

# Famine and Nationalism in Soviet Ukraine

By James E. Mace

**A**fter the harvest of 1932, millions of Ukrainians starved to death in one of the world's most fertile regions. The local population had produced enough food to feed itself, but the state had seized it, thereby creating a famine by an act of policy. The areas affected were demarcated by internal administrative borders in the Soviet Union, leaving immediately adjoining areas virtually untouched. Thus, the famine appears to have been geographically focused for political reasons. Since it coincided with far-reaching changes in Soviet nationality policy, and since the areas affected were inhabited by groups most resistant to the new policy, the famine seemed to represent a means used by Stalin to impose a "final solution" on the most pressing nationality problem in the Soviet Union. According to internationally accepted definitions, this constitutes an act of genocide.<sup>1</sup>

## Information About the Famine

Once an event of this magnitude fades from public consciousness, official efforts to deny that it had occurred are reinforced by a human tendency to disbelieve that such a thing could ever have happened. For this reason, it is necessary to sketch briefly what we know about the famine and how we know it.

The most obvious source for what happened is the memory of those who survived the famine. Eyewitnesses to any event of half a century ago become

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fewer in number with each passing year, but there are still hundreds, perhaps thousands, of them living in the West. A few managed to flee across the Prut River into Romania at the height of the famine, but most left the Soviet Union during World War II. Soon after the war, they formed organizations which published their testimony in their native Ukrainian or still imperfect English.<sup>2</sup> Others were interviewed as part of the Harvard University Refugee Interview Project.<sup>3</sup> Still others published individual accounts. Most, of course, remained silent.

There are also individuals who may broadly be classified as perpetrators of the famine, and who have told their story in print. Lev Kopelev was a young communist who was sent into the Ukrainian countryside to procure grain in 1933, and he has written with regret about those whom in his youthful enthusiasm for the communist system he condemned to death by starvation.<sup>4</sup> Victor Kravchenko, a Soviet trade official who defected at the end of the war, has also written about what he did and witnessed as a young Ukrainian com-

<sup>1</sup>The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which the Soviet Union signed in 1954, defines genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such" by the following means, among others:

- Killing members of the group.
- Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group.
- Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.

See Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, Eds., *The Human Rights Reader*, New York, New American Library, 1979, pp. 201-02.

<sup>2</sup>The largest collection of this type was published by DOBRUS, a Ukrainian acronym for the Democratic Association of Ukrainians Formerly Repressed by the Soviets, *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*, Toronto/Detroit, DOBRUS, 1955. Other sources of various types are analyzed in Dana Dalrymple, "The Soviet Famine of 1932-34," *Soviet Studies* (Glasgow), No. 3, 1964, pp. 250-84, and No. 4, 1965, pp. 471-74. The best bibliography is by Alexandra Pidhaina, "A Bibliography of the Great Famine in Ukraine, 1932-1933," *The New Review: A Journal of East European History* (Toronto), No. 4, 1973, pp. 32-68.

<sup>3</sup>The files of this project, which include transcripts of interviews with famine survivors, are housed at Harvard University.

<sup>4</sup>Lev Kopelev, *The Education of a True Believer*, New York, Harper and Row, 1980, pp. 224-86.

munist.<sup>5</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, who was not in Ukraine at the time, remembered how he learned about it:

*Mikoyan told me that Comrade Demchenko, who was then First Secretary of the Kiev Regional Committee, once came to see him in Moscow. Here's what Demchenko said: "Anastas Ivanovich, does Comrade Stalin—for that matter, does anyone in the Politburo—know what's happening in the Ukraine? Well, if not, I'll give you some idea. A train recently pulled into Kiev loaded with the corpses of people who had starved to death. It picked up corpses all the way from Poltava to Kiev...."*<sup>6</sup>

As we shall see, Stalin knew perfectly well what was happening. He had ample warnings that a famine would result if his policies were carried out, and received continuous appeals to change the policies once the famine had started.

A number of foreign journalists reported the famine, among them Malcolm Muggeridge of the *Manchester Guardian*, William Henry Chamberlin of *The Christian Science Monitor*, Eugene Lyons of *United Press*, and Harry Lang of the Jewish daily *Der Forvert*.<sup>7</sup> Others, most notably Walter Duranty of *The New York Times* and Louis Fischer of *The New Republic*, seemed to have been perfectly aware of it, but actively aided the Soviet state in suppressing the story.<sup>8</sup>

Soviet historiography sporadically refers to the famine by using euphemisms such as "a severe shortfall of edible produce," caused partially by the "incorrect planning of the grain procurements campaign."<sup>9</sup> In the Soviet Union, what purports to be fiction is often more forthright than what purports to be history. Ivan Stadnyuk, a recipient of a Lenin Prize whose fiction portrays Stalin in a relatively positive light, wrote about the famine in a 1962 novel called *People Are Not An-*

*gels*. Set in Vynnytsya oblast near what was then the Soviet border with Poland, this work gives the following eloquently simple description:

*The first to die from hunger were the men. Later on the children. And last of all, the women. But before they died, people often lost their senses and ceased to be human beings.*<sup>10</sup>

Demography can aid us in deriving approximate numbers of those who died. Sergey Maksudov has demonstrated that at least 9.1 million people in the Soviet Union died prematurely between 1926 and 1939, that 8.5 million of them died before 1935 (i.e., during the period of collectivization and famine), and that 4.5 million died in the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>11</sup> Since his analysis assumes the absolute accuracy of the 1939 census and does not take into account the effects of interrepublic migration, the figure for the Ukrainian SSR probably underestimates the loss of life suffered there, by not making allowances for the policy of resettling villages depopulated by the famine in the Ukrainian SSR with villagers from other republics.<sup>12</sup>

