



THE GREAT UKRAINIAN FAMINE

by Alexander J. Motyl

Throughout the world this year Ukrainians are commemorating a grisly fiftieth anniversary. Thanks to Stalin, a great famine ravaged their homeland in 1933, reducing the breadbasket of the Soviet Union to little more than a graveyard. Before the year was out, over five million Ukrainian peasants had died a slow and gruesome death. Wrote one survivor:

People scoured the fields for roots of all kinds, stripped the trees of their bark, caught mice and gophers, ate carrion. . . . They even devoured the carrion of horses infected with glanders and then the authorities had them shot. They fed on the mash left over from the previous year, which was no longer considered suitable for feeding to livestock. They boiled dried animal hides. They prepared pancakes and fritters from leaves and other inedible substances. They even ate toadstools. . . .

A catastrophe of such dimensions ranks as one of the twentieth century's prime examples of mass destruction; yet, it continues to remain largely unknown to the world. Soviet mendacity, Western gullibility, and a readiness on both sides to condone the liquidation of nations and classes thought to stand in the way of "progress" have conspired to transform a major human tragedy into a forgotten historical footnote. In good Soviet fashion, the dead Ukrainian peasants have been relegated to the status of "non-person."

The 1920s had been years of plenty in the Ukraine, as well as in the entire USSR. The Communist Party's unenthusiastic acceptance in 1921 of Lenin's "New Economic Policy" (NEP) sanctioning a limited reintroduction of capitalism had allowed the Ukrainian peasantry to prosper and the Ukrainian language, literature, and arts to flourish. By the end of the

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decade, however, the regime had come to perceive both trends as subversive. The NEP was sustaining a private peasantry—both Russian and non-Russian—that was hostile to the urban-based Bolsheviks' collectivist goals; indeed, the Party appeared to be drowning in a "peasant sea." Meanwhile the cultural relaxation associated with NEP threatened to undermine the regime's decidedly great Russian character. And, as Stalin noted in 1925, both developments complemented each other: "The peasant question is the basis, the quintessence, of the national question. That explains the fact that the peasantry constitutes the main army of the national movement, that there is no powerful national movement without the peasant army, nor can there be. . . ."

Stalin's solution to the peasant problem was collectivization. The richer, more productive, and politically more troublesome peasants—*kulaks*—were deported to Siberia and thereby "liquidated as a class." The remaining "poor" and "middle" peasants were herded into collective farms. They responded by slaughter-

ing their animals, working less, and engaging in "terrorist" acts against representatives of the regime. Not surprisingly, production plummeted; state extraction of grain, however, increased. In all, Soviet agriculture received a blow from which it has still not fully recovered. But from Stalin's viewpoint, collectivization was a success: peasant opposition to Soviet power had been broken once and for all.

Stalin also achieved a breakthrough on the non-Russian front. "National Communists" were forced back into line; the cultural freedoms of the 1920s were revoked; and, by 1933, the tsarist policy of Russification was formally reintroduced. Local nationalisms, it was officially decreed, were more dangerous than Russian chauvinism. In the Ukraine, major political show trials in the early 1930s marked the beginning of a centrally directed secret-police terror that lasted through the decade.

Why did collectivization hit the Ukrainians with particular severity? First of all, the tempo of collectivization in the Ukraine, which served as a kind of testing ground for Stalin's

agricultural experiments, was more rapid than in the rest of the USSR. And second, the grain quotas imposed on the Ukraine were disproportionately higher. Thus, in the more equitable NEP days of 1926, the Ukraine provided the state with 3.3 million tons of grain, or 21 percent of its total harvest. In 1930, the first full year of collectivization, it delivered 7.7 million tons out of a harvest of 23.1, or 33 percent. Peasant resistance to collectivization caused the harvest to drop to 18.3 million tons in 1931, but the Ukraine's quota remained at 7.7—an extortionately high 42 percent. Although the quota was reduced to 6.6 million tons in 1932, grain production fell to 14.6, so that only 4.7 million tons, or 32 percent of the harvest, could actually be collected. The murderous grain requisitions of 1930-1932 resulted in the outbreak of a country-wide famine—"not hardship, or privation, or distress, or food shortage," as *Christian Science Monitor* correspondent William Henry Chamberlin wrote soon thereafter, "but stark, outright famine, with its victims counted in millions."

One eyewitness, a city resident, described a visit to his parents' village:

Although it was not long since I had last been there, I could hardly recognize it. The Moscow government had taken away all the food long before. Now the village was bereft of even cats and dogs. The officials hunted them and put them into a pound, but the hungry people caught and ate them. People avoided one another in the calm, unreal atmosphere for fear of being eaten. My mother and a few of her neighbors told me how H. Zhuk ate his mother; how a woman they knew ate her children; and how H. Skrynnyk ate his mother.

