he was "an American Stalinist" and that Americans had much to learn from Stalin and Xi Jinping. He presented state-directed production as serving ordinary people. On 4 November 2025, Nick Fuentes called Stalin the most effective statesman of the twentieth century, while explicitly acknowledging his brutality and mass murder.

Their routes to admiration differ, but the recurring attraction is power and achievement. The people whose lives sustained that power recede behind the industrial output, the strength of the state and the stature of its ruler.

The Holodomor preceded the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact by six years.[82] Stalin's crimes against other populations establish his readiness to use mass murder in pursuit of political ends. They give no reason to presume benevolent intentions towards Ukrainians. His attack on Ukrainian national life must be assessed through the measures examined here: confiscation, punitive procurement, blocked escape and the repression of institutions capable of resisting Moscow's authority. Rejecting the genocide classification would still leave those deliberate actions to explain; it would not turn the catastrophe into an innocent accident.

Stalin's personal responsibility also leaves the responsibility of the Soviet system intact. As Kołakowski argues, condemning the dictator cannot explain how the Party and its institutions sustained his unlimited power.[83] Those institutions enforced his decisions, suppressed alternatives and prevented effective challenge. Ukrainians were denied the freedom to reject that system or determine their own national future. The ruler's decisions, the Party's monopoly of power and Moscow's domination of Ukraine reinforced one another.

[81] For a fuller discussion of Mao's famine, see Vatnik Soup, *The Great Leap Backwards: China's Maoist regime, then and now*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming.

[82] For a fuller discussion of the pact and Soviet–German cooperation, see Vatnik Soup, *Molotov–Ribbentrop: The Red-Brown Alliance*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming.

[83] For the fuller discussion of personal and institutional responsibility, see section 2.7, "Authoritarianism, Socialism and Imperialism", p. 71. Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. P. S. Falla, Book Three, *The Breakdown*, ch. XIII, "Developments in Marxism Since Stalin's Death", §1, "De-Stalinization", pp. 1149–1150, 1152–1153 (one-volume edition).

Ukraine therefore faced both a ruler willing to destroy resistance and a Soviet imperial order determined to retain control over it. **Condemning Stalin leaves the responsibility of the institutions that sustained his power and carried out his decisions to explain. The same problem confronts any account of Russia's present war that places all responsibility on Putin while leaving the state's institutions and imperial claims outside the discussion.** Once again, an authoritarian ruler has held power for decades while claiming the right to decide Ukraine's future. Ukrainians cannot be asked to entrust their freedom to the hope that Moscow's next ruler will be more benevolent.

2.6 The Curse of the Black Earth

Agricultural wealth can make a territory valuable to a state seeking food for its cities, exports and resources for industry. But fertility alone explains neither famine nor genocide. The question is who controls the harvest, what can be taken from its producers, and whether those producers possess the power to resist. The "curse" lies in institutions that make coercive extraction possible.



Wheat and sky in Ukraine's national colours.

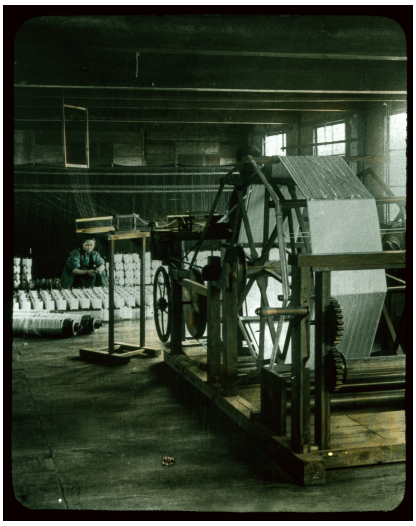
In "Industrialisation and the Grain Problem", delivered on 9 July 1928, Stalin identified workers and peasants as the principal sources of finance for Soviet industry. His argument connected agricultural resources to state industrial priorities. Collectivisation offered greater administrative command over producers and deliveries. However, gaining control over output and making agriculture more productive were different objectives: the state could seek a larger share of a harvest even while its policies damaged the capacity to produce it.

Control over Ukraine's grain market was also concentrated institutionally. In 1928, Moscow liquidated Ukrkhlib, the Ukrainian grain-procurement and flour-milling trust, whose shares passed to the all-Union Soiuzkhleb. As Liudmyla Hrynevych shows, this removed important Ukrainian levers over procurement and food supply. Central planning operated through an unequal relationship between Moscow and the republic. In his nationality-policy theses of March 1923, Stalin had himself condemned tsarist efforts to make peripheral territories

supply raw materials to the industrial centre, while acknowledging that Great-Russian chauvinism persisted in Soviet institutions. Extraction could also reach beyond the current harvest: Torgsin exchanged food for families' accumulated valuables, drawing on household wealth built up over years.

Japan: Agriculture Financing Industrialisation

Japan's early industrialisation in the Meiji era offers a concrete comparison. Cash land taxes helped finance state industrial development, while rural exports, including silk and tea, earned foreign exchange. Cultivation remained organised through private holdings and tenancy, without compulsory collectivisation. Heavy taxation and the concentration of landownership nevertheless placed severe pressure on rural households. Agriculture could thus supply resources for industry under institutions that differed fundamentally from Stalin's collective and state farms: the transfer of resources did not itself dictate how production had to be organised.



Silk reeling in Japan, c. 1910. Hand-tinted photograph.

Poland and Hungary: Resistance and Concessions

Poland

Communist-ruled Poland later demonstrated how political resistance could change agricultural policy. Forced collectivisation during 1948–56 met persistent opposition among farmers. After the political upheavals of 1956, Władysław Gomułka allowed collective farms to dissolve. A US diplomatic assessment of 15 November 1961 reported 86% of Polish agricultural land in private cultivation, 13% in state farms and only 1% in collective farms. Poland's largely private agriculture therefore survived *despite* an attempted collectivisation campaign, and as part of a wider political compromise.

Poland and Hungary: Resistance and Concessions (continued)

Hungary

Hungary took a different course. The 1956 revolution was followed by the breakup of many agricultural cooperatives and the abolition of compulsory deliveries. János Kádár's government then renewed coercive collectivisation in 1959–61, bringing most arable land into cooperatives or state farms. Yet household plots and concessions to family production[84] remained important, and the 1968 reforms gave household cultivation further support. Poland mainly preserved private farming; Hungary combined collective farming with more flexible incentives. Both cases show how peasant resistance, political stability and agricultural performance could constrain Communist agricultural policy.

Later Soviet policy also demonstrates that crop failure did not dictate a single response. In 1963, following a poor harvest, Khrushchev's government bought grain abroad; its September agreement with Canada covered 5.3 million tonnes of wheat. Plokhy contrasts this response with continued Soviet grain exports during the famines of 1932–33 and 1946–47. The financial and international circumstances differed, but the comparison distinguishes a harvest failure from the decisions governing food supply.[85]

The alternatives were disputed within the Soviet leadership itself. In his 1928 essay on the economy, Nikolai Bukharin argued that industrial investment had to remain in balance with agriculture, consumption and reserves. Excessive transfers from the countryside could undermine the production, markets and exports on which industry depended. He supported socialist industrialisation and collective farming, but also the improvement of individual peasant farms and a price policy that would encourage supply. His objection came from within Bolshevism: the choice was not simply between Stalin's programme and the abandonment of Soviet socialism.

Stalin's April 1929 attack on Bukharin makes the disagreement explicit. He rejected proposals to raise procurement prices, arguing that dearer grain would increase urban bread prices, wages and industrial costs, and weaken the state's control of the market. He also acknowledged a transfer from peasants through low agricultural prices and high prices for manufactured goods. The burden was part of the chosen financing of industrialisation, rather than a consequence the leadership could not recognise.

In his April 1928 report, Stalin had already acknowledged that large capitalist farms could employ machinery and modern agricultural methods, while ruling out support for their development. His May 1928 discussion likewise associated advantages of scale with large farms under different ownership forms. But farm size, ownership and cultivators' incentives

[84] Nigel Swain, *Collective Farms Which Work?* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), chapter 1, "'Family Labour' in the Achievement and Consolidation of Collectivised Agriculture, 1946–68", pp. 25–50.

[85] Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), chapter 24, "The Second Soviet Republic". On the Canadian agreement: *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, vol. V, document 359, 1 October 1963, note 1.

are distinct questions; gains from scale did not establish the necessity of compulsory collectivisation. Yield per hectare, output per worker, the share marketed and the share compulsorily delivered are different measures.

The direction of causation also matters. Efficient private farms could grow because they were productive, rather than become productive simply because they were large. Increasing acreage by decree could not, by itself, reproduce the incentives, management and market conditions under which they had developed.

In his speech of 11 July 1928, Stalin cited the Campbell Farming Corporation's 95,000-acre wheat operation in Montana. Quoting agronomist N. M. Tulaikov, he described its mechanisation and management, then argued that Soviet conditions offered giant state farms greater scope to develop. He wanted the machinery and scale of capitalist farming without private landownership, and argued that state farms could develop with little profit or temporarily none. The example concerned state farms, or sovkhozy; compulsory collectivisation into kolkhozy also entailed the political subordination of peasant households.

The political objective went beyond obtaining a particular harvest. The published brief record of Stalin's Siberian statements of January 1928 presents independent peasant production as an insecure foundation for Soviet power and calls for its replacement as a source of grain by collective and state farms.[86] Read alongside the later dispute, it identifies the independence of producers as a problem the leadership wanted to overcome. The existence of alternatives does not establish that they could have delivered comparable industrial and military capacity by 1941. It does, however, prevent the resulting coercion from being explained as the only policy anyone could conceive.

In Allen's simulation for 1939[87], GDP reaches 348.3 billion 1937 roubles with NEP-style agriculture and 364.6 billion with collectivisation, about 4.7% more. The corresponding increase in non-agricultural value added is about 22%, a broader measure than industrial output alone. Both scenarios retain heavy industrial investment and soft budget constraints in industry.

His NEP scenario assumes higher agricultural output and livestock numbers, a different tax system and less migration to cities. It also assumes that no famine occurs; this is not an independently established result. Military equipment is set at historical values, so the model does not independently test defence capacity. The comparison depends on these assumptions; it does not measure an observed historical gain.

A comparison of GDP measures the value of production, while an assessment of welfare must also account for deaths, suffering, dispossession and the destruction of families and

[86] This record appeared in his collected works in 1954; it is not a surviving verbatim transcript of every speech.

[87] Robert C. Allen, *Farm to Factory: A Reinterpretation of the Soviet Industrial Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 2003), chapter 8, pp. 153–171; tables 8.1 (p. 163), 8.3 (p. 164), p. 170.

communities. These losses matter beyond their effects on output. An increase in measured production therefore cannot establish that collectivisation improved the lives of those subjected to it.

Mark Harrison questions Allen's proposed combination of state industrial controls and market agriculture: shortages of manufactured goods could discourage peasants from selling food, even at higher prices. Retaining independent farming might therefore have required changes in industrial policy as well as agricultural ownership. That objection tests a particular alternative; it does not establish that famine or Stalin's chosen coercion was unavoidable.

Prussian/American paths

Lenin's 1907 contrast between "Prussian" and "American" paths offers a revealing comparison. His "Prussian" path preserved landlord dominance through capitalist development.

Large estates would evolve into capitalist enterprises while the old landed elite retained its commanding position. Peasants could lose their holdings and become dependent agricultural labourers: modernisation would preserve the hierarchy of power.

The "American" path instead envisaged breaking up the old landlord system and allowing agriculture to develop through independent farmers. Lenin preferred this route because he expected peasant initiative and a growing domestic market to accelerate capitalist development. He supported it as a revolutionary stage towards socialism and advocated nationalising the land. In his programme, independent cultivation therefore did not require private ownership of the soil.

Stalin's choice was compulsory collectivisation and an expansion of state farms. In April 1928, he acknowledged the advantages of large capitalist farms while ruling out support for them. Large-scale production would be organised under Soviet collective and state institutions, with cultivators subjected to the state's procurement demands.

Stalin rejected capitalist farming, yet concentrated command over producers in the Party-state. The resemblance concerns coercive extraction and peasant dependence, while the property systems differed: collective farms and state farms had distinct legal forms, a distinction Stalin still acknowledged in 1952. This is an institutional analogy, not evidence that Stalin consciously followed the path Lenin described.

But it sharpens a political point: abolishing private landlords did not guarantee the independence of the people cultivating the land.

This helps explain an incentive to control Ukraine's agricultural resources. It does not explain the national targeting by itself. Fertile soil cannot account for the persecution of Ukrainian intellectuals, restrictions on language and institutions, or the association of procurement objections with Ukrainian national disloyalty. Nor does it explain why the authorities closed routes of escape once people were starving. Those measures require attention to political objectives, knowledge and deliberate choices. Ukraine's inhabitants were subjected to

decisions about their lives and nationhood; they were not condemned by the soil beneath them.

2.7 Authoritarianism, Socialism and Imperialism

Ludwig von Mises was born into a Jewish family in 1881 in Lemberg, now Lviv, Ukraine. A leading figure of the Austrian school of economics, he built his career in Vienna. After studying law, he joined the Chamber of Commerce in 1909, taught at the university and led a private seminar attended by Hayek[88] and other future economists. His work in Vienna combined economic research with practical advice on public policy; his classical liberalism defended private property, individual freedom and limits on state power.

In his 1920 essay on socialist calculation[89], Mises argued that abolishing markets in the means of production removed the prices needed to compare competing uses of resources. He developed the critique in *Socialism* (1922)[90] and set out his political principles in *Liberalism* (1927)[91], years before Stalin's forced collectivisation.

Mises moved to Geneva in 1934. After the Anschluss in 1938, the Nazis raided his former Vienna apartment and seized his library and papers. In 1940, he and his wife escaped through France, Spain and Portugal to the United States.[92] In America he began a second teaching career as a visiting professor at New York University in 1945 and published *Human Action* (1949)[93].



Memorial plaque to Ludwig von Mises at 13 Hnatiuka Street, Lviv. Photograph dated 2015.

Mises regarded comprehensive socialism as an impossible system of social cooperation. Central control over the means of production removed the market prices needed for

[88] See the Hayek insert, p. 36, in section 1.5.

[89] Ludwig von Mises, *Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth* (1920), English edition, Ludwig von Mises Institute, 1990.

[90] Ludwig von Mises, *Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis* (1922), German original, 1922; English edition, 1951.

[91] Ludwig von Mises, *Liberalism: In the Classical Tradition* (1927), German original.

[92] Mises's departure suggests that Swiss neutrality no longer assured him of safety. In his *Memoirs* (2009 translation, p. 116), he recalls that Switzerland regarded his presence as "a political burden and a threat to its security". For the wider wartime context, see Vatnik Soup, *Switzerland's Neutrality Initiative: Neutrality, Sovereignty and the September 2026 Vote*, NAFO Policy Papers, No. 1 (September 2026).

[93] Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (1949).

economic calculation. In *Human Action* (1949), he wrote: "A society that chooses between capitalism and socialism does not choose between two social systems; it chooses between social cooperation and the disintegration of society. Socialism is not an alternative to capitalism; it is an alternative to any system under which men can live as human beings."[94]

We do not necessarily have to follow Mises that far in his radical dichotomy, but he certainly had a point when it came to extremely centralised systems such as Stalin's or Mao's[95] (or even Hitler's, in that regard)[96]: they empowered a single dictator, backed by the party-state and controlling production, food distribution and movement, to make decisions that could condemn millions to death by starvation, whether through catastrophic misjudgment or intentional extermination.

In *Socialism*, Mises defined socialism's aim as constructing "a society in which the means of production are socialized", that is, a society in which the state fully controls the means of production.[97] In *Omnipotent Government* (1944), he acknowledged that Soviet bureaucratic production could continue by using prices formed in foreign capitalist markets and techniques developed abroad. His verdict was: "Under these circumstances socialism results not in complete chaos but only in extreme poverty." He explicitly connected this critique with the Holodomor in Ukraine, writing that "many millions literally died of starvation".[98]

Mises's argument opens a question wider than economic efficiency. What made the Holodomor possible: Russian imperial domination and hostility to Ukrainian nationhood, socialist control over production and distribution, or an authoritarian, centralised state concentrating economic and political power over millions of people in the same hands? These explanations overlap. Their relative weight matters, but choosing one cannot make the others disappear.