A more accurate estimate of Ukrainian population loss can be derived by examining the 1926 and 1939 censuses on the basis of nationality, since the new settlers were not ethnic Ukrainians. In the 1926 census, the USSR contained 31.2 million Ukrainians, while the 1939 census lists only 28.1 million, an absolute decline of 9.9 percent or 3.1 million individuals.<sup>13</sup> On the basis of official Soviet administrative estimates of the natural rate of population growth for the Ukrainian SSR up to 1931, we can project a probable Ukrainian population total of 34,165,000 on the eve of the famine (1931).<sup>14</sup> Yet, because Ukrainians were concentrated in the countryside, where the natural

<sup>5</sup>Victor Kravchenko, *I Chose Freedom: The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official*, New York, Scribners, 1946, pp. 91–131.

<sup>6</sup>Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, tr. and ed. by Strobe Talbott, Boston, Little, Brown, 1970, p. 74.

<sup>7</sup>Malcolm Muggeridge, *Winter in Moscow*, Boston, Little, Brown, 1934, pp. 39–57, 150 et passim; idem, *Chronicles of Wasted Time. One: The Green Stick*, New York, William Morrow, 1973, pp. 205–76; William Henry Chamberlin, *Russia's Iron Age*, Boston, Little, Brown, 1934, pp. 367–69, 377–78; Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia*, New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1937, pp. 488–93, 572–80. English translations of Harry Lang's reports were published in *The New York Evening Journal*, Apr. 15–23, 1935.

<sup>8</sup>James William Crowl, *Angels in Stalin's Paradise: Western Reporters in Soviet Russia, 1917 to 1937, A Case Study of Louis Fischer and Walter Duranty*, Lanham, MD, University Press of America, 1982, pp. 133–80; Marco Carynnyk, "The Famine the 'Times' Couldn't Find," *Commentary* (New York), November 1983, pp. 32–40; and Myron B. Kuropas, "America's 'Red Decade' and the Great Famine Cover-Up," *The Great Famine in Ukraine: The Unknown Holocaust*, Jersey City, NJ, Svoboda Press, 1983, pp. 38–45.

<sup>9</sup>*Istoriya selyanstva Ukrainskoi RSR* (A History of the Peasantry in the Ukrainian SSR), Kiev, Naukova Dumka, 1967, Vol. 2, p. 175.

<sup>10</sup>For an English translation, see Ivan F. Stadnyuk, *People are not Angels*, tr. by P. A. Spaulding and J. Antonenko. London, Mono Press, 1963, p. 119. First published in Russian in *Neva* (Leningrad), December 1962.

<sup>11</sup>S. Maksudov, "Losses Suffered by the Population of the USSR in 1918–1958," *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* (Paris), No. 3, 1977, p. 235; idem, "Population Loss in Ukraine, 1926–1938," unpublished paper, University of Alberta, 1983.

<sup>12</sup>Numerous eyewitness accounts of such resettlement are confirmed by a document in the Smolensk archive, ordering local officials to recruit settlers for this purpose. See Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule*, New York, Vintage Books, 1958, p. 444.

<sup>13</sup>Figures on the ethnic composition of the USSR are taken from a table in V. I. Kozlov, *Natsional'nosti SSSR (Etnodemograficheskiy obzor)* (Nationalities of the USSR [Ethnodemographic Overview]), Moscow, Statistika, 1975, p. 249.

<sup>14</sup>The rate of natural growth of the population in the Ukrainian SSR was 2.4 percent in 1926, 2.25 percent in 1927, 2.15 percent in 1928, 1.77 percent in 1929, 1.56 percent in 1930, and 1.45 percent in 1931. See V. I. Naulko, *Etnichnyi sklad naselennya Ukrainskoi RSR: Statystyko-kartohrafichne doslidzhennya* (The Ethnic Composition of the Population of the Ukrainian SSR: Statistical-Geographical Analysis), Kiev, Naukova Dumka, 1965, p. 84.

rate of population growth was higher at the time, this is a conservative estimate.<sup>15</sup> We may then project back from the 1939 figure to ask how many Ukrainians would have had to have been alive in 1934 to result in 28.1 million half a decade later. Since the natural rate of population growth was declining up to 1931 (when it reached a low point of 1.45 percent annually) and we lack similar statistics for the later 1930's, we have little choice but to project back from the natural rate of population growth observed for Ukrainians in the Ukrainian SSR in 1958-59 (1.39 percent), which gives us a 1934 population estimate of 26,211,000.<sup>16</sup> If we subtract our estimate of the post-famine population from the pre-famine population, the difference is 7,954,000, which can be taken as an estimate of the number of Ukrainians who died before their time. Again, this is a conservative estimate because it assumes that no one was born in the years 1932 or 1933. From this figure one must subtract victims of unnatural deaths not related to the

famine. Some 200,000 farms in the Ukrainian SSR were "dekulakized." Estimating five persons per family on average, this makes for a total of 1,000,000 individuals of whom perhaps 250,000 were either executed or died in the harsh conditions of exile.<sup>17</sup> Let us assume that another quarter of a million Ukrainians were executed or died in exile in 1936-39. This still leaves almost 7.5 million Ukrainians who died in the famine.