"This kind of grim, stark chronicle could have been compiled in almost any village in the Ukraine in that terrible winter and spring of 1932-33," wrote Chamberlin. "Every village I visited reported a death rate of not less than ten per cent." Small wonder that Malcolm Muggeridge, who traveled to the Ukraine in the



summer of 1933 as a correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*, recently termed the famine the "most terrible thing I have ever seen."

Most Ukrainians would agree with Chamberlin that "this famine may fairly be called political because it was not the result of any overwhelming natural catastrophe." They would also view it, however, as a deliberately anti-Ukrainian policy of the "Moscow government": Stalin, they allege, masterminded the scheme in order to solve his peasant and Ukrainian problems with one blow. Considering the Soviet dictator's exceptionally brutal treatment of the non-Russians and his mass deportations of the entire Chechen, Ingush, Balkar, Karachai, Kalmyk, and Crimean Tatar populations during and after World War II, this interpretation, clearly, is not implausible. Yet, as formulated, it invites skepticism: if Stalin's goal had been genocide, then why did the authorities not confiscate *all* the grain harvested in the Ukraine? Would even Stalin have jeopardized his economic plans by deliberately devastating a country that figured so importantly in them?

The traditional interpretation among Western Sovietologists views the famine as an unplanned and largely unavoidable by-product of the revolutionary zeal and bureaucratic shortsightedness that characterized the collectivization campaign. Furthermore, it is argued, famine generally affected the USSR's most fertile areas—not only the Ukraine, but the North Caucasus and Central Volga regions as well. This supposedly means that a policy of extracting the most grain from the most productive regions—that is, economics, and not great-power chauvinism—was to blame for the famine.

Other scholars, however, consider the famine to have been a deliberate political act. According to an expert on the Stalin era, British historian Robert Conquest:

The famine can be blamed quite flatly on Stalin. . . . It is perhaps the only case in history of a purely man-made famine. It is also the only major famine whose very existence was ignored or denied by the governmental authorities, and even to a large degree successfully concealed from world opinion.

There seems little doubt that the main issue was simply crushing the peasantry at any cost. One high official told a Ukrainian who later defected that the 1933 harvest "was a test of our strength and their endurance. It took a famine to show them who is master here. It has cost millions of lives, but the collective farm system is here to stay."

In this view, famine was a policy

instrument directed against the most recalcitrant peasants, regardless of nationality.

A third, ethnically oriented "revisionist" interpretation has recently been gaining ground in scholarly circles. Its main proponent is James Mace, an American historian who is preparing a book on the famine. As Mace puts it:

The areas affected by the man-made famine all contained groups which could plausibly be considered hindrances to Stalin's plans to resurrect a politically homogeneous Russian empire. It did not, strictly speaking, correspond with the main grain-producing areas, as would be expected were it solely a question of intensified extraction solely motivated by economic concerns: there was no famine in the Central Black Soil Region of Russia, while in Ukraine it extended into Volhynia and Podillia, hardly part of the basic grain-producing area of the USSR.

If we ask ourselves which national groups were most likely to constitute a threat to the new centralized and Russified Soviet Union which Stalin was creating, we arrive at the following: Ukrainians, second only to the Russians in numbers, who had fought a stubborn and protracted war for national independence. . . ; the Kuban and Don Cossacks, who had first given the White counter-revolution its base; and the Germans, who had welcomed the 1918 German occupation in Ukraine. . . . These were precisely the groups whose territories were affected by the famine.

The three interpretations are not irreconcilable. Bureaucratic bungling and cadre overzealousness in a campaign to extract maximal resources from the richest regions; officially encouraged hostility to the peasants most opposed to collectivization; and the Party's determination to root out all nationalist opposition, whether urban or rural, surely would have made for a set of callous attitudes that could endorse the "cleansing" effect of a famine on the regime's enemies. Of course, for the millions who starved to death these considerations are scarcely to the point: exactly why the regime was tolerating their destruction was far less important than the fact of their destruction. By the same token, Biafrans would presumably have found little solace in the thought that they were being starved not as Ibos, but as secessionists subjected to the arbitrariness of an overly zealous Nigerian war-machine.

Ukrainians, consequently, consider the famine *their* Holocaust, a national trauma of mythical proportions that has shaped their present consciousness. Fifty years after the fact, however, the tragedy—and, even more, its overwhelmingly Ukrainian character—continues to be largely unacknowledged in both East and West. The Soviets prefer to ignore

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Index lists 879 names of persons who made, wrote or appeared in films or were otherwise important in production, distribution or exhibition.

Early theatres in . . .

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"aberrations" of the period of the "cult of personality." The West, meanwhile, prefers to remain either uninformed or misinformed about the dimensions of the event.