[94] Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics*, first published 1949; cited English fourth revised edition, Foundation for Economic Education, 1998, chapter XXIV, §3, "The Harmony of the 'Rightly Understood' Interests".

[95] For a fuller discussion of Mao's famine, see Vatnik Soup, *The Great Leap Backwards: China's Maoist regime, then and now*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming.

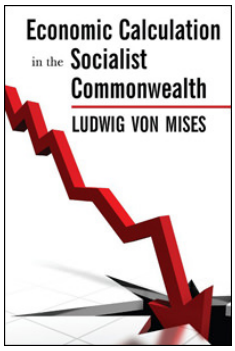
[96] See §1.1.1, "The Holodomor, Asharshylyq, the Hunger Plan and the Holocaust", for Nazi plans to divert food from the occupied Soviet population and the deliberate starvation of civilians and Soviet prisoners of war.

[97] Ludwig von Mises, *Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis*, first published in German, 1922; cited English edition, Liberty Fund, 1981, trans. J. Kahane, "Preface to the Second German Edition" (Vienna, January 1932).

[98] Ludwig von Mises, *Omnipotent Government: The Rise of the Total State and Total War*, first published by Yale University Press, 1944; linked English reprint, Liberty Fund/Mises Institute, 2010, chapter III, §§4–5, pp. 54–58, especially pp. 56–57.

The calculation problem concerns the institutions through which prices arise. Mises's objection was that a planner could not reproduce monetary calculation simply by acquiring better statistics. Hayek approached coordination through the practical knowledge dispersed among individuals. Jörg Guido Hülsmann, author of *Mises: The Last Knight of Liberalism* (2007)[99], in turn insists that knowledge cannot be detached from property, exchange and the judgments of people able to act. Those distinctions matter when asking whether the Soviet disaster was a failure of calculation, a suppression of knowledge, or both.

The Calculation Debate



Ludwig von Mises, Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth, 2014 edition.

Mises. In his 1920 essay[100], Mises argues that abolishing exchange in privately owned means of production prevents the formation of the market prices needed for monetary calculation. His objection concerns how those prices arise, rather than merely the quantity of information available to planners.

Hayek. "The Use of Knowledge in Society" (1945) emphasises practical knowledge distributed among people: local conditions, changing needs and opportunities. Hayek presents prices as a way to coordinate its use. His calculation essays appear in *Individualism and Economic Order* (1948)[101].

Hayek shared the 1974 economics prize with Gunnar Myrdal, for work on monetary theory, economic fluctuations and economic, social and institutional interdependence. In his Nobel lecture, "The Pretence of Knowledge", 11 December 1974, he describes "knowledge of particular facts … which exists only dispersed among uncounted persons".

Hülsmann. "Knowledge, Judgment, and the Use of Property" (1997) clarifies the distinction between Mises's and Hayek's arguments and challenges the reduction of Mises's position to a problem of collecting dispersed information. It places property, exchange and entrepreneurial judgment at the centre: preventing the actions that generate market prices differs from failing to gather existing information.

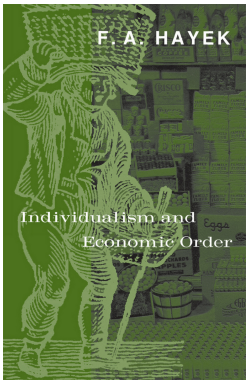
[99] Jörg Guido Hülsmann, *Mises: The Last Knight of Liberalism* (Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2007).

[100] Ludwig von Mises, *Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth* (1920), English edition, Ludwig von Mises Institute, 1990.

[101] F. A. Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order* (University of Chicago Press, 1948).

The Calculation Debate (continued)

Lange and the statue. In 1936, the Polish economist Oskar Lange proposed "a statue of Professor Mises"[102] in the socialist state's Ministry of Socialization or Central Planning Board. It was an ironic tribute to the challenge; Lange believed his model could answer it. Fifty-three years later, Poland's communist monopoly on power collapsed in 1989, and the new government launched market reforms on 1 January 1990. The irony is striking.



F. A. Hayek, Individualism and Economic Order, University of Chicago Press edition.

But the Soviet leadership was not simply suffering from inadequate information: it actively suppressed or discredited information that contradicted its policies. Farmers and local officials possessed knowledge of harvests, household needs and the consequences of requisitioning. Under political coercion, reporting those realities could expose the reporter to accusations of disloyalty. The damage was therefore more than a failure to collect data: the state attacked the conditions under which unwelcome knowledge could be expressed, tested and *acted* upon.

Stalin's letter to Kaganovich of 11 August 1932 makes that mechanism concrete. He acknowledged that numerous Ukrainian district party committees considered the grain-procurement plan unrealistic. He treated their objections as a breakdown of party discipline, linked the problem to enemies and warned that the Soviet leadership could lose Ukraine. Information had reached him. His response turned a challenge to policy into a question of political control.

This is where Hayek's concern with dispersed knowledge becomes especially relevant. Local knowledge loses its corrective force when people are punished for communicating it or lack the power to change a decision. A reader need not accept Hayek's general argument against comprehensive planning to recognise the destructive effect of censorship and coercion. A government can receive warnings and still silence the people giving them; ignorance, manufactured ignorance and the refusal to act on known suffering are different failures.

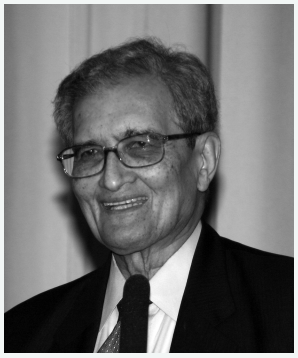
In *The Road to Serfdom* (1944)[103], Hayek also connects comprehensive economic control with the concentration of coercive political power. *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960)[104] develops the question of institutional restraints. For the famine, the practical issue is stark: who could challenge a quota, expose a lethal policy or force those directing it to change course?

[102] Jacek Kochanowicz, "Introduction to the 1990 Edition", in Ludwig von Mises, *Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth* (Ludwig von Mises Institute, 1990).

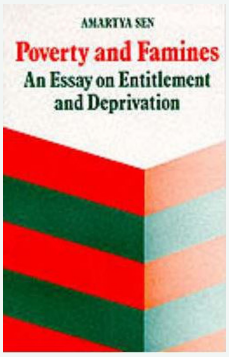
[103] F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944).

[104] F. A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960), English edition, edited by Ronald Hamowy, University of Chicago Press, 2011.

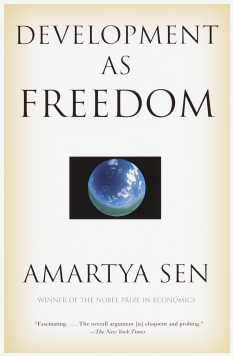
Amartya Sen — Democracy as a Universal Value



Amartya Sen in Cologne, 28 November 2007. Photograph: Elke Wetzig (Elya).



Poverty and Famines. English edition, Oxford University Press.



Development as Freedom. Vintage paperback, 2000.

Amartya Sen, the 1998 economics laureate, makes a strong claim about famine and democracy. In "Democracy as a Universal Value" (1999), he writes that **"no substantial famine has ever occurred" in an independent democratic country with at least a relatively free press.** His explanation is institutional: independent reporting, opposition and elections make suffering visible and put pressure on governments to act.

In *Poverty and Famines* (1981)[105], he also distinguishes a society's food supply from people's ability to obtain it; food may exist while particular groups lose access. *Development as Freedom* (1999)[106] brings political freedom and protection against deprivation together.

For the Holodomor, this sharpens the question of why warnings and suffering failed to force a change of course. Suppressing information and eliminating political challenge disabled the means by which victims could demand relief or hold rulers accountable. Sen's institutional argument remains relevant even if one rejects Mises's or Hayek's economic theory: information must be allowed to circulate, and people must have institutions through which they can demand a response.

Sen's argument gives the food-sufficiency finding in section 2.3 its full political meaning. **An independent, democratic Ukraine would have had both the food to avert the famine and the political means to demand its protection.** Elected representatives could challenge extraction, a free press could expose starvation, and voters could replace a government that refused to act. Moscow's dictatorship instead controlled the harvest, censored reports of hunger and suppressed independent political organisation. Ukrainians were deprived of the food they had produced and of the institutions through which they could insist that it be used to keep them alive.

R. J. Rummel's *Power Kills* (1997)[107] connects government killing with concentrated, unaccountable power. Read alongside Sen, Rummel directs attention to whether the

[105] Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (1981), English edition, Oxford University Press, 1983.

[106] Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (1999).

[107] R. J. Rummel, *Power Kills: Democracy as a Method of Nonviolence* (Transaction Publishers, 1997).

endangered population possesses effective means of challenge. The relevant restraints on coercion[108] concern political rights, independent organisation and institutions capable of forcing a response. This is an argument about the distribution of power; people excluded from effective political participation require particular attention.

Leszek Kołakowski approaches responsibility through the Soviet system's own account of Stalin. Discussing Khrushchev's 1956 Secret Speech in *Main Currents of Marxism*, he exposes the inadequacy of blaming Stalin personally while treating the party and its institutions as essentially sound. Stalin's power had institutional foundations: the Bolshevik monopoly on government, political policing and the destruction of independent opposition. An imagined communism without repression does not explain how the actual system sustained an unchecked ruler for decades. The question is how the institutions created by the revolution enabled his rule and protected his decisions from effective challenge.[109]

Kołakowski on Belief and Evidence

Leszek Kołakowski (1927–2009) was a Polish philosopher who became a leading critic of communism. Expelled from the Polish United Workers' Party in 1966, he left Poland after losing his university post in 1968.

In *Main Currents of Marxism*, he examined the shock caused by Khrushchev's 1956 speech: accounts dismissed as hostile propaganda gained authority when Moscow confirmed them.

"Reports which had caused no tremor as long as they appeared in 'bourgeois' books or newspapers had the effect of a thunderclap when confirmed by the Kremlin oracle."[110]



Leszek Kołakowski, Amsterdam, 9 March 1971.

The Ryazan "Miracle": After Stalin, 1959–60

Stalin died in 1953, and Khrushchev denounced his cult of personality in 1956. Yet in 1959, the Russian region of Ryazan was celebrated for supposedly tripling its annual meat production. Regional party leader Aleksei Larionov received Khrushchev's public backing. Investigations in autumn 1960 exposed extensive falsification behind the celebrated achievement.

[108] R. J. Rummel, *Power Kills: Democracy as a Method of Nonviolence* (Transaction Publishers, 1997), chapter 13, "Why Does Power Kill?".

[109] Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. P. S. Falla, Book Three, *The Breakdown*, ch. XIII, "Developments in Marxism Since Stalin's Death", §1, "De-Stalinization", pp. 1149–1150, 1152–1153 (one-volume edition). He acknowledges camp releases and reduced arbitrary terror while distinguishing those changes from institutional limits on party power.

[110] Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. P. S. Falla, Book Three, *The Breakdown*, ch. XIII, "Developments in Marxism Since Stalin's Death", §1, "De-Stalinization", p. 1150 (one-volume edition).

The Ryazan "Miracle": After Stalin, 1959–60 (continued)

In Yoram Gorlizki's study, the deception runs through the ordinary regional party apparatus. Officials whose earlier careers had been respectable collaborated in manufacturing success. Political pressure and dependence on superiors could reward reassuring reports over accurate information; the fraud implicated the institutions charged with implementing and supervising the plan.

The fraud also consumed the means of future production. Officials sent young and underweight cattle to slaughter to meet the current meat target. One district official recalled warning that this would destroy their reserves. The reported achievement therefore depleted livestock needed for subsequent production. This was a failure of planning for the future: meeting the present obligation took precedence over maintaining the herd on which later meat production depended.

The chronology matters: Stalin was gone and his personal rule condemned, but incentives to manufacture agricultural success persisted. His dictatorship had institutional foundations, and removing the dictator did not automatically remove the political relationships that rewarded deception. This later scandal illustrates a continuing problem of power and accountability.

However, an institutional explanation need not make individual decisions inevitable. In "If Stalin Had Died…", Kotkin argues that wholesale forced collectivisation was neither a necessary condition of industrialisation nor an unavoidable requirement of dictatorship.[111] Soviet institutions enabled Stalin's rule, but his ideological commitments and choices helped determine how far coercion went. Explaining the system does not absolve the ruler who chose to persist.

The fabricated Doctors' Plot, the antisemitic campaign against physicians discussed in the insert in section 2.5.2, offers a concrete example of the consequences of Stalin's personal rule. Stalin's death on 5 March 1953 was followed by the collapse of the Doctors' Plot. A contemporary report of the Soviet announcement on 4 April records the surviving accused doctors' release and vindication. His death brought a reprieve to those still imprisoned in this antisemitic campaign; it came twenty years too late to undo the destruction inflicted during the Holodomor. The reversal illustrates the stakes of unchecked personal power.

Stalin's choices concerned both the use of coercion and the populations against which it was directed. For the Holodomor, the economic and institutional arguments therefore lead back to the question of national targeting. Collectivisation and extraction devastated several Soviet societies, including the Kazakh population during the Asharshylyq[112]. Both famines arose from coercive Soviet policies. Those shared mechanisms, however, do not settle genocidal intent: whether each famine also constituted genocide requires its own assessment of intent and national targeting. In Kazakhstan, forced settlement and collectivisation shattered nomadic livelihoods and violently reshaped Kazakh society and national identity. In Ukraine, procurement policy also became entangled with an assault on national autonomy and culture. The decree of 14 December 1932 connected grain procurement with accusations against

[111] For the agricultural alternatives and the debate over collectivisation and industrialisation, see section 2.6, "The Curse of the Black Earth".

[112] Sarah Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan* (Cornell University Press, 2018).

Ukrainian nationalists and measures reversing Ukrainisation, particularly in the North Caucasus. The January 1933 directive restricting flight from Ukraine and the North Caucasus then closed an avenue of survival. Such decisions require an account of whom the state sought to control and what forms of national life it regarded as threatening.

The comparison in section 1.1.1 makes the material mechanism plain. Ukrainian rural households depended heavily on grain and bread; Kazakh pastoral households depended on herds for meat, milk and exchange for grain. Moscow's policies deprived each of the means by which it fed itself. Detailed expertise might be needed to redesign an agricultural economy, but it was not needed to know that people deprived of their food would starve. Planning's technical failures cannot erase responsibility for continuing lethal deprivation with that knowledge.

Ukraine and other societies across Central and Eastern Europe encountered communist social engineering and Soviet domination in different periods and forms. Their experience raises a question that an argument about socialism alone cannot settle: how did ideology and imperial power reinforce each other? National subordination shaped who could govern, whose institutions could survive and whose account of reality could be heard. The Ukrainian experience requires attention to ideology, imperial domination and authoritarian power.

Industrial growth does not establish that forced collectivisation, punitive requisitioning or the chosen pace of extraction were necessary. A policy's promised achievement must be weighed against the choices available, the warnings received and the human cost knowingly imposed. Mises's theory cannot by itself prove the famine's causes or genocidal intent. Nor does a planning failure exclude deliberate deprivation: a regime can create a crisis, exploit it and suppress the evidence that would expose its responsibility.

*
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Even if the Holodomor had not been genocide, what would it have been—democide, culpable policy failure, an accident? Rejecting one classification does not answer that question or erase the responsibility of the people *and* institutions involved. It absolves neither Stalin nor the Soviet regime, both imposed on Ukrainians. Democide[113] directs attention to government killing, including knowingly lethal conditions and reckless disregard for life; an appeal to accident or inadvertence would still have to explain confiscation, blocked escape and the suppression of warnings.