This is only a rough estimate. The figure might be lower, because some persons who were counted as Ukrainian in the 1926 census could have been listed as Russian in 1939. It could also be significantly higher, because the circumstances surrounding the 1939 census indicate that its figures were inflated. A

<sup>17</sup>The number of dekulakized families is taken from *Kommunist* (Kharkiv), Dec. 21, 1934. I. I. Slyn'ko states that as of Mar. 10, 1930, in 309 rayons of the Ukrainian SSR, 11,374 families consisting of 52,660 individuals had been exiled as kulaks. See his *Sotsialistychna perebudova i tekhnichna rekonstruktsiya sil's'koho hospodarstva Ukrainy, 1927-1932 rr.* (The Socialist Transformation and Technical Reconstruction of Agriculture in Ukraine, 1927-1932), Kiev, Akademiya Nauk Ukrain'skoi RSR, 1961, p. 190. These fragmentary figures from the first wave of dekulakization show an average of just under five persons per exiled family. Eyewitnesses maintain that about 25 percent of those exiled perished.

<sup>15</sup>On rates of natural growth of the rural population, see *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>The 1.39 percent figure was taken from *ibid.*, p. 85.



*Frozen bodies of the starved at a Kharkiv cemetery in 1933.*

—From Stephen Oleskiw, *The Agony of a Nation*, London, Ukrainian Publishers Ltd., 1983, p. 56.

census was taken in 1937, but it was never published. Instead, an announcement was made that the officials in charge of preparing the census were participants in a plot to discredit the progress of socialism by deliberately undercounting the Soviet population.<sup>18</sup> Since the census officials were shot for not finding enough people in 1937, we may safely assume that their successors made every effort to avoid any perception that their own work suffered from similar shortcomings.

Another way to estimate the famine losses is to compare the Ukrainians' demographic fate with that of the Byelorussians—a closely related nation that had a somewhat lower rate of natural population growth before 1931; went through similar political campaigns against "bourgeois nationalism" and similar pressures to assimilate; and had a lower level of literacy and weaker traditions of national self-assertion, which might have made them more prone to assimilation. However, Byelorussia did not go through the famine, and the number of Byelorussians in the USSR increased 11.5 percent in the time that the number of Ukrainians decreased by 9.9 percent. If Ukrainian population growth had matched that of their Byelorussian neighbors—and by every indication it would have surpassed that of Byelorussia but for the famine—there would have been almost 6.7 million more Ukrainians in the Soviet Union in 1939 than were recorded.

Census data is also helpful in tracing the geography of the famine. Maksudov has shown how this could be done on the basis of the 1959 census. Since birth-rates decline and infant mortality soars during a famine, we have clear evidence of extraordinary mortality in areas where the number of rural women (the least mobile segment of the population) is exceptionally small in age groups born immediately before or during the famine. Since the 1959 census provides age data for five-year periods, this yardstick can only provide information about areas where mortality was exceptionally high from the beginning of forced collectivization through the famine, that is, for the years 1929–1933. Areas that show evidence of high mortality in this period are Ukraine, the then heavily Ukrainian and Cossack North Caucasus kray, Kazakhstan, some areas of the Volga basin, and parts of Western Siberia, where collectivization was carried out in a particularly harsh manner.<sup>19</sup> If we exclude

areas where mass mortality can be attributed to the years before 1932 (Kazakhstan and Western Siberia), we are left with areas containing Ukrainians, Cossacks, and Germans, the last being affected somewhat less than the two others.<sup>20</sup> What is particularly striking is the sharp contrast between contiguous oblasts along the border between Ukraine and Russia proper. For example, Kharkiv oblast on the Ukrainian side of the border shows demographic evidence of being one of the most devastated areas, while Belgorod oblast, contiguous to it on the Russian side, shows no evidence of exceptional mortality. Both oblasts have the same sort of farming and weather, while the cities of Kharkiv and Belgorod are only about 35 kilometers apart. The fact that one was affected and the other was not can only be attributed to a deliberate policy to concentrate the famine geographically for political ends.

### The State and National Communism

A key to understanding the geography and motive of the famine is to recall events that took place immediately after the Bolshevik seizure of power. During the 1918 German occupation of Ukraine, even Menonite German communities welcomed their co-nationals and provided volunteers to fight the Bolsheviks, despite old pacifist traditions. (Later, in 1941, the Volga Germans as well as those in Ukraine were deported en masse as a possible security threat.) The Cossacks attempted to establish a separate state under General Alexey Kaledin and later provided the most important base for the anticommunist forces of Anton Denikin. The Ukrainians not only formed their own nation-state but—after their military defeat and incorporation into the USSR—became what Poland would become in the Soviet bloc after World War II: that part of the larger entity that was most conscious of its national distinctiveness, most assertive of its prerogatives, and least willing to follow Moscow's model in arranging its own affairs. Not coincidentally, it was the territories inhabited by Ukrainians, Cossacks, and Germans that were affected by the famine in 1933.

<sup>18</sup>*Pravda* (Moscow), Sept. 26, 1937. See also Boris Souvarine, *Stalin: A Critical Survey of Bolshevism*, New York, Longmans, Green, 1939, p. 669; and Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko, *The Time of Stalin: Portrait of a Tyranny*, New York, Harper and Row, 1981, pp. 205–09.

<sup>19</sup>S. Maksudov, "Geography of the Famine of 1933," *SSSR: Vnutrennyye protivorechiya* (New York), No. 7, 1983, p. 5–17.