Indirect responsibility for this ignorance lies with the widespread tendency among Westerners to be more than willing to give the Soviet Union the benefit of the doubt. Billy

Graham's infamous behavior on his trip to the USSR last year was but one manifestation of this attitude.

Directly responsible, however, were those Western admirers of Stalin's "bold experiment" all too ready to overlook images that did not fit their preconceived schemes. Two who in particular went out of their way to downplay if not ignore the

famine were Walter Duranty, then head of the *New York Times* Moscow bureau, and Louis Fischer, Moscow correspondent for the *Nation*. According to Duranty's colleague, former *Times* critic John Chamberlain, Duranty "was not only heartless about the famine, he had betrayed his calling as a journalist by failing to report it." But Duranty did succeed

in something else—he actually won a Pulitzer Prize for his reportage.

Fischer said it best: "History can be cruel," he wrote. "The peasants wanted to destroy collectivization. The government wanted to retain collectivization. The peasants used the best means at their disposal. The government used the best means at their disposal. The government won." □



POLLING THE FUTURE

by Stanley Rothman and S. Robert Lichter

Are Americans returning to traditional values, or has a somewhat watered-down version of the adversary culture of the 1960s been absorbed by the mainstream? These questions are troubling many writers and scholars today, and though we cannot answer them with certainty we can offer evidence about two key future leadership groups. Our studies suggest that the up and coming generation of journalists is even more skeptical of traditional American institutions and values than the generation they will replace. Even more significantly, so is the up and coming generation of business-men and women, though they are less

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alienated than the future journalists.

Early in 1980 we completed a study of leading American journalists and business executives drawn from a number of major *Fortune*-listed companies. Not surprisingly we found that journalists are far more liberal than businessmen and far more alienated from traditional American institutions. Yet we also found that a surprising number of businessmen share some of the journalists' skepticism. For example, almost nine out of ten journalists believe that the American legal system favors the wealthy, against somewhat less than seven out of ten businessmen. Over 75 percent of the businessmen we questioned believe adultery is wrong as compared to only 47 percent of journalists. And while close to 60 percent of the journalists we interviewed believe America contributes to Third World poverty, only slightly over two out of ten businessmen agree. Though the differences between the two groups remain clear, it is also clear that today's business leaders have absorbed at least some of the criticisms of American life that became widespread in the 1960s.

In an effort to determine the social and political outlook of future journalists and businessmen, in 1982 we interviewed random samples of students from both the Columbia School of Journalism and New York University's Business School. Since graduates of the former are represented in rather large numbers in leading media outlets, and a significant portion of NYU business school graduates become officers in major American firms, they provide an obvious basis for study.

What we found was that Columbia journalism students are considerably more liberal and cosmopolitan than present journalists. Only a quarter of future journalists, for example, believe that private enterprise is fair to workers, as compared to 70 percent of their elders in the profession; and 71 percent of journalism students, as compared to only 49 percent of the current media elite, believe the very structure of American society causes alienation.

Our study also indicated that aspiring journalists are far more likely to accept Third World criticisms of America than are their elders. Seventy-five percent of the students we interviewed believe that America contributes to the poverty of Third World nations. Further, four out of ten of these Columbia students believe that major corporations should be nationalized—three times as many as the present generation of journalists.

In only two areas were journalism students somewhat more conservative than the present generation of media leaders. Students are somewhat less supportive of affirmative action for blacks (67 percent vs. 80 percent), and three-quarters believe adultery wrong as compared to only 47 percent of established journalists. This may indicate a retreat from the sexual attitudes of the 1960s, or it may simply be a function of age and marital status. It clearly reflects the presence of a larger proportion of blacks in our sample. Only five percent of our elite media sample was black as compared to 20 percent of the student sample, and black students are far more traditional on this

issue (even if more "liberal" on other issues) than are white students.

Given these results it is not surprising to find that almost seven out of ten students strongly disapprove of Ronald Reagan, while only three out of ten strongly disapprove of Fidel Castro. Similarly, an overwhelming 85 percent strongly disapprove of the Moral Majority, while a mere seven percent strongly disapprove of the Sandinistas. Nor is it surprising that the *New York Review of Books* receives almost as high a rating for reliability as the *New York Times*, while *Commentary* and *National Review* languish at the bottom of the reliability scale.

Some commentators have suggested that the liberalism of journalism students is merely a function of their student status, and that they are not notably different from other graduate students. The argument is not persuasive. Seymour Martin Lipset and others have demonstrated that students planning careers in journalism or the teaching of the social sciences tend to be considerably to the left of their peers, and our own data support these findings. New York University Business School students are considerably less liberal and alienated than journalism students on most issues. For example, 54 percent of them believe that private enterprise is fair to workers as compared to only one fourth of their journalistic peers, and only two percent believe that major companies should be nationalized. At the same time, 50 percent believe that American society causes alienation, and 35 percent

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