However, one conclusion is clear: **the Holodomor cannot credibly be described as a natural catastrophe that overwhelmed a government doing its best to protect its people.** Forced collectivisation, unchecked political power and the assault on Ukrainian nationhood reinforced one another. Debating the labels cannot erase those mechanisms—or absolve those responsible.

[113] R. J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (Transaction Publishers, 1994), chapter 2, "Definition of Democide".

3. The Wider Historical Pattern of Ukrainian Erasure by Russia

The Holodomor's destruction reached beyond the people it killed. Hunger devastated the villages in which language, custom and family memory were transmitted, while repression attacked the institutions through which Ukrainians could govern themselves and sustain a public culture. These forms of violence belonged to a longer struggle over whether Ukraine could exist as a nation with a political future of its own. Imperial and Soviet rule changed in ideology, borders and methods; nevertheless, Moscow repeatedly claimed the authority to decide the limits of Ukrainian national life. Russia's present war gives that history immediate stakes.

Genocide concerns the destruction of a group as a group; it is not simply another word for mass murder. Large-scale killing describes what happens to individuals. The genocidal aim is the destruction, wholly or in substantial part, of a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, and the Convention includes acts other than killing. In particular, forcibly transferring children to another group can attack a community's continuity while leaving those children alive. Here the protected group is the Ukrainian nation: its state and institutions help sustain its collective life, rather than constituting a separate treaty category.[114]

Destroying Ukrainian statehood, suppressing a language or imposing imperial rule does not by itself establish genocide under the Convention. Lemkin's broader account nevertheless helps explain how the destruction of institutions, culture and political autonomy can join physical violence in an assault on a nation. Cultural erasure can expose the national purpose of an attack, while killing, destructive conditions of life and forced child transfer show the means by which that purpose is pursued. The survival of some individuals does not establish the survival of their group.

[114] The Genocide Convention, Article II, targets a protected group as such, including destruction in part and forcible child transfer. The ICTY's judicial account of the Krstić appeal, 19 April 2004, distinguishes physical or biological destruction from an attack confined to cultural or sociological identity. The UN's account of the Convention's drafting explains the exclusion of cultural genocide as a separate category and the express inclusion of child transfer. Statehood and national institutions matter here as foundations of the Ukrainian group's life; their destruction alone is not a separate Article II act.

3.1 Statehood, Language and Cultural Erasure

The struggle over Ukrainian national life had an imperial history before it became a Soviet one. The Valuev Circular of 1863 restricted Ukrainian-language religious and educational publications, while Alexander II's Ems Ukase of 1876 extended restrictions to imports of Ukrainian books, public readings, theatre and printed song lyrics. Censorship sought to obstruct the institutions through which a language could develop beyond private conversation: schools, publishing, scholarship and public performance. Ukraine's later struggle for statehood grew out of a society whose ability to express its own identity had already been systematically constrained.

Ukraine's struggle for independence did not begin in 1991. After the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, the Central Rada, led by historian Mykhailo Hrushevsky, proclaimed the Ukrainian People's Republic in November 1917. Initially seeking autonomy, it proclaimed full independence in the Fourth Universal, dated 22 January 1918. A separate West Ukrainian People's Republic emerged in former Austro-Hungarian territory, and the two proclaimed their unification on 22 January 1919, although continuing warfare prevented the union from being fully realised.

Ukraine's independence struggle involved multiple armies and competing governments, but its independent republican forces were ultimately defeated by the Bolsheviks. Much of Ukraine came under the Moscow-backed Ukrainian Soviet republic, a founding constituent of the USSR in December 1922. Other territories with Ukrainian populations remained outside Soviet control, principally under Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia. **Modern Ukrainian statehood had therefore already emerged and been fought for long before the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991.** The interwar division also matters to the history of the famine: Soviet authorities did not yet govern all the territory that forms Ukraine today.

Within Soviet Ukraine, the relationship between state control and national culture initially took a different turn: Ukrainisation in the 1920s expanded Ukrainian education, publishing and cultural life. But Stalin's regime reversed that policy and persecuted those who had helped build it. The generation later known as the *Розстріляне відродження* ("Executed Renaissance") included writers and artists whose work was banned and whose lives were destroyed by imprisonment or execution. Theatre director Les Kurbas, playwright Mykola Kulish and novelist Valerian Pidmohylny were among the Ukrainian cultural figures executed at Sandarmokh in 1937. Repression attacked both the people who created a national culture and the institutions that could transmit it to another generation.



Writers of VAPLITE, the Free Academy of Proletarian Literature, Kharkiv, 1926–27. The group included Mykola Khvylovy and Mykola Kulish.

The later expansion of Soviet Ukraine brought western regions with different political and cultural histories under the same state. Subcarpathian Ruthenia, also called Subcarpathian Rus and now largely forming Ukraine's Zakarpattia region, entered Czechoslovakia in 1919. Its population included Rusyns and Ukrainians, alongside Hungarians, Jews and other communities with distinct and sometimes overlapping identities. Hungary annexed part of the region in 1938 and occupied the remainder in March 1939, crushing the short-lived independent Carpatho-Ukraine. After the Red Army's arrival in 1944, Soviet authorities prevented the restoration of Czechoslovak control and imposed changes of citizenship. Under the treaty of 29 June 1945, Prague ceded the territory to the USSR. Its incorporation into Soviet Ukraine brought the region under the same authoritarian state that governed the rest of the republic.

Beyond Ukraine, Soviet expansion also extinguished the independence of the Baltic states. The Molotov–Ribbentrop agreements of August and September 1939[115] prepared the Baltic states' subjugation; Soviet occupation and annexation followed in 1940. Arrests, executions and family deportations in June 1941 attacked their societies as well as their governments. Nazi occupation followed, but the Red Army's return in 1944–45 restored Soviet occupation, which Moscow portrayed as liberation. Further mass deportations followed in March 1949.[116] Many Western states refused to recognise the annexations as lawful and maintained that Baltic statehood continued legally, even while Soviet authorities exercised control on the ground.

In postwar Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Moscow exercised control through formally separate states. Their subordination operated through local Communist leaderships, the

[115] See 2.5.3 Foreign Policy and Imperial Domination. For a fuller discussion of the pact and Soviet–German cooperation, see Vatnik Soup, *Molotov–Ribbentrop: The Red-Brown Alliance*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming.

[116] Approximately 95,000 people were deported from the three Baltic states in March 1949. See the Latvian embassy's commemorative address, delivered on 26 March 2024 and published on 12 April 2024.

Cominform established in 1947, economic dependence and the threat or use of military force. A US assessment of Czechoslovakia dated 15 December 1949 identified the Soviet Embassy, a Soviet Interior Ministry centre in Prague and contacts between party officials among the channels of Moscow's control. Formal independence therefore offered no assurance of national self-determination. Ukraine's independent republic had already been defeated decades earlier, and its Soviet administration was embedded directly within the institutions of the USSR. Across these different political arrangements, the power to set the limits of national life remained concentrated in Moscow and the party leaderships answerable to it.

After that postwar consolidation, Stalin's death in 1953 and Khrushchev's Secret Speech of 25 February 1956 brought a real rupture with his public cult. Some victims were rehabilitated, including posthumously. But Khrushchev denounced arbitrary repression while defending Leninist legitimacy, collectivisation and heavy industry. Khrushchev's own rise through the Moscow party leadership and appointment to lead Ukraine in 1938 tied his career to the system he was judging. Condemning collectivisation as a policy would call into question the party's record and his own service to it. The political choice of what to acknowledge therefore mattered. As Kołakowski argues in *Main Currents of Marxism*, concentrating blame on Stalin could shield the party and system through which he had ruled. The dictator could be denounced without surrendering the party's claim to judge its own history.[117]

The Soviet party's June 1956 resolution made that boundary explicit: Stalin's abuses had not, it insisted, altered the system's socialist character. French Communist leaders faced a related risk: as Courtois and Lazar put it, "Changing the basis of their legitimacy risked threatening their power."[118]

[117] Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. P. S. Falla, Book Three, *The Breakdown*, ch. XIII, "Developments in Marxism Since Stalin's Death", §1, "De-Stalinization", pp. 1149–1150 (one-volume edition). For the parallel problem of repudiating Mao's disastrous policies while preserving the Communist Party's historical legitimacy, see Vatnik Soup, *The Great Leap Backwards: China's Maoist regime, then and now*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming.

[118] Thierry Wolton, *Une histoire mondiale du communisme*, vol. III, *Les complices* (Paris: Grasset, 2017), pp. 322–323. Stéphane Courtois and Marc Lazar, *Histoire du Parti communiste français* (2nd ed., Paris: PUF, 2000), p. 310, as reproduced in Wolton, p. 326. French original: « Modifier ce qui fondait leur légitimité risquait de menacer leur pouvoir. »; translation ours. For differences between the French and Italian parties and dissent within the movement, see Wolton, pp. 320–325.

Khrushchev's Secret Speech, 1956

On 25 February 1956, at a closed session of the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev delivered *On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences*. He described fabricated charges, torture and the execution of loyal Communists. After decades in which the Party had demanded adulation of Stalin, its leader was exposing crimes committed in its own name. The published text records agitation and indignation in the hall. Contemporary reports described delegates fainting.

The shock spread beyond the Congress. Copies were read at Party meetings and sent to Communist parties in Eastern Europe; a Polish text reached the West. The US State Department released the speech on 4 June 1956. For Communists who had dismissed earlier testimony as hostile propaganda, the denunciation now came from the leadership they had defended.



Polish edition for internal Party use, Warsaw, March 1956.

In Ukraine, the limits of that break became clear in the continuing pressure on national culture. In his 1965 manuscript *Інтернаціоналізм чи русифікація?*, Ivan Dziuba challenged Russification by appealing to the Soviet state's own professed Leninist principles of national equality. Yet even this criticism from within the declared ideals of the system brought persecution: he was expelled from the Writers' Union and arrested in 1972.[119] The issue was who could speak for Ukrainian cultural life when the party reserved the authority to define its acceptable limits.

Control over culture extended to the historical record itself, including the memory of famine and foreign relief. The Soviet government's acknowledgement of ARA assistance on 10 July 1923 stands alongside the later history described by the Hoover Institution's archival guide: American relief workers were portrayed as spies, while the mission was largely omitted from official publications. An acknowledged rescue could later be recast as a hostile foreign presence or removed from public history.

[119] Czechoslovakia in 1968 provides a parallel: the Prague Spring's attempt to create "socialism with a human face" was crushed by a Soviet-led invasion in August. See the forthcoming Vatnik Soup paper *Jan Palach: Resistance to Tyranny*; Kyle Orton, "Socialism Could Never Have a Human Face", 21 August 2022.

The Holodomor itself remained subject to official silence for decades after Stalin's death. Stanislav Kulchytsky recalled joining a Soviet commission in 1986 intended to rebut famine accounts, only to find archival evidence that undermined the explanation he had been assigned to defend. When Ukrainian party leader Volodymyr Shcherbytsky acknowledged the famine on 25 December 1987, he still attributed it to drought. Admitting that hunger had occurred did not yet mean accepting responsibility for the policies that had made it lethal.

Family memories nevertheless survived, and the opening that began under perestroika widened after independence.



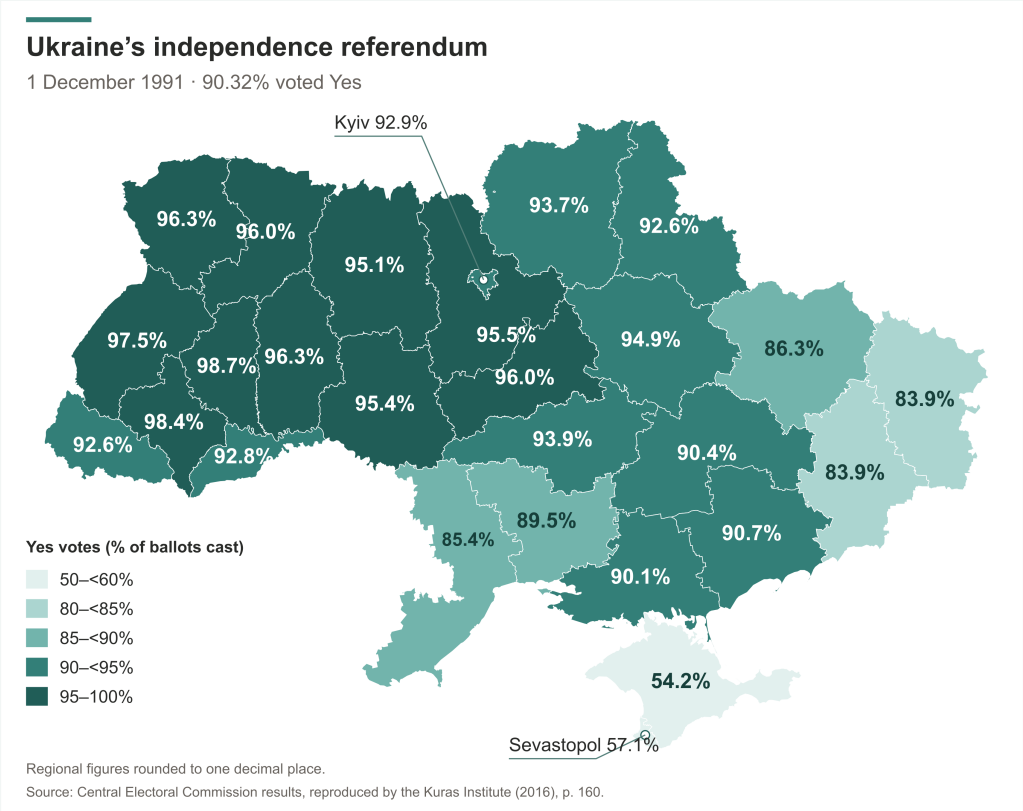
Holodomor remembrance march, Winnipeg, 1983, on the famine's fiftieth anniversary. Winnipeg Free Press photo archive.

From Perestroika to Independence

Under Mikhail Gorbachev, perestroika ("restructuring") and glasnost ("openness") relaxed censorship and widened public debate in the late 1980s. Discussion of the Holodomor, officially suppressed for decades, became possible again.

On 1 December 1991, **90.32% of ballots cast supported Ukraine's declaration of independence**, with 84.18% turnout. A majority voted Yes in each of the 27 administrative regions, including Crimea (54.19%) and Sevastopol (57.07%).

From Perestroika to Independence



Support for independence by region, 1 December 1991. Regional percentages are rounded; the published national result was 90.32%.

In the Budapest Memorandum of 5 December 1994, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States reaffirmed respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and existing borders, and their obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against its territorial integrity or political independence, in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon state. The bilateral Ukrainian–Russian state-border treaty, signed on 28 January 2003, entered into force on 23 April 2004. Ukrainians had chosen independence; Moscow had undertaken to respect it.

Kulchytsky recalls the publication of Volodymyr Maniak and Lidiia Kovalenko's *33-й: голод. Народна книга-меморіал* in 1991 and subsequent archival collections. That recovery continues: in June 2025, the National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide reported digitising 373 eyewitness testimonies, mostly recorded in the early 2000s. Recording these voices restores individual lives and acts of survival to a history the authorities tried to suppress. Remembering also asserts Ukrainians' right to speak in their own name.