<sup>20</sup>On mass starvation in Kazakhstan, which began around 1930 but continued until virtually the end of the decade, see Martha Brill Olcott, "The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan," *Russian Review* (Stanford, CA), No. 2, 1981, pp. 136–37. Western Siberia was an area where Stalin personally supervised the initial collectivization drive, which was notorious for its brutality. Along the Volga the dead seem at least to have had coffins, whereas mass graves were widespread in Ukraine, indicating differing magnitudes of mortality for the two areas. See the brief account of Mikhail Alekseyev, "Sower and Protector," *Nash sovremennik* (Moscow), No. 9, 1972, p. 96.



In order to understand the function that this famine performed in Soviet history, it is first necessary to comprehend that the Soviet leadership perceived an additional link between nationalism and the peasantry in the so-called borderlands (*okrainy*) outside ethnic Russia. Stalin wrote: "The nationality question is in the essence of the matter a question of the peasantry."<sup>21</sup> Like much else in Stalin's writings, the aphoristic form encapsulates a commonplace idea. As early as the 8th Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) in March 1919, the nationality question was discussed as an aspect of the regime's relationship with the peasantry.<sup>22</sup> Since the borderlands by and large consisted of Russian-speaking cities surrounded by non-Russian speaking villages, this was little more than a matter of simple observation. National resistance to Russian rule came primarily from the countryside, and coming to terms with non-Russian national aspirations meant of necessity coming to terms with the peasants who formed the mainstay of the national movements.

In Ukraine, the Soviet state was plagued by what the newspapers called "kulak banditism"—actually guerrilla bands of Ukrainian nationalists who harassed the Bolsheviks from rural areas. The Ukrainian national government, an anticommunist but thoroughly socialist people's republic (*Ukrains'ka Narodna Respublika*), had been pushed out from Ukrainian territory by the end of 1920, but thousands of individuals loyal to it continued to fight for independence.<sup>23</sup> Since the Soviet state proclaimed in Ukraine, as in other so-called borderlands, had been imposed by the Bolsheviks, and such support as it had came mainly from Russian or Russified urban dwellers, the Soviet state was viewed in the countryside as an occupation regime. As time went on, even the Bolsheviks came to realize this.

The wars of the Russian Revolution had ended in military victory and socio-political stalemate for the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks had attempted to impose a completely new structure on society from top to bottom, but their attempts to regiment society through the policy of War Communism had failed. Peasants would not join communes. Intellectuals who did not

find themselves in complete accord with the party's views could not be immediately dispensed with by the Bolsheviks. Guerrilla fighters for national self-determination could not be defeated as easily as conventional forces.

Lenin realized that a period of respite, a domestic equivalent to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, was necessary for the survival of his government. In 1921 he proclaimed the New Economic Policy, designed to appease the peasantry by replacing forced requisitions of foodstuffs with a tax in kind and allowing the peasants to sell their surplus produce on a free market. Peasants were assured that they had secure tenure on their individual farms. Intellectuals were allowed to express themselves quite freely, as long as they were not openly disloyal. With regard to the nationalities, a policy more attuned to their national aspirations was introduced.

In 1923, the 12th Party Congress formally adopted the policy of *korenizatsiya*, which literally means "taking root," but whose meaning is better conveyed by the word "indigenization." Ukrainization, the Ukrainian version of *korenizatsiya*, was designed to give the Soviet Ukrainian state a veneer of national legitimacy by actively recruiting Ukrainians into the party and state apparatus, switching official business to the Ukrainian language, and supporting Ukrainian cultural activities.<sup>24</sup>

Ukrainization went much further than comparable policies elsewhere in the USSR, further than Moscow evidently ever intended. Prominent Ukrainian socialists were invited to return from exile. Many did, including Ukraine's ex-president Mykhaylo Hrushevsky. In 1924, the Declaration of the Sixty-Six, among whose signatories were former cabinet ministers of the Petlyura government, pledged loyalty to the Soviet state on the grounds that Ukrainians had always been an oppressed people with a natural affinity for socialism and that it was only early Bolshevik hostility toward Ukrainian culture and aspirations that had prevented Ukrainians from cooperating with the Soviet state. Now that the Bolsheviks had repudiated their past errors, the declaration concluded, Ukrainians were willing to be loyal Soviet citizens.<sup>25</sup> The document had the character of a national covenant: those who felt themselves to be the natural leaders of the Ukrainian people declared their loyalty to communism on the grounds that this was compatible with loyalty to their nation.

<sup>21</sup>I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniya* (Works), Moscow, Gospolitizdat, Vol. 7, 1946, p. 72.

<sup>22</sup>František Šilný, *Natsional'naya politika KPSS v periode s 1917 po 1922 god* (The Nationality Policy of the CPSU from 1917 Through 1922), Munich, Suchasnist', 1978, pp. 196-97.

<sup>23</sup>As of April 1921, the Soviet government estimated that 102 armed bands were operating in Ukraine and the Crimea, each with from 20 to 800 men, in addition to Nestor Makhno's anarchist force of 10,000 to 15,000. O. O. Kucher, *Rozhrom zbroinoi vnutrishnoi kontrrevolyutsii na Ukraini u 1921-1923 rr.* (Destruction of the Armed Internal Counterrevolution in Ukraine in the Years 1921-1923), Kharkiv, Vydavnystvo Kharkiv's'koho Universytetu, 1971, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup>See, for example, Basil Dmytryshyn, *Moscow and the Ukraine, 1917-1953*, New York, Bookman Associates, 1956, pp. 56-90.

<sup>25</sup>*Visti VUTsVK* (Kharkiv), May 18, 1924.