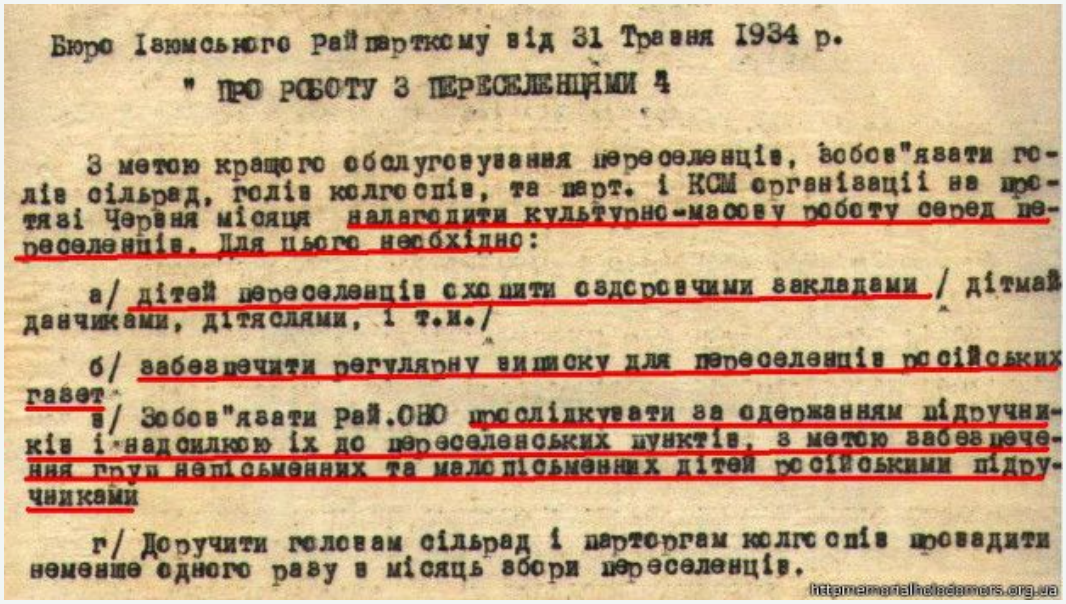
3.2 The Holodomor within the Assault on Ukrainian Nationhood

Ukraine was subjected to a particularly destructive combination of national subjugation and Soviet social engineering. Its independent state had been defeated, its cultural institutions came under attack, and its rural population was exposed to mass starvation. A modern demographic reconstruction estimates approximately 3.9 million excess deaths in Soviet Ukraine over 1932–34. The loss reached beyond individual lives: families, village communities and the transmission of language and memory were devastated. The particular severity of Ukraine's treatment lies in this convergence of physical destruction, coercive economic transformation and attacks on the institutions of national life.

The loss of Ukrainian independence also meant loss of control over the harvest. Ukraine produced enough food in 1932 to avert famine, as the study presented in section 2.3 establishes. Yet Moscow's procurement system subordinated the harvest to central priorities: supplies for Soviet cities, reserves and foreign sales. These allocations were imposed while Ukrainian peasants starved; the figures in section 1.3 show what extraction left them. National independence concerned the power to retain and distribute the food needed for survival. Coupled with democratic accountability, it would have given Ukrainians the means to challenge a policy that was killing them, as the discussion of Sen in section 2.7 explains.

In his 1953 address "Soviet Genocide in Ukraine", Raphael Lemkin connected starvation with attacks on intellectuals and churches, and with policies dispersing Ukrainians and reshaping settlement. He understood the peasantry as a carrier of language, culture and collective identity. His argument explains why the destruction of national institutions belongs beside mass death in an account of the assault on a nation.

Resettlement and the language of schooling, 1934



Бюро Ізюмського райпарткому від 31 Травня 1934 р.

" ПРО РОБОТУ З ПЕРЕСЕЛЕНЦЯМИ "

З метою кращого обслуговування переселенців, зобов"язати голів сільрад, голів колгоспів, та парт. і КСМ організації на протязі Червня місяця налагодити культурно-масову роботу серед переселенців. Для цього необхідно:

а/ дітей переселенців охопити оздоровчими закладами / дітмайданчиками, дітяслями, і т.п./

б/ забезпечити регулярну виписку для переселенців російських газет.

в/ Зобов"язати Рай.ОНО прослідкувати за одержанням підручників і надсилкою їх до переселенських пунктів, з метою забезпечення груп неписьменних та малописьменних дітей російськими підручниками

г/ Доручити головам сільрад і парторгам колгоспів провадити неменше одного разу в місяць збори переселенців.

http://memorialholodomors.org.ua

"On work with settlers": Izyum district party bureau, 31 May 1934. Extract from a museum reproduction.

The instruction of 31 May 1934 called for organised cultural activities among settlers. It ordered subscriptions to Russian newspapers and provision of Russian textbooks for settlers' schools and literacy groups. It also required monthly meetings with settlers.

Resettlement after the famine thus involved decisions about language and institutions as well as housing and land. This local instruction shows how the party organised the newcomers' schooling and public life in Russian.

Religious policy exposes the same struggle over independent institutions. After years of repression, Stalin authorised an accommodation with the Russian Orthodox hierarchy during the war. The Moscow Patriarchate's own September 1943 statements record his meeting with three metropolitans on 4 September and permission to elect a patriarch; the bishops elected Sergius on 8 September and thanked the Soviet government. The same statements mobilised Christians against Hitler. Religious authority helped mobilise support for the war while the hierarchy operated within boundaries set by the state.

Abroad, the wartime alliance had already given Moscow an incentive to display religious tolerance. On 11 September 1941, Roosevelt asked Soviet ambassador Constantine Oumansky to arrange publicity about religious freedom in the USSR before the next Lend-Lease bill reached Congress. Secretary of State Cordell Hull's memorandum records the president's concern that hostility towards the Soviet Union would obstruct aid. Yet on 31 July, Acting Secretary Sumner Welles had reported no indication of increased religious tolerance. Roosevelt's request identifies a concrete political incentive: a more reassuring image of Soviet religious life could make the alliance easier to defend before an American audience. Publicity and freedom in practice were separate questions.

However, the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Galicia received different treatment. Its account of the operation against it describes the arrest of Metropolitan Josyf Slipyj and other

bishops in 1945, followed by the security services' organisation of an assembly in Lviv on 8–10 March 1946. With the Greek-Catholic hierarchy imprisoned, the assembly proclaimed the abolition of the Union of Brest and incorporation into the Russian Orthodox Church. The church calls it a pseudo-council: state-directed coercion was presented as ecclesiastical reunification. Its legal organisation was suppressed, while believers maintained an underground church.

The contrast concerns power over institutions as well as doctrine. Moscow could accommodate a hierarchy useful to the state while dismantling a Ukrainian church with its own loyalties, leadership and social authority. The attack reached the structures through which communities educated clergy, preserved traditions and organised a life beyond the state. It also met resistance: formal liquidation did not extinguish religious practice or the identity the church helped sustain.

Nor was the church's usefulness confined to wartime morale. Historian Kathryn David's "At the Kremlin in 1943" traces the policy's roots to western Ukrainian territories annexed from Poland in 1939. There, religious institutions could help present territorial conquest as reunification. A regulated Orthodox hierarchy offered Moscow a means of extending political and cultural influence across borders. Her interpretation makes the imperial dimension explicit: restoring a church under state supervision could serve the same expansion of power as suppressing another.

Mass deportation also targeted populations defined by nationality. Soviet Germans, Chechens, Ingush and other peoples were deported. In the Baltic states, deportations in 1941 and 1949 uprooted families selected through political and social categories. Campaigns against entire ethnic populations extended collective punishment further: nationality itself could determine removal, including that of children and people accused of no individual offence.

Crimea and the Crimean Tatars

The Crimean Tatars are an indigenous people of Crimea. Their national life encompasses language, religion, family memory and cultural traditions, including Örnek ornamentation, inscribed by UNESCO in 2021. Deportation attacked the people who carried that life and the connection between their community and its homeland.



Crimean Tatar women, early twentieth-century postcard.



Crimean Tatar traditional dress, Ukraine, 2021.

Stalin's order of 11 May 1944 instructed the NKVD to remove all Crimean Tatars and settle them permanently in Uzbekistan. It also prescribed the transfer of their homes, livestock and produce to Soviet authorities. During 18–20 May, more than 190,000 Crimean Tatars were deported; starvation, disease and exhaustion killed many in transit and exile. An accusation of collective betrayal became the justification for uprooting a people, including children and families, without establishing individual guilt. The operation attacked the community's continued existence in its homeland as well as the lives of its members. Ukraine's parliament recognised the deportation as genocide in 2015.

Survival and the struggle to return are also part of this history. Families preserved knowledge, identity and attachment to Crimea through exile. Their subsequent cultural renewal shows that removal did not extinguish the people it targeted. But the connection to present-day Ukraine is also one of renewed pressure: the UN's 2024 account of ten years of Russian occupation documents the suppression of Crimean Tatar identity and representative institutions. Their place in Ukraine's history and their particular targeting make this experience central to understanding national erasure.[120]

But repression also served material extraction. During Operation West in October 1947, Soviet security agencies deported families associated with Ukrainian nationalist resistance to special settlements and labour sites. Removing families also struck at the networks of kinship and local support on which resistance depended. Dispersing people to distant settlements under state supervision made it harder to maintain those ties and organise opposition. The

[120] See Vatnik Soup, *Crimea: A Ukrainian Destiny*, Historical Memory Dossier. Forthcoming.

Soviet government resolution of 10 September 1947 explicitly connected their removal with supplying workers to the coal industry. A Soviet report of 27 May 1948 recorded 77,791 deportees, including women and children. Most were assigned to coal enterprises in Kuzbass, the Chelyabinsk and Molotov (now Perm) regions of the Urals, eastern Siberia, and Karaganda in Kazakhstan. Other groups were sent to the Omsk region for industrial and agricultural work. Breaking resistance, uprooting communities and exploiting their labour were connected purposes of the same operation.

Ukrainian political prisoners, meanwhile, were dispersed through the Soviet camp network, including Gorlag at Norilsk, Rechlag at Vorkuta and Steplag near Zhezkazgan in Kazakhstan. Prison-camp sentences were legally distinct from the compulsory special settlements imposed on deported families. Both removed Ukrainians from their communities and placed their lives and labour under Soviet control far from home.

The uranium mines of Czechoslovakia show a related combination. Political prisoners were forced to mine uranium around Jáchymov and Horní Slavkov, while the ore supplied the Soviet nuclear weapons programme. These prison camps were separate from both the Soviet Gulag and Czechoslovakia's administrative forced-labour camp system.[121] However, they connected political repression to the extraction of a finite natural resource for Soviet strategic priorities. The prisoners' bodies and their country's mineral wealth were both subjected to coercive use.

Direct deportation into the USSR extended that exploitation across borders. Slovakia's Institute of National Memory records Czechoslovak civilians sent to forced labour in the Donbas and the Caucasus, including work in mines, construction and industry. These civilian deportations were authorised at the highest Soviet level in September 1944 to obtain workers replacing wartime labour losses. Ukrainian industrial territory could thus also be a destination for people deported from elsewhere: Soviet authorities used both people and places within a wider machinery of forced production.

Sending Czechoslovak civilians to the Donbas and deporting Ukrainian families to Siberia, the Urals and Kazakhstan were deliberate acts of population displacement and labour allocation. The authorities selected people for removal, organised transport and assigned destinations according to state priorities. Coercion thus reached beyond ruling a country: it enabled the state to uproot its inhabitants and redistribute their labour across the Soviet system.

These cases reveal related mechanisms, although their objectives and consequences differed. Grain requisitioning could deprive Ukrainian communities of the means to survive; deportation could destroy the social base of resistance while supplying labour; imprisonment could turn political opponents into miners serving an arms programme. Control over territory enabled control over resources, work and movement. But in Ukraine, economic coercion also became entangled with the attack on national autonomy and culture. A people deprived of the power to govern itself could be forced to surrender its harvests, its labour and the institutions through which it sustained its identity.

[121] For a fuller discussion of Czechoslovak repression and forced labour, see Vatnik Soup, *Jan Palach: Resistance to Tyranny*, Historical Memory Dossier (January 2027). Forthcoming.

3.3 From 2014 to the Present: Occupation and Genocide Allegations

Russia's current war against Ukraine began in 2014, with the seizure and attempted annexation of Crimea and Russian military intervention in the Donbas. On 27 March, the UN General Assembly affirmed Ukraine's territorial integrity and rejected the validity of the Crimean referendum as a basis for changing the peninsula's status. The full-scale invasion of 24 February 2022 expanded the war into an assault on the survival of an independent Ukrainian state.

Moscow presented its invasion as protection against an alleged genocide in the Donbas. In its order of 16 March 2022, the International Court of Justice stated that it did not possess evidence substantiating Russia's allegation and ordered Russia to suspend the military operations it had begun on 24 February. Separately, on 14 April 2022, Ukraine's parliament declared Russia's actions genocidal.

Bucha shows what occupation could mean for a Ukrainian community. Russian forces controlled the town near Kyiv from 5 to 30 March 2022. After their withdrawal, civilian bodies were found in the streets and in improvised graves. By 31 October 2022, UN human-rights monitors had documented 73 civilian killings in Bucha, including children. Their investigation of northern Ukraine describes security checks followed by summary executions; victims were found with bound hands and gunshot wounds to the head. Civilians were also shot while trying to flee or carry on daily activities. Suspected connections to Ukrainian forces could make a resident a target.[122]



Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Bucha, 4 April 2022.

The removal of children also attacks the continuity of Ukrainian families and communities. On 17 March 2023, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Vladimir

[122] OHCHR, *Killings of Civilians: Summary Executions and Attacks on Individual Civilians in Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy Regions in the Context of the Russian Federation's Armed Attack against Ukraine*, 7 December 2022, Executive Summary; Bucha.

Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, concerning the alleged war crimes of unlawful deportation and transfer of children.

Russian occupation subjects local government, schools and cultural life to Moscow's control. A March 2024 UN human-rights report documented the replacement of Ukrainian systems of government and education, pressure to obtain Russian passports, and suppression of Ukrainian cultural expression.

Russia recast Ukrainian citizens who remained in occupied Ukrainian territory as "foreigners". Putin's Decree No. 159 of 20 March 2025 gave them until 10 September 2025 to obtain a legal basis for residence under Russian law or leave. The alternatives were Russian citizenship, another Russian residence status, or the risk of deportation from their own homes. The occupying power thus made Ukrainians' right to remain where they lived depend on its own recognition of their status.

Access to essential services became a means of pressuring residents to take a Russian passport. The UN Secretary-General reported that, from 1 January 2025, pensions in occupied territory required Russian citizenship; the measures cited include a 13 September 2024 decree by the Zaporizhzhia occupation authorities. The March 2025 decree also removed earlier provisions for free medical care, while Russian language, history and law tests formed part of obtaining residence documents for employment. Without Russian passports, residents faced restrictions on employment, banking, insurance and property rights, as well as harsher scrutiny at checkpoints. Accepting Russian citizenship could in turn expose Ukrainian men to conscription into the army fighting their own country.[123]

Churches, schools, books and agricultural resources become objects of control alongside territory. Killings, the removal of children, forced displacement and imposed Russian citizenship strike at the different ways a national community survives: its members, its next generation and its institutional and cultural continuity. The conflict therefore concerns both the borders of Ukraine and the ability of Ukrainians to sustain a national life within them.

3.4 Ukrainian Grain in Russia's Current War

Control over food has again become a means of exerting power over Ukraine. The mechanisms include appropriation under occupation, attacks on agricultural and port infrastructure, and pressure on the routes through which Ukraine sells its harvests. They damage livelihoods inside Ukraine while affecting countries that depend on international food supplies.

Margarita Simonyan, RT's editor-in-chief, made the hoped-for political use of hunger explicit at the St Petersburg International Economic Forum on 17 June 2022. Addressing Putin, she introduced a "very cynical joke", or "exclamation", which she said she had heard from several people in Moscow. Her original Russian words were:

[123] UN Secretary-General, A/80/315, 6 August 2025, §§ 7–10, nn. 5–8; OHCHR, *Forced Displacement from Territory of Ukraine Occupied by the Russian Federation*, 20 March 2026, §§ 33–38.

“Вся надежда на голод. Что имеется в виду? Имеется в виду, что сейчас начнётся голод, и тут-то они образумятся: и санкции снимут, и вообще будут с нами дружить, потому что осознают, что не дружить с нами невозможно.”

“All our hope rests on famine. What does that mean? It means that famine will now begin, and then they will come to their senses: they will lift sanctions and, in general, be friends with us, because they will realise that it is impossible not to be friends with us.”

The opening phrase is transliterated *Vsya nadezhda na golod*. Russian **голод** (*golod*) means hunger or famine. Ukrainian **голод** (*holod*) has the same spelling and meaning, and forms the first element of **Голодомор** (*Holodomor*). Simonyan delivered the “joke” with a broad smile: other people’s hunger was the punchline, and concessions to Moscow were the hoped-for result.



Simonyan’s “All our hope rests on famine”, 17 June 2022. Still from a video with English subtitles; a dated video repost preserves the exchange.

The same broadcaster made imagined European deprivation the subject of a Christmas sketch. In RT’s film released on 23 December 2022, a girl receives a pet hamster at Christmas 2021. A year later, its exercise wheel powers the family’s lights. By the imagined Christmas of 2023, the freezing family is eating soup; the father pulls the hamster’s red bow from his mouth, and the mother shushes him. The closing message reads “Merry ‘Anti-Russian’ Christmas!” and advertises RT via VPN.[124] The sketch’s sequence and message present hunger and cold as the price of opposing Russia, packaged as festive humour.

[124] VPN (virtual private network) services can bypass access blocks. RT urges foreigners to use them while Russia blocks Twitter/X and other platforms at home. Officials and propagandists such as Simonyan therefore need a VPN or another means of circumvention when posting to those platforms from Russia. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov acknowledged using a VPN in April 2022. The state also blocks VPN services; from 1 September 2025, it introduced penalties for advertising circumvention tools and deliberately searching for material designated “extremist”. See Vatnik Soup, *Censorship and VPNs*.



The imagined "Christmas 2023" in RT's propaganda sketch.

The EU's sanctions package of 24 February 2025 explicitly included vessels transporting stolen Ukrainian grain. A subsequent Bellingcat and Lloyd's List investigation, published on 12 December 2025, traced the bulk carrier *Krasnodar* from Sevastopol's Avlita grain terminal to Saudi ports on two voyages between September and November. Satellite imagery identified the ship at the occupied Crimean terminal during gaps in its tracking transmissions. The company leasing the vessel, Petrokhleb-Kuban, denied exporting from Avlita or stealing grain; the investigators set out the imagery and tracking evidence contradicting its account of the loading location. The case shows how occupied ports can bring agricultural produce into international trade while its origin is contested or concealed.

However, taking produce is only one form of control. On 17 July 2023, the UN Secretary-General announced Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The arrangement had enabled the passage of more than 32 million tonnes of food commodities from Ukrainian ports, including World Food Programme shipments for humanitarian operations. Russia's participation in an export arrangement had become a source of leverage over access to those supplies.

Attacks on the infrastructure compounded that pressure. On 23 August 2023, UN human-rights monitors reported fourteen Russian attacks since 11 July hitting grain terminals, warehouses, port facilities and related equipment. They documented civilian casualties and disruption of global food supply lines. Damage to a silo or terminal reaches beyond the grain immediately destroyed: it can obstruct storage, transport and the income needed for another harvest. UN monitoring of March 2026 continued to record attacks on port infrastructure.

Stalin's requisitions and the Nazi Hunger Plan assigned Ukrainian agriculture a place in projects of power that treated the lives of its inhabitants as expendable. That history gives the political importance of food a particular resonance in the present war. Ukrainian sovereignty includes the ability to cultivate land, retain the fruits of labour and reach export markets without a conquering power deciding the terms. Food and memory meet in that question:

whether Ukrainians can command the resources and institutions needed to sustain their own national life.

3.5 Russia's War on Ukrainian Nationhood Today

Vladimir Putin had already framed Ukrainian independence as a problem of historical legitimacy. In "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians", published on 12 July 2021, he described Russians and Ukrainians as a single people and asserted that "true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia". He also said Ukraine's future was for its citizens to decide. But the condition attached to sovereignty undercut that assurance: Ukrainians' choices would count as authentic only within a relationship that Moscow accepted. Russia's invasion gave that contradiction a military form.

The language of brotherhood does not resolve this denial of Ukrainian agency. Putin spoke of the "fraternal Ukrainian people" while justifying Crimea's annexation in 2014, and invoked "brothers and sisters" at the September 2022 annexation ceremony.[125] In these uses, kinship confers no equal right to refuse Moscow's rule. "Little Russians", "one people" and the rejection of an "anti-Russia" can all permit individual Ukrainians to survive while denying a separate Ukrainian nation the right to its own future. Imperial "unity" is offered on condition that Ukrainians abandon the political and national independence Moscow rejects.

The denial of Ukrainian statehood also has an explicit ideological literature. In *Основы геополитики*[126] (1997), Part V, sections 4.4 and 5.6, Aleksandr Dugin treats sovereign Ukraine as a threat to Russia's Eurasian project and calls for its geopolitical dismantling. He allows forms of cultural autonomy while demanding Moscow's absolute military and political control over the northern Black Sea coast. Ukrainian distinctiveness is tolerated only on condition that it carries no independent power. This is the imperial hierarchy stated openly: Moscow assigns the strategic role, and Ukrainians are denied the right to choose their own.

In a discussion with Western journalists in March 2022, Dugin made the imperial condition explicit: "Without Ukraine, Russia cannot become once more the empire." With Ukraine under Russian control, he said, it would become an empire again; he dismissed the matter as "nothing personal".[127] Ukrainian sovereignty is treated as an obstacle to Russia's imperial status.

In an ANNA-News interview of 6 May 2014, discussing the killings and fire in Odesa four days earlier, he said: "я думаю убивать, убивать и убивать. Больше разговоров никаких не должно быть. Как профессор я так считаю." In English: "I think: kill, kill and kill. There

[125] Putin's 18 March 2014 address invokes the "fraternal Ukrainian people" while justifying Crimea's annexation; his 30 September 2022 address invokes Ukrainian brothers and sisters while proclaiming four further regions part of Russia.

[126] Александр Дугин, *Основы геополитики* (1997), Part V, sections 4.4, 5.6; pp. 347–349, 377–382.

[127] Aleksandr Dugin, discussion with Western journalists, March 2022. Full English-language recording, dated 5 March 2022 (26 min 9 s); original YouTube publication.

must be no more talking. As a professor, that is my view." A video extract preserves the statement.

In an August 2014 VK post, he wrote "Геноцид кретинов напрашивается сам собой" — "A genocide of cretins suggests itself" — and denied that the people he was attacking were really Ukrainians: "Я не верю, что это украинцы." He praised Ukrainians as a Slavic people while describing those he rejected as "появившаяся из канализационных люков раса ублюдков" — "a race of bastards that emerged from sewer manholes". The invocation of genocide and the racial dehumanisation are explicit. Read alongside his programme of imperial control, they express a genocidal intent towards the Ukrainians he excludes from an acceptable national identity.

The state-owned agency RIA Novosti published Timofey Sergeytsev's "What Russia Should Do with Ukraine" on 3 April 2022. He called for the liquidation of the ruling elite, repression in culture and education, and the removal of sovereignty for at least a generation. "Denazification will inevitably also entail de-Ukrainianisation," he wrote. The pursuit of independence was cast as evidence of Nazism; the programme targeted Ukrainian national existence itself.

We have examined these historical inversions in "May 9: Soviet-Nazi collaboration" and the contemporary overlap between pro-Kremlin propaganda and the far right in "Degenerate Russia: Nazi vatniks".

"Anti-Russia": when independence and sovereignty are recast as hostility

In this rhetoric, "anti-Russia" means "non-Russia": a Ukraine able to choose its own institutions, alliances and future without Moscow's approval. Putin's 2021 essay presents separation as a Western project and makes acceptable sovereignty conditional on partnership with Russia. Independent Ukrainian agency disappears from that account: choices Moscow rejects become evidence of foreign control. Sergeytsev's "denazification" takes the same logic further, turning the suppression of Ukrainian nationhood into a purported act of liberation.

Pavel Gubarev, a pro-Russian separatist leader from Sievierodonetsk in eastern Ukraine, proclaimed himself Donetsk's "people's governor" in 2014. He called for Russian military intervention and recruited separatist fighters; he later moved to Russia and said he fought with Russia's armed forces near Kyiv in March 2022. In a video circulated in October 2022, he stated the choice with unusual bluntness. He described Ukrainians as Russian people possessed by the devil, presented changing their convictions as a cure, and threatened killing if they refused. His opening assurance that he came to convince rather than kill led directly to threats to kill a million, five million or everyone.[128]

[128] Background: Council of the EU, entry 82, The Moscow Times, 18 February 2026. Pavel Gubarev, video circulated in October 2022: video excerpt and OstroV's dated report of 11 October. The six images retain the Russian Media Monitor English subtitles and original marks; the caption gives the full relevant passage from the subtitled clip, including its opening and closing context.

Pavel Gubarev: “convince” or kill



Pavel Gubarev, October 2022. Six frames from the English-subtitled version by Julia Davis’s Russian Media Monitor. The complete passage, including the sentences immediately before and after the six frames, reads: “These are Russian people, possessed by the devil. We are coming to convince them, not to kill them. But if you don’t want us to change your minds, then we will kill you. We will kill as many of you as we have to. We will kill 1 million, or 5 million, we can exterminate all of you until you understand that you’re possessed and you have to be cured.”

The conditional form is central to the threat. Ukrainians are offered survival through the surrender of the separate national identity their conquerors reject; those who refuse face physical destruction, potentially extending to everyone. Forced incorporation and extermination appear as connected means of eliminating Ukrainian national existence. **A threat to destroy the people who resist forced assimilation does not cease to be genocidal because submission is offered as an escape.** Gubarev’s words make his own eliminationist intent explicit.

Religious authority has also supplied a justification for Russia’s present war. In his sermon of 25 September 2022, Patriarch Kirill described death in the fulfilment of military duty as a sacrifice that washes away a person’s sins. Although he also prayed for the fighting to end,

the argument attached spiritual redemption to military service in the war. For the wider use of religion by the Russian state, see "Degenerate Russia: Religious persecution".

On 27 March 2024, the World Russian People's Council, chaired by Kirill, adopted a declaration calling Russia's invasion a "holy war" — "священная война" (*svyashchennaya voyna*) in Russian. The full text demands that all modern Ukraine enter Russia's exclusive sphere of influence. It also calls for legal recognition of a single Russian people comprising Great Russians, Ukrainians described as "Little Russians", and Belarusians. This is a political programme issued by a patriarch-led public forum, distinct from a resolution of the Holy Synod. But its claims are concrete: the defence of a supposedly shared spiritual world becomes a justification for denying Ukraine independent political and national existence.

The rhetoric also conflicted with assurances given abroad. On 12 April 2024, the World Council of Churches recalled that Kirill had told its general secretary in May 2023 that references to holy war concerned the metaphysical realm, not armed conflict. The WCC rejected the new declaration and asked whether it expressed the Russian Orthodox Church's position. Reassurance to foreign interlocutors and the sanctification of war at home could not be reconciled simply by calling both a defence of peace.

Church administration has again followed the extension of Russian power into Ukraine. On 7 June 2022, the Russian Orthodox Church's Holy Synod placed the Dzhankoi, Simferopol and Feodosia dioceses in occupied Crimea directly under the Moscow patriarch and synod. These dioceses had belonged to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, itself historically linked to Moscow. The resolution invoked appeals from their bishops and difficulties communicating with Kyiv. Its institutional result was to remove Kyiv's authority and transfer administration directly to Moscow. The expansion of Russian ecclesiastical jurisdiction thus accompanied occupation even within a church tradition previously connected to the Moscow Patriarchate.

Repression also reached clergy outside that hierarchy. In its report covering September–November 2024, paragraphs 70–73, the UN Human Rights Office documented restrictions on religious freedom in occupied territory and recorded the release of two Greek-Catholic priests in June 2024 after detention since November 2022. One reported torture and ill-treatment. See also our soup on religious persecution. These acts differ from the machinery of the 1946 forced incorporation, but the comparison identifies a recurring issue: who may maintain an institution independent of Moscow, and what happens when that independence survives territorial conquest? A claim to protect religion cannot answer evidence of persecution or justify the removal of Ukrainian religious autonomy.

Here, "unity" entails a claim to decide which Ukrainian institutions may exist independently of Moscow. The historical circumstances have changed, but the political demand is recognisable: a people may retain approved forms of religious life while losing the authority to organise that life on its own terms.

3.6 Deporting and Russifying Ukrainian Children

The removal of children extends the assault on Ukrainian nationhood into the next generation. In its March 2026 investigation, the UN Commission of Inquiry verified cases involving 1,205 children deported or transferred from five Ukrainian oblasts. By then, 80 per cent of the children in its documented cases had not returned. These are verified cases, not an estimate of the overall number removed. It documented Russian citizenship, long-term placement in Russian families and institutions, adoption databases and obstacles to family reunification. These were arrangements for continued separation and incorporation into Russian life. The Commission classified Russian authorities' deportation and forcible transfer of children, and their enforced disappearance, as crimes against humanity.

Larger figures describe different populations. In his 2024 annual report, cited by the UN Secretary-General in 2025, Ukraine's parliamentary human rights commissioner reported 19,546 children transferred within occupied Ukraine or deported to Russia. Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's presidential commissioner for children's rights (*sic*)[129], claimed in her office's 2022 annual report that more than 700,000 children had arrived in Russia from Ukraine, including occupied Donbas, most with parents or other relatives. Neither figure is interchangeable with the Commission's verified case count; the Russian total is not an independently established count of unlawful deportations.

Moscow presents these movements as evacuation and protection from war — the war Russia itself chose to wage against Ukraine. But the Commission found that the documented removals were generally not temporary, lacked the required consent and were not principally motivated by health, medical-treatment or safety needs. A claim to shelter children does not justify keeping them from their families and country.

Lvova-Belova's own public statements illuminate the intended transformation. In September 2022, she described a group of Mariupol children who sang the Ukrainian anthem and criticised Putin. She presented their subsequent placement in Russian families, including her own, as transforming their attitudes into love for Russia. During a meeting with Putin, she also publicly acknowledged that she had "adopted" a child from Mariupol. Her account treated the children's Ukrainian loyalties as an obstacle overcome through their new upbringing.

In an October 2025 video interview for Empatia Manuchi, while dismissing abduction and Russification allegations as "mythology", she herself said "Я украла мариупольского ребёнка" — "I stole a Mariupol child". She described the boy's love for Ukraine and wish not to live in Russia, and telling him that he must change his attitude.

[129] The title is official. Compare the Hunger Plan discussed in section 1.1.1: Herbert Backe, a leading architect and organiser of the 1941 starvation policy, was State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Food and Agriculture, which he later headed. An institution responsible for food could organise starvation; an office invoking children's rights can organise deportation and forced assimilation.



Maria Lvova-Belova. Still from a UNITED24 video excerpt with English subtitles.

Yale's Humanitarian Research Lab identified a systematic programme of coerced adoption and fostering initiated by Putin and his subordinates with the intention of Russifying Ukrainian children. Removal, imposed citizenship and replacement of family and national attachments belong together in this account. The question concerns the deliberate transfer of children out of the community through which they would otherwise inherit language, memory and belonging.

The Commission's case files show what this could mean in practice. Three teenage boys were issued Russian passports. For an infant girl deported from Kherson, adoption records and a new birth certificate replaced her original name and birthplace with a new name and a birthplace in Moscow Oblast. Her mother, siblings and guardian remained in Ukraine. Changing a child's recorded origins goes beyond temporary protection.

The church also appears in the infrastructure receiving children taken from Ukraine. Yale's September 2025 investigation identified a religious facility managed by the Russian Orthodox Church among 210 locations in its study.