The Ukrainian intelligentsia made use of the relative freedom and state sponsorship of the 1920's by creating something like a golden age in Ukrainian letters, a period later called the "executed rebirth," (*rozstrilyane vidrodzhennya*) because of its abrupt and violent termination. What the party more prosaically called the "Ukrainian cultural process" posed a direct challenge to party legitimacy, and the issue of what to do about this development was one of the dominant political issues of the 1920's. Ukrainian communists, many only recently recruited from Ukrainian non-Bolshevik socialist parties, became prominent in official cultural life and extremely vocal in protesting the constraints on Ukraine's culture imposed by its association with Russia.

Mykola Khvylovyi, the most popular Ukrainian communist writer of the day, created a sensation by constructing a whole theory of national cultural liberation. He called on Ukrainians to develop a literature based on West European models. In order to do this, Khvylovyi insisted that Ukrainian literature repudiate Russian culture and turn to West European culture, so that it could then promote an "Asiatic renaissance" by serving as a conduit transmitting the highest achievements of European culture to the rising colonial peoples of the East. Ukraine's Commissar of Education, Oleksander Shums'kyi, who had originally been leader of a Ukrainian revolutionary group that was admitted to the Bolshevik Party only in 1920, led a delegation of West Ukrainian Communists to Stalin in 1925, demanding that Ukrainization be speeded up and that the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine be headed by a Ukrainian. In 1928, another high official in the commissariat of education, Mykhaylo Volobuyev, argued that Soviet Ukraine was being exploited by the Soviet government in a manner virtually indistinguishable from prerevolutionary times; that its economic development was therefore being distorted; and that the only solution was for Soviet Ukraine to be given control over its economic resources and develop them in a relatively autarkic fashion.<sup>26</sup>

Although Stalin personally insisted on the condemnation of such "national deviations" (and condemned they were), in 1927 he withdrew his personal satrap, Lazar Kaganovich, from Soviet Ukraine and left a relatively autonomous national communist leadership in charge. After Kaganovich was replaced as First Secretary of the CP(B)U by Stanislav Kossior, the real political strongman in the Ukrainian SSR became Shums'kyi's successor as commissar of education, Mykola Skrypnyk. As an Old Bolshevik who had been closely associated with Lenin—one of the few ethnic



A 1931 photo of Mykola Skrypnyk, Ukrainian party leader in the late 1920's and early 1930's, promoter of the policies of Ukrainization.

—From Iwan Koszeliwec's *Mykola Skrypnyk*, Munich, "Suchasnist'," 1972, p. 225.

Ukrainians to have such credentials—Skrypnyk was able to extend his authority over anything touching on the nationality question—which meant practically everything—in Ukraine. He became the chief advocate of his republic's national interests and chief defender of its prerogatives at Union councils. One of his first acts as education commissar was to chair an orthography conference, which brought together experts from Europe, Russia, and Ukraine, to standardize Ukrainian spelling and purge the language of Russianisms. He took it upon his office to satisfy the "cultural needs" of Ukrainians in Russia on the grounds that the Russian Soviet government was not devoting adequate resources to them. On one occasion, he stated that Russia's record in this area was so abysmal that it was giving political ammunition to the anticommunist Ukrainian nationalists in Polish-ruled Western Ukraine. In his view, the only solution was to transfer to the Soviet Ukrainian republic certain border areas of the Russian republic with Ukrainian majorities. In other words, a Soviet Ukrainian leader was demanding territorial concessions from Soviet Russia. His demands did not meet with success.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup>See my *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918–1933*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1983, pp. 86–191.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 192–231.

The period of Skrypnyk's dominance (1927–1933)—while marked by the same cultural restrictiveness characteristic of this period in Soviet history as a whole—was the high point of Ukrainization, to the extent that urban inhabitants who did not speak Ukrainian began to feel like foreigners in the cities where they had been born. Industrialization flooded the workplaces with Ukrainians from the countryside to a point where Ukrainians became an absolute majority in the industrial work force by 1930. Many daily newspapers switched from the Russian to the Ukrainian language. By early 1933, 88 percent of all factory newspapers were in Ukrainian. All university lectures had to be delivered in Ukrainian.<sup>28</sup> The original constituency of Soviet rule in Ukraine, the Russian and Russified urban dwellers, was being severely undermined.

## Collectivization and Ukraine

Nevertheless, the state's relations with the Ukrainian countryside remained uneasy. For one thing, Soviet power there continued to depend largely on a barely changed reincarnation of the old committees of poor peasants (*komyed*, renamed *komnezam* in 1930) abolished in the Russian SFSR before the end of the Civil War. In fact, the Ukrainian village *komnezam* was until the end of 1923 empowered to "dekulakize" villagers by seizing and redistributing (usually to *komnezam* members) any "surplus" land and property it wished. It retained state power in the village, often in the absence of a village soviet, until well into 1925. Kept in a sort of limbo thereafter, the *komnezam* returned to prominence when the state turned once again to compulsory grain collection after the 1927 harvest. Those who participated in these "procurements" were allowed to retain a share of the booty. The *komnezam* would also play an important supporting role in the collectivization and famine, but almost always under the leadership of an outsider. It was abolished only in 1933.<sup>29</sup>

Even at the height of the state's "honeymoon" with the countryside in the mid-1920's, there were occasional frank admissions that its few rural supporters were an isolated and despised minority. One high Soviet Ukrainian official addressed a group of village

newspaper correspondents in 1926, openly sympathizing with the fact that they were a small minority whose lives were often made difficult by "kulaks" and even by state functionaries.<sup>30</sup>

In 1928–29, Stalin began his "socialist offensive," consisting in the abandonment of Lenin's New Economic Policy in favor of a crash program of rapid industrialization, forced collectivization of agriculture, and the subordination of all societal resources to this "socialist transformation." In many hastily collectivized villages, the *kolkhoz* meant only that implements and livestock were brought to the center of the village and dubbed "socialized property," while the peasants were told to plant and harvest as a group. This did nothing to raise output or benefit the rural population, but bringing the entire harvest to a common threshing room made it much easier for the state to "procure" a larger portion of the harvest. Collectivization was thus extractive, recognized by the peasants to be such, and could only be carried out as a program to subjugate the rural population in its entirety.