This is why Article II(e) of the Genocide Convention matters. It expressly includes forcibly transferring children from one protected group to another; killing the children is not a prerequisite. Permanent separation and organised assimilation are evidence relevant to that question. The ICC's March 2023 warrants against Putin and Lvova-Belova concern the war crimes of unlawful deportation and transfer. That choice of charges does not amount to a finding that genocidal intent was absent. Vatnik Soup examined the child-deportation programme and its announced national aims in "Genocide in Ukraine".

Keeping the children alive is compatible with attacking the group's survival. When children are forcibly transferred into another group with the required destructive intent, replacing their names, schooling and national attachments can sever the continuity of the community they were taken from. Russification describes the identity intended to replace their Ukrainian belonging.

3.7 Stalin and Lenin in Putin's Politics of Memory

Stalin's return to public honour changes the meaning of remembrance. When industrialisation, victory and state power dominate his public image, the people killed or dispossessed under his rule can become an inconvenient qualification. For Ukraine, this is especially consequential: the ruler responsible for the famine can be celebrated while Ukrainian remembrance of his victims is dismissed as hostility towards Russia.[130]



Russian Foreign Ministry post, 30 November 2022: Maria Zakharova denies that the Holodomor targeted a national group and invokes poor harvests.

This rehabilitation has coexisted with official commemoration of repression. On 30 October 2017, Putin attended the opening of Moscow's Wall of Grief and said that the terrible past must remain in national memory, without naming Stalin. But on 15 May 2025, a recreated relief honouring Stalin opened at Moscow's Taganskaya metro station, as part of the metro's ninetieth-anniversary celebrations. The composition places him among grateful workers and children. Its restoration brought that benevolent image back into a public transport system; opponents responded by displaying earlier statements by Putin and Dmitry Medvedev

[130] An earlier official formulation appears in Aleksandr Volgarev's statement to the OSCE Permanent Council, 24 November 2022, PC.DEL/1772/22, p. 1: the famine's events "were not directed against any particular nation". English translation by OSCE Language Services, circulated 25 November 2022.

condemning repression. The dispute exposes a selective reckoning: mourning victims can coexist with renewed honour for the ruler and the state he commanded.



Recreated relief honouring Stalin at Moscow's Taganskaya metro station, unveiled on 15 May 2025.

Nearby, the privately operated Bunker-42 Cold War museum provides another setting for Stalin's public cult. In a column published on 23 May 2025, Die Zeit's Moscow correspondent Michael Thumann described a film crediting Stalin with ordering the atomic and hydrogen bombs[131] and presenting them as a guarantee of Russia's enduring invincibility. Two visitors at a control panel participated in a simulated nuclear strike on San Francisco. The guide presented it as retaliation and assured visitors that Russia would never strike first. Thumann also described children at the entrance and regular school visits, a restaurant offering dishes associated with the Soviet leadership, and a shop selling Stalin merchandise, nuclear-bomb key rings and a Putin mug. His account shows how the dictator's image and a spectacle of mass civilian destruction could be packaged together with sightseeing, dining and souvenirs.[132]

Lenin occupies a different place in this selection. In his address of 21 February 2022, Putin presented modern Ukraine as a creation of Bolshevik Russia and Lenin as its architect. He followed his criticism of Ukrainian decommunisation with a threat to show Ukraine what the

[131] Soviet atomic spies stole crucial secrets from the US-led Manhattan Project. Klaus Fuchs and Theodore Hall supplied detailed information about the American bomb design; Fuchs used Harry Gold as a courier. The USSR's first atomic bomb, tested in 1949, was based on that American design. See MI5, *Klaus Fuchs*; Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, *On the Trail of a Fourth Soviet Spy at Los Alamos*, *Studies in Intelligence*, 63, no. 3 (September 2019), pp. 1, 6. Uranium also came from prison labour and colonial extraction: prisoners mined it for the USSR at Jáchymov in Soviet-controlled Czechoslovakia (see section 3.2, p. 86). Kazakhstan's uranium industry expanded from the 1950s, while the Semipalatinsk test site exposed nearby communities to radioactive fallout.

[132] Michael Thumann, *Ein Zweitschlag auf San Francisco. Danach eingelegte Gurken*, *Die Zeit*, 23 May 2025. Account of a visit, cited for the museum's presentation. Bunker-42 has a separate street entrance. An archive-based history of GO-42, 26 October 2022, updated 21 March 2023, identifies a communications installation and disputes the later Stalin-office and nuclear-launch-room presentations as descriptions of its original function.

term really meant. In that argument, undoing Lenin's legacy could mean undoing Ukrainian statehood itself. This account erases the Ukrainian republican movement and its struggle against Bolshevik conquest. Ukrainian statehood becomes a gift from Moscow whose legitimacy Moscow can withdraw.[133]

The selection is therefore organised around imperial authority more consistently than around fidelity to communist doctrine. Lenin can be blamed for recognising a Ukrainian political entity, while Stalin supplies an image of central power, territorial reach and victorious mobilisation. Ukraine's independence challenges the right claimed by Moscow to decide which parts of that inheritance Ukrainians must accept. Remembering the Holodomor asserts a different authority: the victims and their descendants belong to a history that the successor state of their rulers does not own.

The construction of new Stalin monuments also has a measurable history. Tochka's 2023 investigation traced the installation dates of monuments in its inventory. A separate Agentstvo survey of reported openings counted eight in 2024 and at least nine in the first five months of 2025, excluding occupied Ukrainian territory.

Ukraine's removal of Lenin statues (*Leninopad*) extended over several decades. Plokhy's historical study traces earlier waves in the West and Center before the topplings associated with the Revolution of Dignity[134]. The Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance reported 1,320 Lenin monuments removed during decommunisation. These later removals continued a process that had begun around independence.

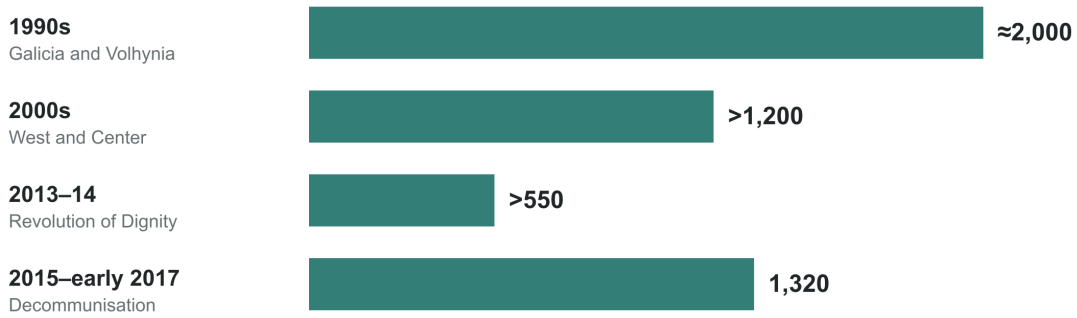
For Ukrainians, the political inheritance described in section 2.5.1 connects these monuments to the loss of independence, communist dictatorship and recurrent famines. Lenin and Stalin represented successive stages of an order that subordinated Ukrainian lives, food and political choice to authority centred in Moscow. Leninopad could therefore express a rejection of communist dictatorship and Russian imperial domination together, and a refusal to honour rulers associated with famine and repression.

[133] The 1954 transfer moved the Crimean oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR through Soviet institutions; it did not create Ukraine or make Crimea a revocable personal gift. Russia subsequently recognised the existing borders in Article 2 of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership, 31 May 1997. Putin signed the Treaty on the Ukrainian–Russian State Border in Kyiv on 28 January 2003 and its ratification law, Federal Law No. 24-FZ of 22 April 2004; the treaty entered into force on 23 April 2004 (UNTS, vol. 3161, No. 54132). That treaty delimited the land boundary; the earlier recognition of Ukraine's existing borders encompassed Crimea. Disputes over the motives for an internal Soviet transfer cannot erase those later commitments between independent states. The Russian formula «ошибка Хрущёва» — *oshibka Khrushchyova*, "Khrushchev's mistake" — frames Ukrainian possession as a Russian error for Moscow to reverse. South African-American businessman Elon Musk echoed the English phrase in his 3 October 2022 post proposing that Crimea formally belong to Russia. Vatnik Roger Waters went further: in his *Daily Telegraph* interview of 8 February 2023, he dismissed Ukraine's status as a country, saying "it's only been there since Khrushchev, 1956". This apparently confuses the transfer of Crimea with the creation of all Ukraine, and gets even the transfer's year wrong: 1954, not 1956.

[134] See Vatnik Soup, "Euromaidan: The Revolution of Dignity" (Soup 123), and *Euromaidan: Revolution of Dignity*, Historical Memory Dossier, forthcoming.

Lenin removals in Ukraine, 1990s–2017

Reported removals of Lenin statues and monuments in Ukraine

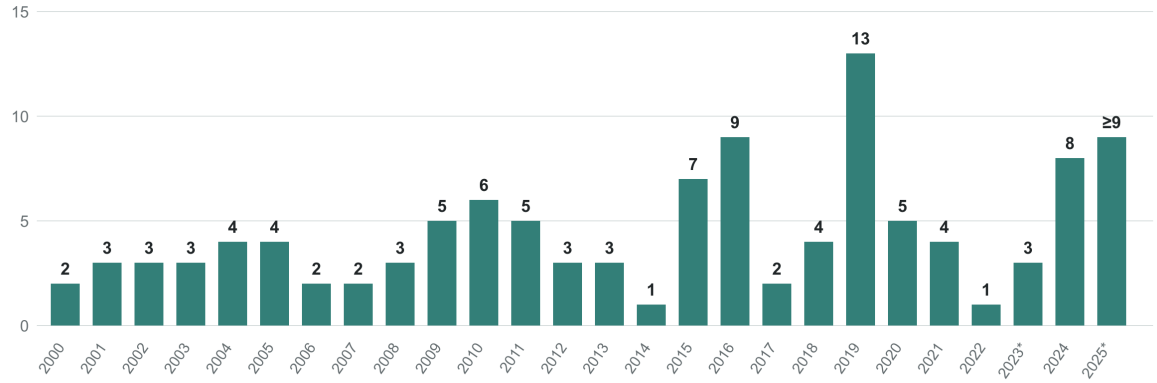


Each bar covers the period and area shown. Approximate estimates and reported totals are labelled.
Sources: 1990s–2014, Harvard MAPA (2017); 2015–early 2017, UINP (2016 report).

Lenin removals over successive periods. The bars preserve the approximate figures, geographical coverage and reported totals of their sources.

New Stalin monuments in Russia

Reported annual installations, 2000–2025



* Partial years: 2023 to 1 October; 2025 to 27 May. The 2025 count is at least nine.
Sources: 2000–2023, Tochka (1 Oct 2023); 2024–2025, Agentstvo (27 May 2025).
The inventories differ in coverage; Agentstvo excludes occupied Ukraine.

Reported Stalin monument installations, 2000–2025. Sources and coverage are identified in the chart notes; asterisks mark partial years.

Leninopad — Leninfall

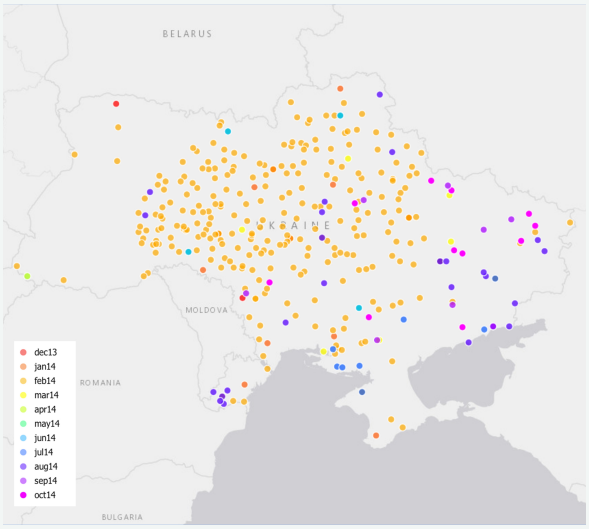
Leninopad — "Leninfall" — became the name for the wave of Lenin monument removals associated with Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity. The toppling of the statue near Kyiv's Bessarabian Market on 8 December 2013 became its defining image. Removals had begun around independence, particularly in western Ukraine; the upheaval of 2013–14 accelerated the process, followed by the decommunisation laws of 2015.

For decades, repeated images of Lenin had marked the public landscape with the authority of the Soviet state. Once removed, the statues acquired very different lives: stored in basements, scattered through gardens, broken into fragments or transformed into other figures. Their destinations exposed the practical question behind the political argument: what should Ukrainians do with the objects through which Soviet power had represented itself?[135]

In Odesa, Oleksandr Milov gave one Lenin a particularly unexpected afterlife, transforming him into another imperial villain, this time a fictional one: Darth Vader. The familiar monumental figure remained on its pedestal, now wearing Vader's helmet and cape. A monument built to command respect had become an occasion for laughter.



Odesa, 21 November 2015. A Lenin statue transformed into Darth Vader by Oleksandr Milov, in a factory courtyard.



Recorded removals, December 2013–October 2014. Each point marks a statue; colours indicate the month. Many earlier western removals fall outside this period. View the original map.

[135] Niels Ackermann and Sébastien Gobert, *Looking for Lenin* (FUEL, 2017), photographs by Ackermann and texts by Gobert. See the photographic project. Serhii Plokhy records that the activists who damaged Kyiv's Lenin monument on 30 June 2009 justified their action by citing Yushchenko's decree on Soviet responsibility for the Holodomor: *Goodbye Lenin: A Memory Shift in Revolutionary Ukraine*, PDF p. 3, n. 3.

Monuments, removal and occupation



Kyiv, 8 December 2013. Lenin's empty pedestal after protesters toppled the statue during the Revolution of Dignity.



Zaporizhzhia, 25 November 2017. A shattered Stalin bust was brought to the Holodomor memorial on Remembrance Day.



Henichesk, April 2022. A Lenin statue installed under Russian occupation stood before the administration building.



Melitopol, 8 May 2025. The Russian Communist Party unveiled a Stalin bust with the agreement of the occupation administration.

3.8 Memory Laws, Rewriting and the Destruction of Books

The struggle over history also has legal force. Russia's 2020 constitutional amendments made the protection of historical "truth" a state commitment. As Human Rights Watch's review of the legislation explains, Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code, introduced in 2014 under the heading of rehabilitation of Nazism, also penalises the public dissemination of knowingly "false" information about Soviet actions during the Second World War. A law signed on 1 July 2021 prohibited publicly equating the wartime aims, decisions or actions of the Soviet leadership and military with those of Nazi Germany and its allies. It also prohibited denial of the Soviet people's decisive role in defeating Nazi Germany and of the USSR's claimed humanitarian mission in liberating Europe. Administrative penalties introduced in 2022 included detention for up to fifteen days.

These provisions have practical consequences. The first person convicted under Article 354.1 was Vladimir Luzgin, an auto mechanic from Perm who in 2014 shared an article about the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. The repost discussed Soviet–German collaboration and the partition of Poland. In 2016, Russia's Supreme Court upheld a fine of 200,000 roubles, treating

the statements as knowingly false information about Soviet wartime actions and contrary to the Nuremberg judgment. The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) notes that Nuremberg had not adjudicated the Soviet invasion of Poland. On 15 May 2025, the European Court of Human Rights found a violation of freedom of expression in Luzgin's case, examined with other applications in *Kashapov and Others v. Russia*.[136]

In 2022, opposition politician Leonid Gozman received successive fifteen-day terms for posts comparing Stalin with Hitler and Soviet counter-intelligence with the SS. Protection of the victory narrative thus reaches the discussion of Soviet wrongdoing. The defeat of Nazism becomes a basis for restricting the historical scrutiny of another dictatorship.

Control also begins before publication, with access to the evidence. FIDH's 2021 report recorded that a 2014 decision extended secrecy over most Soviet security-service documents from 1917–91 until 2044. Historians also encountered restrictions on copying and claims of personal privacy used to withhold the names of officials involved in repression. Mikhail Suprun was prosecuted for collecting information about deportees for a memorial book. In *Suprun and Others v. Russia*, on 18 June 2024, the European Court of Human Rights found that restrictions on archival access and historical research violated Article 10. It rejected the justification for concealing the professional activities of officials involved in decades-old repression.[137] Such records connect victims to the institutions and individuals responsible; obstructing their examination makes accountability harder.

Independent institutions of remembrance have also come under attack. On 28 December 2021, Russia's Supreme Court ordered the liquidation of International Memorial; the following day, Moscow City Court ordered the closure of its sister Human Rights Center Memorial. The proceedings invoked foreign-agent legislation; the human-rights centre also faced allegations of justifying terrorism and extremism. The institutions targeted were distinct, but their work connected the documentation of past repression with the defence of people persecuted in the present. Official memorials could remain while independent organisations lost the legal space to challenge the state's account.

Restrictions also reached international historical research. On 18 June 2024, the Max Weber Foundation announced that Russia had designated the German Historical Institute in Moscow an "undesirable organisation". After the full-scale invasion of 2022, the institute had already suspended its scholarship programmes, institutional cooperation with Russian state institutions and events, while maintaining services including its library to preserve scholarly contact. On 7 November 2024, the foundation's board of trustees decided to close it.[138] The

[136] FIDH, *Russia: "Crimes Against History"*, June 2021, no. 770a, §17, p. 10. Updated outcome: European Court of Human Rights, *Kashapov and Others v. Russia*, 15 May 2025, §§7–10 and appendix, entry 22 (application 17942/17). Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939; the Soviet Union invaded from the east on 17 September: USHMM chronology.

[137] FIDH, *Russia: "Crimes Against History"*, §§50–57, pp. 18–21, and §78, p. 28. European Court of Human Rights, *Suprun and Others v. Russia*, 18 June 2024 (final 18 September 2024), especially §§99–104 and the operative finding under Article 10.

[138] Max Weber Stiftung, *Stellungnahme der Max Weber Stiftung zur Listung des Deutschen Historischen Instituts Moskau als „unerwünschte Organisation" in Russland*, 18 June 2024; *Geschichte*, entry for 2024, recording the closure decision of 7 November 2024. The June announcement describes the institute's earlier wartime cutbacks and continued library services; the closure decision was a separate, later event.

closure further narrowed the institutional space for independent research and international exchange about Russian and Soviet history.

At Perm-36, a museum on a former Gulag camp site, state control preserved an institution while changing its interpretation. FIDH documented the regional authorities' takeover in 2014, the removal of the independent managing organisation, and changes to exhibitions that downplayed political prisoners and Soviet dissidents. The displaced organisation was subsequently designated a foreign agent and dissolved in 2016.[139] A museum can remain open while those who developed its independent account lose the authority to tell it.

The personal risks are visible in Yuri Dmitriev's case. The Memorial historian helped uncover Sandarmokh and identify victims of Stalinist executions. Arrested in 2016, he was prosecuted for sexual offences and denied the accusations. FIDH and UN experts raised concerns about the fairness and political purpose of the proceedings; his sentence was increased to fifteen years in December 2021. Meanwhile, in 2018–19, the state-backed Russian Military Historical Society excavated Sandarmokh while advancing a claim that Soviet prisoners of war shot by Finnish forces were buried there. FIDH described this as an effort to reinterpret a site of Stalinist terror.[140] The Ukrainian writers and artists executed there, discussed above, make Sandarmokh part of Ukraine's cultural history as well as a place of remembrance of Soviet repression.

Control of teaching and public culture was established within Russia before the full-scale invasion. FIDH criticised the 2014 Unified Historical and Cultural Standard for dating Soviet entry into the Second World War to June 1941, obscuring collaboration with Nazi Germany in 1939–41. It also documented pressure on pupils and teachers participating in Memorial's history essay competition. Academic recognition and public exhibition were subject to similar interventions: the authorities denied Kirill Alexandrov his doctorate despite its approval by an academic council, and withdrew the screening licence for *The Death of Stalin* in 2018.[141] What could be researched, taught or shown was made answerable to the state's political interests.

In occupied Ukraine, control of history enters the classroom. Human Rights Watch's 2024 investigation documented the imposition of Russian curricula and instruction, textbooks justifying the invasion, and coercion against teachers and parents who resisted. Ukrainian distance learning could itself invite punishment. Patriotic and military education is also intended to prepare children in occupied territory for service in Russia's armed forces and state institutions. A curriculum imposed by an occupying power teaches children which country they supposedly belong to, while narrowing their access to the language and history of their own community.

[139] FIDH, *Russia: "Crimes Against History"*, §74, p. 26.

[140] FIDH, *Russia: "Crimes Against History"*, §§80–83, pp. 29–30, and §95, pp. 34–35. See also the UN experts' communication on Dmitriev and Sandarmokh, 26 January 2021. Later sentence chronology: PEN International, "Yuri Alexeyevich Dmitriev", recording the increase to fifteen years on 27 December 2021 and its confirmation on 22 March 2022.

[141] FIDH, *Russia: "Crimes Against History"*, §§47–49, pp. 16–18, and §§101–103, pp. 36–37.

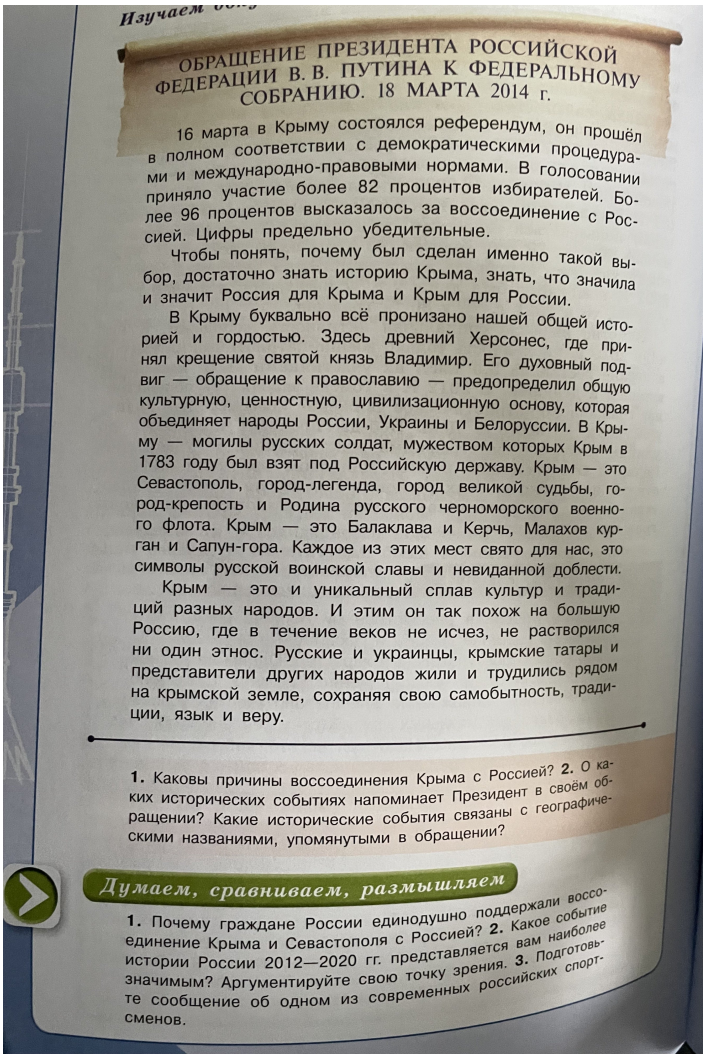
Books are also physically removed. In testimonies published by East SOS on 30 September 2025, a teacher from Bilokurakyne described the confiscation of Ukrainian books, with patriotic and Holodomor literature taken to a basement. Their subsequent fate was unknown. Other witnesses, from Hrechyshkyne and the Starobilsk district, described books being burned in boiler rooms or on school grounds in 2022–23. East SOS changed or withheld witnesses' names for safety. Its collection also records people hiding library books in their homes: the attempt to eliminate a culture also produces efforts to preserve it.



Burned Ukrainian textbooks, including a History of Ukraine book. Photograph reported from occupied Luhansk region and published on 12 April 2024.



Russian textbooks delivered by the occupation authorities to a school in Borova, Kharkiv region. Photographed in November 2022.



Изучаем

ОБРАЩЕНИЕ ПРЕЗИДЕНТА РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ В. В. ПУТИНА К ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОМУ СОБРАНИЮ. 18 МАРТА 2014 г.

16 марта в Крыму состоялся референдум, он прошёл в полном соответствии с демократическими процедурами и международно-правовыми нормами. В голосовании приняло участие более 82 процентов избирателей. Более 96 процентов высказалось за воссоединение с Россией. Цифры предельно убедительные.

Чтобы понять, почему был сделан именно такой выбор, достаточно знать историю Крыма, знать, что значила и значит Россия для Крыма и Крым для России.

В Крыму буквально всё пронизано нашей общей историей и гордостью. Здесь древний Херсонес, где принял крещение святой князь Владимир. Его духовный подвиг — обращение к православию — предопределил общую культурную, ценностную, цивилизационную основу, которая объединяет народы России, Украины и Белоруссии. В Крыму — могилы русских солдат, мужеством которых Крым в 1783 году был взят под Российскую державу. Крым — это Севастополь, город-легенда, город великой судьбы, город-крепость и Родина русского черноморского военного флота. Крым — это Балаклава и Керчь, Малахов курган и Сапун-гора. Каждое из этих мест свято для нас, это символы русской воинской славы и невиданной доблести.

Крым — это и уникальный сплав культур и традиций разных народов. И этим он так похож на большую Россию, где в течение веков не исчез, не растворился ни один этнос. Русские и украинцы, крымские татары и представители других народов жили и трудились рядом на крымской земле, сохраняя свою самобытность, традиции, язык и веру.

1. Каковы причины воссоединения Крыма с Россией? **2.** О каких исторических событиях напоминает Президент в своём обращении? Какие исторические события связаны с географическими названиями, упомянутыми в обращении?

Думаем, сравниваем, размышляем

1. Почему граждане России единодушно поддержали воссоединение Крыма и Севастополя с Россией? **2.** Какое событие истории России 2012—2020 гг. представляется вам наиболее значимым? Аргументируйте свою точку зрения. **3.** Подготовьте сообщение об одном из современных российских спортсменов.

A history textbook left in a school in Borova, photographed in November 2022. It reproduces Putin's 18 March 2014 address and asks pupils why Russian citizens unanimously supported the "reunification" of Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia.

Memorials within Russia were also targeted. In May 2020, two plaques commemorating victims of the Great Terror and the Katyń massacre were removed from a former Soviet security-service building in Tver. Local officials challenged their historical basis despite earlier official approval. FIDH also recorded obstruction and vandalism against Last Address, whose small plaques name people arrested and killed by the Soviet state. In 2018, Moscow briefly withdrew permission for Memorial's Return of the Names commemoration before backing down after public protest.[142] Removing markers and obstructing commemorations weakens the connection between individual victims and the ordinary places where they lived or were killed.

The Holodomor's public memory has been targeted directly. On 19 October 2022, the memorial to its victims in occupied Mariupol was dismantled. A representative of the pro-Russian organisation Young Republic defended the removal as the destruction of a "символ политического дезинформирования" — a "symbol of political disinformation". In occupied Luhansk, the monuments to Holodomor victims and victims of Stalinist repression

[142] FIDH, *Russia: "Crimes Against History"*, §§107–110, pp. 37–39; for Return of the Names, §59, p. 22.

were destroyed on 17 July 2024. Denial had acquired a material expression: the places where people could commemorate the dead were themselves removed.

The Ukrainian books, schools and memorials targeted under occupation are means by which a national community transmits its own account of itself. Their erasure belongs beside the removal and Russification of children: both attack the possibility of a distinct Ukrainian future. Read alongside killing, forced child transfer and explicit threats of extermination, these measures help identify the national community whose continued existence is being attacked.

Suppressing the record also assists denial abroad. In March 2026, the Russian MFA circulated Medvedev's dismissal of the Holodomor as fabricated. When witnesses are discredited and alternative accounts removed, outsiders encounter a public narrative already shaped by coercion. **The danger illustrated by Duranty returns: the state's authority and achievements can be made to outweigh the testimony of its victims. Ukrainian remembrance resists that authority by preserving names, testimony and institutions through which Ukrainians can tell their own history.**



Volodymyr and Olena Zelenskyy honour the victims at Bitter Memory of Childhood, Kyiv, 23 November 2024.

Conclusion

Millions of people died in Ukraine amid policies that stripped households of food and obstructed their routes to survival. For those affected, a grain quota was no economic abstraction: it could decide whether children ate, whether seed remained for another harvest, and whether a family stayed alive. Remembering the Holodomor begins with those lives and the communities broken around them.

The evidence supports recognising the Holodomor as genocide: deliberate deprivation became an instrument of the assault on Ukrainian national life. The leadership knew that people were starving. Yet punitive seizures and restrictions on flight continued, while procurement policy became bound to accusations of Ukrainian disloyalty and the reversal of Ukrainisation. The existence of other Soviet victims does not support treating Ukraine's catastrophe as an innocent accident. Quite the contrary: the regime's willingness to uproot or destroy whole populations makes that explanation less credible. The destruction of rural communities also devastated the families, language and institutions through which a national culture endured. Agricultural disruption explains part of the crisis; it does not explain away the choices that turned hunger into an instrument of national destruction.

Recognising that purpose does not require choosing a single explanation for Soviet violence. Coercive economic transformation, unchecked political power and imperial domination reinforced one another. A state that controlled production also controlled the public account of its consequences; warnings could be suppressed, and objections recast as sabotage or nationalism. The distinctions between famine, democide and genocide matter; however, disagreement over a classification cannot turn these decisions into an innocent accident. Nor can industrial achievement cancel the responsibility of those who made survival subordinate to state priorities.

The international response shows why the struggle over evidence matters: those who knew about mass starvation also faced a moral choice. People outside the Soviet Union could learn about starvation and still find reasons to tolerate it. Duranty's reporting combined minimisation with justification: it obscured the scale of suffering while presenting casualties as an acceptable cost of socialist transformation. Diplomatic objectives, commercial opportunities and ideological hopes could all make that account convenient, although they involved different actors and motives. Denial thus offered more than reassurance that a catastrophe was not happening.

It could also relieve readers of the obligation to care about a catastrophe they had reason to believe was real. Walter Duranty, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *proto-vatnik*, helped make Ukrainian starvation tolerable to foreign audiences; **today's vatniks encourage the same indifference while Ukrainians are bombed and tortured, their communities occupied and their children deported.** Through denial, minimisation, euphemism,

rationalisation, victim-blaming, deflection and false equivalence, even the obligation to care and act can be argued out of existence.

The appropriation of harvests, coercion of religious institutions, suppression of Ukrainian education and removal of a Holodomor memorial give the conflict over history immediate stakes. Official rejection of the Holodomor's national targeting accompanies renewed challenges to Ukraine's independent existence. The question raised by remembrance therefore reaches beyond Stalin's reputation: who has the authority to govern Ukrainian land, sustain Ukrainian institutions and tell Ukrainian history?

Ukrainians have continued to answer through survival, resistance and the preservation of testimony. Families, witnesses, researchers and communities have kept names, language and knowledge alive despite efforts to silence them. Their work restores people and experiences that official accounts sought to erase. **On this Holodomor Remembrance Day, honouring those whose lives were taken also affirms the right of Ukrainians today to live, to live freely, and to determine their own future.**



Candles and ears of grain on Holodomor Remembrance Day, Lviv, 23 November 2013.

References

Recommended Reading

For further reading on the Holodomor, its Soviet context and its relevance today, we recommend the following works. The first three provide the broadest introduction. The remaining titles are grouped by subject, with the most important works for each topic listed first.

Starting points

1. Anne Applebaum — *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine*

The main narrative companion to the Holodomor: collectivisation, food seizures, blocked escape and the assault on Ukrainian national life, grounded in documents and personal testimony.