Ukrainization had tilted the ethnic balance of power toward the nation that was dominant in the countryside. This was a political necessity as long as the state felt that it needed to secure at least the tolerance of the countryside. Once the state felt strong enough to initiate the forced collectivization of agriculture, the political equation was radically altered.

The drive for the immediate and total collectivization of agriculture meant a return to civil war. Although the opposition remained leaderless and uncoordinated, Stalin himself admitted that this war was more difficult to fight than World War II.<sup>31</sup> It was a war of town against country, and, in Ukrainian terms, this implied a war of what remained of the non-Ukrainian city against the Ukrainian countryside. Once the state embarked upon this struggle, policies to placate the countryside became irrelevant.

Forced collectivization was carried out by means of dispatching individuals from the cities to the villages. There were various waves of this invasion, but the most important one was that of the "twenty-five thousands," so called because of a 1929 decree authorizing the recruitment of 25,000 proletarian volunteers to help carry out collectivization. We do not have official figures on the national composition of those "thousands" who worked in Ukraine, but the evidence suggests that relatively few were Ukrainians. Many—the Soviet sources do not give a precise figure

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.; and Bohdan Krawchenko, "The Impact of Ukrainization on the Social Structure of Ukraine," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* (Toronto), No. 3, 1980, pp. 338–57.

<sup>29</sup>For a lengthier discussion of this institution, see my "The *Komitety Nezamozhnykh Selyan* and the Structure of Soviet Rule in the Ukrainian Countryside, 1920–1933," *Soviet Studies*, No. 4, 1983, pp. 487–503.

<sup>30</sup>V. Zatonsky, *Leninovym shlyakhom* (On Lenin's Path), Kharkiv, Radyans'ke selo, 1926, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup>Winston Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1950, p. 498.



but indicate that the number was substantial—were sent from the Russian SFSR to Ukraine. Seventy-five hundred of those sent to the Ukrainian countryside were recruited locally, but since over 75 percent of them had been workers for over 12 years, this would indicate that few of them were Ukrainians.<sup>32</sup> Mass Ukrainian migration to the cities and factories was too recent a phenomenon, and most urban Ukrainians were undoubtedly still too close to their village origins to take part in a campaign to force the villagers to give up their private farms. This of necessity introduced an ethnic factor into the collectivization campaign in Ukraine. Meanwhile, official statements asserted that collectivization in Ukraine had a special task, namely, as the newspaper *Proletars'ka Pravda* put it on January 22, 1930, "to destroy the social basis of Ukrainian nationalism—individual peasant agriculture."<sup>33</sup>

Ukraine was designated as a priority area for collectivization, and the policy was carried out more rapidly there than in Russia, as the following figures show:

Date	Percentage of farms collectivized	
	Ukraine	Russia
December 1929	8.6	7.4
March 1930	65.0	59.0
Mid-1932	70.0	59.3

The trend continued. By 1935, 91.3 percent of all peasant farms in Ukraine were collectivized, while the 90 percent mark was not reached in Russia until late in 1937.<sup>34</sup>

Ukrainian peasants (like their Cossack counterparts) resisted collectivization with particular determination. Soviet Ukrainian historians record that the number of "registered kulak terrorist acts" (and any anti-Soviet act was by definition "kulak") grew four-fold from 1927 to 1929, with 1,262 such acts recorded for the latter year. In the first half of 1930, the number rose to over 1,500.<sup>35</sup> Later figures are unavailable, perhaps because the authorities could no longer keep count. The memoir literature is filled with accounts of killings of those enforcing collectivization. Instances where the women would forbid their men to fight and take it upon themselves to drive the local So-

viet administration from the village became proverbial as "babas' revolts."

Collectivization provoked a crisis within the Communist Party of Ukraine and a rapid turnover of personnel. Newspapers carried daily denunciations of "opportunists" who failed to fulfill their tasks. Village communist organizations lost almost half their membership as a result of the 1929–30 purge, declining from an already weak 40,000 party members in January 1929 to 21,000 members a year later.<sup>36</sup> Between January 1930 and July 1932, 80 percent of rayon party secretaries were removed.<sup>37</sup> Since the vast majority of those purged were excluded because of opposition to or inadequate results in carrying out collectivization, it is logical to assume that the new raykom secretaries were chosen for their devotion to collectivization rather than for their loyalty to the Ukrainization policy and the Skrypnyk leadership. In short, collectivization not only undermined the political basis for Skrypnyk's policy; it also undermined his personal political base.