2. Timothy Snyder — *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*

Soviet and Nazi mass killing across Eastern Europe. Snyder connects starvation, occupation and the Holocaust while examining the different policies, intentions and victims of the two regimes.

3. Serhii Plokhy — *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*

Ukraine's longer history of competing empires, changing borders, language and struggles for independence. A foundation for understanding Ukrainian national life, survival and political agency.

The famine and Soviet power

1. Bohdan Klid and Alexander J. Motyl, editors — *The Holodomor Reader: A Sourcebook on the Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine*

Documents, correspondence, testimony, scholarship and legal assessments. The strongest starting point for examining the evidence directly, including the leadership's decisions and Lemkin's account of national destruction.

2. R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft — *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933*

A detailed reconstruction of harvests, procurement and agricultural policy. Read alongside Applebaum to compare explanations of the crisis, the leadership's responsibility and the development of intent.

3. Robert Conquest — *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*

An influential early account of collectivisation and the terror-famine, including its Ukrainian national dimension. Read with later archival and demographic scholarship to follow the development of the historical debate.

4. Terry Martin — *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*

Soviet nationalities policy, Ukrainisation and its reversal. Martin examines how national languages, elites and institutions could be promoted, controlled and subsequently attacked by the same state.

5. Elena Osokina — *Stalin's Quest for Gold: The Torgsin Hard-Currency Shops and Soviet Industrialization*

How shortages and famine drove citizens to exchange household valuables for food, and how the state turned those transactions into industrial finance. A close study of survival and extraction.

6. Sarah Cameron — *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan*

The specialist companion for the Asharshylyq: forced settlement, destroyed pastoral livelihoods, flight and the violent remaking of Kazakh society. It deepens the comparison between shared Soviet mechanisms and distinct national experiences.

7. Sheila Fitzpatrick — *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization*

Rural resistance, dependence and survival under collective farming. Its social history complements Ukraine-specific studies; chapter 5, "A Second Serfdom?", develops the institutional comparison.

8. Robert C. Allen — *Farm to Factory: A Reinterpretation of the Soviet Industrial Revolution*

An economic reassessment of industrialisation and collectivisation. Read with Mark Harrison's review, which questions the feasibility of combining industrial controls with market agriculture.

Leninism, Soviet Power and Its Defenders

1. Stéphane Courtois — *Lénine, l'inventeur du totalitarisme*

A political biography tracing Lenin's construction of Bolshevik power and arguing for the Leninist origins of totalitarian rule. The revised and expanded 2024 edition is a companion to the discussion of the founding institutions that Stalin inherited and transformed.

2. Stéphane Courtois, editor, with Nicolas Werth and other contributors — *Le livre noir du communisme*

A collective history of communist repression. For the Soviet case, begin with Nicolas Werth's study "Un État contre son peuple", covering political policing, terror, famine and the camps. Werth's historical study and Courtois's introduction offer distinct contributions to the discussion of violence and political responsibility.

3. Nicolas Werth — *Un État contre son peuple. De Lénine à Poutine*

The revised and substantially expanded version of Werth's contribution to Le livre noir du communisme. Begin with chapters 2–6 on the political police, Red Terror, civil-war violence, peasant resistance, famine and the transition towards Stalin's rule. Later chapters connect collectivisation, mass repression and the struggle over Soviet memory.

4. Thierry Wolton — *Histoire mondiale du communisme, vol. I, Les bourreaux*

The first volume examines communism from the side of those exercising power. A broader comparative companion for understanding ideology, party institutions and coercion, and for considering how individual rulers operated through political systems.

5. Thierry Wolton — *Histoire mondiale du communisme, vol. II, Les victimes*

The second volume examines communist rule from the side of those subjected to it: surveillance, coercion, forced labour, deportation and hunger. It complements Les bourreaux by bringing the human consequences of party power into view, alongside the dossier's discussion of Ukrainian survival and repression.

6. Thierry Wolton — *Une histoire mondiale du communisme, vol. III, Les complices*

The third volume examines the international political, intellectual and economic support that helped communist regimes endure. A companion to the discussion of fellow travellers, Western admirers, propaganda and the defence of Soviet rule.

Stalin, dictatorship and foreign policy

1. Oleg V. Khlevniuk — *Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator*

The most compact starting point for Stalin's life and rule, drawing on the Soviet archives. It connects his personal decisions, inner circle and use of terror with the institutions that sustained his dictatorship.

2. Stephen Kotkin — *Stalin: Paradoxes of Power, 1878–1928*

The first volume follows Stalin from Georgia through revolution and the consolidation of party power. It places his rise in the wider history of the Russian Empire, Bolshevism and international politics; read it before Waiting for Hitler for the full biographical sequence.

3. Stephen Kotkin — *Stalin: Waiting for Hitler, 1929–1941*

Stalin's dictatorship, agricultural transformation, the Great Terror and the road to the pact with Hitler. The biographical scale brings ideology, institutions and individual decisions into the same account.

4. Simon Sebag Montefiore — *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*

Stalin's inner circle: patronage, family ties, fear and the intimacy of arbitrary power. A vivid complement to the institutional biographies, showing how personal relations operated inside a government capable of mass murder.

5. Richard Overy — *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia*

A comparison of how the two dictatorships functioned, mobilised support and organised repression. It helps distinguish their ideologies and institutions while examining the interaction of rulers, elites and societies.

6. Roger Moorhouse — *The Devils' Alliance: Hitler's Pact with Stalin, 1939–1941*

The dedicated companion to the Molotov–Ribbentrop discussion: negotiations, Soviet–German cooperation and the occupation of Eastern Europe. It keeps the people subjected to the pact's territorial bargains in view alongside high diplomacy.

7. Constantine Pleshakov — *Stalin's Folly: The Tragic First Ten Days of World War II on the Eastern Front*

A focused account of Stalin's decisions and the Soviet military catastrophe in June 1941. Its argument about Soviet offensive intentions requires comparison with specialist military scholarship; use it to examine the dictator's judgement, rather than as a settled explanation of every Soviet war plan.

8. Piotr R. Frankowski — *The Secret Red Alliance: How the Soviet Union Planned to Use Germany to Take Over the World*

Forthcoming study of Soviet industrial and military cooperation with Weimar and Nazi Germany. A prospective companion to the Soviet–German trade discussion; Pen & Sword lists publication for 30 April 2027.

Economics and political responsibility

1. Amartya Sen — *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*

Explains starvation through people's ability to obtain food as well as the food supply. Its comparative cases develop the questions of ownership, exchange, deprivation and responsibility.

2. R. J. Rummel — *Death by Government*

Develops democide as a framework for government killing beyond the legal definition of genocide. Read its comparative mortality estimates alongside specialist historical and demographic research.

3. Ludwig von Mises — *Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth*

The short original statement of the calculation argument: ownership, exchange and the prices used to compare production choices. A theoretical companion to the historical studies of Soviet agriculture.

4. F. A. Hayek — *Individualism and Economic Order*

Hayek's account of dispersed knowledge, competition and socialist calculation. Begin with "The Use of Knowledge in Society" and the socialist-calculation essays, which develop arguments distinct from Mises's.

5. F. A. Hayek — *The Road to Serfdom*

The relationship between comprehensive planning and coercive power. The chapters on democracy, the rule of law and "The End of Truth" are especially relevant to the dossier's institutional argument.

6. Leszek Kołakowski — *Main Currents of Marxism*, especially Volume III, *The Breakdown*

Marxism's intellectual history and the institutional roots of Stalinism. See especially chapter XIII of Volume III, whose discussion of Khrushchev examines the limits of blaming Stalin while shielding the system that sustained him.

7. Jörg Guido Hülsmann — *Mises: The Last Knight of Liberalism* (2007)

A detailed biography of Mises: his Lviv origins, work in Vienna, the calculation debate, exile and American career. It places his economic arguments in the political and intellectual history of the twentieth century.

Comparisons, propaganda and historical memory

1. Jade McGlynn — *Memory Makers: The Politics of the Past in Putin's Russia*

How patriotic narratives, commemoration and the Soviet past help legitimise Putin's rule and Russia's war. The closest contemporary companion to the dossier's discussion of historical memory.

2. Eugene Finkel — *Intent to Destroy: Russia's Two-Hundred-Year Quest to Dominate Ukraine*

Russian efforts to dominate Ukraine across imperial, Soviet and Putin-era rule. A wider account of national erasure, changing policies and the struggle over Ukrainian independence.

3. Timothy Snyder — *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*

The Holocaust comparison in greater depth: racial ideology, food and territory, citizenship and the destruction of state protections. Snyder examines conditions that made mass murder possible.

4. Stephen Koch — *Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Münzenberg, and the Seduction of the Intellectuals*

Stalinist influence in Western intellectual life through organisations, publications and cultural prestige. The revised 2004 edition develops the role of cultural intermediaries and apparently independent voices.

5. Martin Amis — *Koba the Dread: Laughter and the Twenty Million*

A literary polemic about Stalin and Western intellectual indulgence of communism, combining history with personal and family memory. Read it alongside the archival biographies: its force is moral and literary, rather than a substitute for source-based historical reconstruction.

6. Pekka Kallioniemi and Morten Hammeken — *Vatnik Soup: The Ultimate Guide to Russian Disinformation*

Contemporary Russian disinformation, its promoters and the networks through which it spreads. A companion to this dossier's discussion of how public reputation, political commitment and claims of expertise can lend credibility to apologetics for state violence.

7. Bertrand M. Patenaude — *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921*

American famine relief in 1921–23, including Ukraine, and its encounters with Bolshevik authorities. A fuller history of relief access, obstruction and the later memory of assistance.

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p. 34 — Who will beat whom? Catch up and overtake, Soviet poster, 1929. First Collective of the Association of Artists of the Revolution (AKhR); individual artist unidentified. Poster prepared from Gosplan material under Glavpolitprosvet editorship, [1929]. Russian State Library, 01008529874; Wikimedia Commons record, marked public domain. Complete reproduction unaltered.
p. 35 — Walter Duranty, portrait published in 1919. Portrait published in *The Literary Digest History of the War*, 1919, p. x; Funk & Wagnalls, Francis Whiting Halsey, compiler. Photographer uncredited. Wikimedia Commons file record, public domain in the United States; image unaltered.
p. 36 — Friedrich August von Hayek, undated portrait. Portrait released by the Mises Institute (DickClarkMises), via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0; image unaltered.
p. 37 — Walter Duranty, Russians Hungry, But Not Starving, 31 March 1933. Walter Duranty, “Russians Hungry, But Not Starving”, *The New York Times*, 31 March 1933, p. 13. Newspaper clipping reproduced without alteration. Original article, The New York Times; archived transcription.
p. 39 — Gareth Jones, Famine Rules Russia, Evening Standard, 31 March 1933. Gareth Jones, “Famine Rules Russia”, *Evening Standard*, 31 March 1933. Original clipping supplied by the Gareth Jones family archive; complete image reproduced without alteration. Inset photograph’s original photographer uncredited.
p. 40 — Mr. Jones: official theatrical poster (2019). Official theatrical poster for *Mr. Jones* (2019), directed by Agnieszka Holland. Image: Samuel Goldwyn Films press materials.
p. 40 — In the Shadow of Stalin: The Story of Mr. Jones: book cover (2024). Cover of *In the Shadow of Stalin: The Story of Mr. Jones* (Oni Press, 2024), by Andrea Chalupa, illustrated by Ivan Rodrigues. Image: Oni Press.
p. 43 — Raphael Lemkin (1900–1959). Undated photograph. American Jewish Historical Society, Raphael Lemkin Collection, P-154, Box 1, Folder 15, Photograph 6. Digital image: Center for Jewish History, via Wikimedia Commons. Undated photograph; photographer unidentified. Institutional Flickr Commons rights statement: no known copyright restrictions. Complete image retained.
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p. 51 — Felix Dzerzhinsky, 1923. Felix Dzerzhinsky, 1923: Bundesarchiv, Bild 102-00032; photographer uncredited. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0 Germany; cropped.
p. 51 — Dzerzhinsky replica at the SVR headquarters, 2023. Photograph of the unveiling at the SVR headquarters, Yasenevo, Moscow, 11 September 2023; photographer unidentified. Ceremony record, Russian Historical Society. Photograph reproduced in full without alteration.

p. 52 — Lenin's Hanging Order, 11 August 1918: both original manuscript pages. V. I. Lenin. Library of Congress, Revelations from the Russian Archives: page 1, page 2. Complete archival reproductions, unaltered.
p. 53 — Stalin, Batum police photograph, 1902. Batum Gendarme Administration, police photograph, 1 April 1902; photographer unidentified. Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs Academy Archive II (former IMEL), as identified in the Wikimedia Commons record; reproduced there from Ronald Grigor Suny, Stalin: Passage to Revolution (2020), plate 18. Public-domain reproduction; cropped to remove the photographic mount.
p. 55 — Stalin's portrait and the title page of the White Sea–Baltic Canal book, 1934. Photographer unidentified. The pictured 1934 title page names Maxim Gorky, L. L. Averbakh and S. G. Firin as editors. Complete photograph, unaltered.
p. 57 — Yezhov removed from the Moscow–Volga Canal photograph. Original and retouched versions of the Moscow–Volga Canal photograph, 1937; photographer unidentified. Related prints: David King Collection, Metropolitan Museum exhibition record. Original and retouched version, Wikimedia Commons public-domain records. Comparison, reproduced in full without further alteration.
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p. 59 — "In the same harness": Soviet antisemitic and anti-Ukrainian cartoon. Soviet Ukrainian cartoon, "В одній упряжці" ("In the same harness"). Artist and original publication date unidentified. Reproduced in Sergej Sumlenny's post of 6 October 2023, preserved by Thread Reader, post 9. Complete source image.
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p. 73 — Ludwig von Mises, Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth, 2014 edition. Mises Institute. Publisher's cover.
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p. 75 — Amartya Sen in Cologne, 28 November 2007. Amartya Sen in Cologne, 28 November 2007. Photograph: Elke Wetzig (Elya). Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.
p. 75 — Amartya Sen, Poverty and Famines. Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines*. English edition, Oxford University Press. Oxford University Press / Apple Books.
p. 75 — Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom. Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*. Vintage paperback, 2000. Penguin Random House.
p. 76 — Leszek Kołakowski, Amsterdam, 9 March 1971. Bert Verhoeff / Anefo, Nationaal Archief, 924-3417, 9 March 1971. Portrait crop via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0 Netherlands. Existing crop reproduced without further alteration.
p. 81 — VAPLITE writers, Kharkiv, 1926–1927. Photographer unknown. VAPLITE group photograph, Wikimedia Commons.
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p. 84 — Holodomor remembrance march, Winnipeg, 1983. Winnipeg Free Press photo archive, record 48934.
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p. 111 — Volodymyr and Olena Zelenskyy at the memorial, 23 November 2024. President of Ukraine, commemoration of Holodomor victims, 23 November 2024, photograph 460849. Original 1,280 × 853 image, unaltered. Website notice: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

p. 113 — Holodomor remembrance candles, Lviv. Remembrance candles, Lviv, 23 November 2013: DixonD, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0; photograph unaltered.

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NO. 1

The Holodomor Genocide

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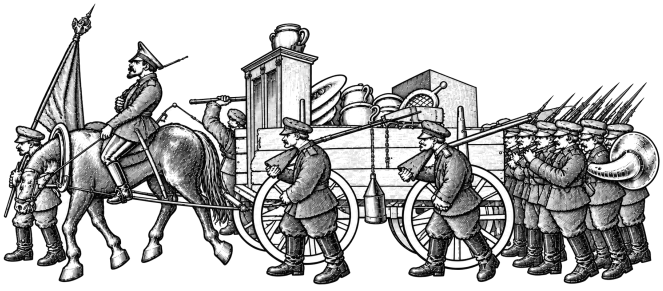

Russian troops leaving Lviv with loot, 22 June 1915.



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