## Politics of Hunger

When Skrypnyk turned 60 in January 1932, the official celebrations in the Ukrainian capital of Kharkiv rivalled those of the Stalin jubilee of 1929 in Moscow. For days the newspapers were filled with official biographies and expositions of his ideas. His picture was visible everywhere. Yet, his actual position was already extremely weak. Ukrainization had become secondary to the policy of collectivization. Some of his past actions had already been attacked implicitly by denouncing as nationalistic sabotage similar actions committed by others.<sup>38</sup>

The famine of 1932–33 came about primarily as a result of excessive grain procurements. Since the Ukrainian harvest of 1932 was better than that of the worst NEP year, it is clear that without the forced pro-

<sup>32</sup>I. F. Hanzha, I. I. Slyn'ko, and P. V. Shostak, "The Ukrainian Village on the Road to Socialism," in V. P. Danilov, Ed., *Ocherki istorii kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khozyaystva v soyuznykh respublikakh* (An Outline History of the Collectivization of Agriculture in the Union Republics), Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1963, p. 177.

<sup>33</sup>Quoted by F. Pigido, *Ukraina pid bolshevytskoyu okupatsiyeu* (Ukraine Under Bolshevik Occupation), Munich, Institute for the Study of the USSR, 1956, p. 107.

<sup>34</sup>Vsevolod Holubnychy, "Causes of the 1932–1933 Famine," *Vpered: Ukrainskyi robitnychy chasopys* (Munich), No. 10, 1958, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup>A. F. Chmyga, *Kolkhoznoye dvizheniye na Ukraine* (The Kolkhoz Movement in Ukraine), Moscow, Izd. Moskovskogo universiteta, 1974, p. 302; and O. M. Krykunenko, *Borotba Komunistychnoi partii Ukrainy za zdiysnennya lenins'koho kooperatyvnoho planu* (The Struggle of the Ukrainian Communist Party for the Realization of the Leninist Cooperative Plan), Lviv, Vydavnytstvo L'vivskoho Universytetu, 1970, p. 55.

<sup>36</sup>*Natsional'naya politika VKP(b) v tsifrah* (The National Policy of the All-Union Communist Party [bolshevik] in Numbers), Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1930, pp. 144–45.

<sup>37</sup>Myroslav Prokop, *Ukraina i Ukrain's'ka polityka Moskvy* (Ukraine and Moscow's Ukrainian Policy), Munich, Suchasnist', 1981, p. 32.

<sup>38</sup>Most blatantly in the case of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine show trial, where evidence was fabricated in order to link Ukrainian purism in linguistics with treason to the Soviet state. Skrypnyk had been a vocal and public advocate of linguistic purism.



curements of grain there would have been no starvation. The procurement quotas that were being imposed by Union authorities on Soviet Ukraine in conjunction with collectivization were clearly discriminatory. Thus, in 1930 the Union insisted that 7.7 million metric tons of Ukrainian grain be procured, a third of that year's exceptionally good 23 million ton harvest. By contrast, in 1926, the best year before collectivization and compulsory procurements, only 3.3 million tons had been acquired by the state, 21 percent of that year's harvest.<sup>39</sup> In 1931 the harvest was poorer than in 1930 because of the disorganization accompanying collectivization, a heat wave during the growing season, and hard rains at harvest time.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the 7.7 million ton quota could not be met from an 18.3 million ton harvest, in spite of tremendous pressure from Moscow.<sup>41</sup> Yet, fully seven million tons were ultimately collected. According to official Soviet statistics, the 1932 grain harvest in Soviet Ukraine was 14.4 million tons, which should still have been adequate to feed the population and livestock but which would have left few reserves. In spite of this, the high quotas were retained. Ultimately, only 3.7 million tons were actually procured, despite the draconian collection measures.<sup>42</sup>

The Ukrainian party leadership appealed for lower quotas to the delegates from Moscow at the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference in July 1932. Kaganovich and Vyacheslav Molotov listened to one official after another tell of the hardships the quotas had caused. Kossior, Skrypnyk, and Panas Lyubchenko all told of villages where everything had been taken and where there was no longer anything to eat. Molotov responded that the quotas, which had already been lowered by 18 percent from the previous year (to 6.6 million tons), would remain in place, and the party conference duly included the figure in its resolution.<sup>43</sup> However, Ukrainian warnings about the dire consequences of what Kossior called the "mechanistic" enforcement of quotas, without regard for areas where the harvest had been poor, show that officials on the scene were giving Moscow ample warning of what was to come. When the predictions came true, officials on the scene pleaded for relief. For example, one obkom secretary told Stalin to his face that there was mass starvation.<sup>44</sup> Admiral Fyodor Raskolnikov, of the Black

Sea Fleet, and General Yona Yakir, the commander of the Kiev Military District, both sent Stalin letters of protest.<sup>45</sup> Moscow was warned of the danger before the harvest and had accurate information throughout the famine.

Stalin's public response was to disbelieve the reports. Furthermore, the Soviet Union continued to export grain. Net Soviet grain exports during the famine years were 1.54 million tons in 1932 and 1.77 million tons in 1933.<sup>46</sup> These exports were possible only because of such measures as the law of August 7, 1932, which provided for the execution (or ten years' imprisonment in extenuating circumstances) of anyone caught pilfering collective farm property or encouraging others to leave the collective farms. Fully 20 percent of all cases in Soviet courts in 1932 were tried under this decree, and Stalin himself referred to it as "the basis of socialist legality at the present moment."<sup>47</sup>

The Ukrainian Soviet government adopted additional harsh measures. A November 1932 decree prohibited collective farms from creating any reserves or distributing any food to its members until the quota was met.<sup>48</sup> A decree of December 6, 1932, assigned an initial six villages to a "blacklist" (*chorna doshka*) subject to the following measures: 1) the immediate closing of state and cooperative stores, and the removal of all goods in them from the village; 2) a complete ban on all trade (including trade in essential commodities such as bread) by collective farms, collective farmers, and individual farmers; 3) the immediate halting and compulsory repayment of all credits and advances (including bread); 4) a thoroughgoing purge of local collective-farm, cooperative, and state apparatuses; and 5) the purge of all "foreign elements" and "saboteurs of the grain procurement campaign" from the collective farm.<sup>49</sup> On December 13 the blacklist was extended to 82 rayons, and at the same time a special system of local prosecutors was established to prosecute those held criminally responsible for nonfulfillment of the quotas.<sup>50</sup>

Portraits of village life during succeeding months emerge from the files of the Harvard University Refugee Interview Project, which was conducted during the early 1950's. It should be stressed that the inter-

<sup>39</sup>Holubnychy, loc. cit., p. 5.

<sup>40</sup>Slyn'ko, op. cit., pp. 286-88.

<sup>41</sup>See, for example, the lead editorial in *Pravda*, Jan. 8, 1932, insisting Ukraine could and must liquidate its "backwardness" in procuring grain.

<sup>42</sup>Hanzha et al., loc. cit., p. 199.

<sup>43</sup>*Visti VUTsVK*, July 11-15, 1932.

<sup>44</sup>Roman Terekhov, who actually lived to write about this (See *Pravda*, May 26, 1964) was secretary of the Kharkiv obkom.

<sup>45</sup>Leonid Plyushch, *History's Carnival: A Dissident's Autobiography*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977, pp. 40-41.

<sup>46</sup>*Vneshnyaya torgovlya SSSR za 1918-1940 gg.* (The Foreign Trade of the USSR for the Years 1918-1940), Moscow, Vneshtorgizdat, 1960, pp. 144, 360.

<sup>47</sup>Robert Conquest, Ed., *Agricultural Workers in the USSR*, London, Bodley Head, 1968, pp. 24-25.

<sup>48</sup>Slyn'ko, op. cit., p. 297.

<sup>49</sup>*Visti VUTsVK*, Dec. 8, 1932.

<sup>50</sup>Slyn'ko, op. cit., p. 298.

viewers were not particularly interested in the famine and that the information was therefore given without any prompting while the respondents were relating their life experiences. One rather typical account (Case 128) is the following:

*... there was the famine in the Ukraine in 1933. We saw people die in the streets; it was terrible to see a dead man, when I close my eyes I can still see him. We had in our village a small church which was closed for services and in which we played. And I remember a man who came in there; he lay down with his eyes wide open at the ceiling and he died there! He was an innocent victim of the Soviet regime; he was a simple worker and not even a kulak. This hunger was the result of Soviet policy.*

Other accounts are more graphic, as this one by a Russian woman (Case 373):

*Well, in 1933–34 I was a member of a commission sent out to inspect wells. We had to go to the country to see that the shafts of the wells were correctly installed, and there I saw such things as I had never seen before in my life. I saw villages that not only had no people, but not even any dogs and cats, and I remember one particular incident: we came to one village, and I don't think I will ever forget this. I will always see this picture before me. We opened the door of this miserable hut and there ... the man was lying. The mother and child already lay dead, and the father had taken the piece of meat from between the legs of his son and had died just like that. The stench was terrific, we couldn't stand it, and this was not the only time that I remember such incidents, there were other such incidents on our trip...*

Nor were such horrors confined to the countryside. Cannibalism occurred even in the cities, as a worker (Case 513) described:

*I remember a case in 1933. I was in Kiev. I was at that time at a bazaar—the bazaar was called the Bes-sarabian market. I saw a woman with a valise. She opened the valise and put her goods out for sale. Her goods consisted of jellied meat, frozen jellied meat, which she sold at fifty rubles a portion. I saw a man come over to her—a man who bore all the marks of starvation—he bought himself a portion and began eating. As he ate of his portion, he noticed that a human finger was imbedded in the jelly. He began shouting at the woman and began yelling at the top of his voice. People came running, gathered around her*

*and then seeing what her food consisted of, took her to the militsia (police). At the militsia, two members of the NKVD went over to her and, instead of taking action against her, they burst out laughing. "What, what, you killed a kulak? Good for you!" And then they let her go.*

The main victims, however, were not "kulaks," who had long since been exiled, or even the individual farmers, who were by then a minority. Figures cited at the Third All-Ukrainian Party Conference in July 1932 indicate that at that time 81 percent of all tilled land was either in collective farms or state farms and that over 70 percent of all farm families were in collectives.<sup>51</sup> This means that the majority of the victims were collective farmers.

The All-Union Central Committee weighed in with

<sup>51</sup> *Visti VUTsVK*, July 14, 1932.



Pavel Postyshev, a secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) who in March 1933 was elected second secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party and who enforced Moscow's brutal policy of grain procurements in Ukraine.

—Cover photo of E. Yu. Rivesh's biography, P. P. Postyshev, Moscow, Politizdat, 1962.

two decrees, on December 14, 1932, and January 24, 1933, the first demanding that Ukrainization be carried out "properly" and that "Petlyurists and bourgeois nationalists" be dispersed, the second declaring that Ukrainian authorities were guilty of laxity in failing to meet the procurement quotas. The January decree was tantamount to Moscow's taking direct control of the Ukrainian party apparatus by appointing Pavel Postyshev (a non-Ukrainian former obkom secretary who had been transferred to Moscow some years earlier) as second secretary of the Ukrainian Central Committee and obkom secretary in Kharkiv; and by appointing new obkom secretaries in Odessa and Dnipropetrovsk. Ukrainian Commissar of supplies and Odessa obkom secretary Mikhail Mayorov, Dnipropetrovsk obkom secretary Vasilii Stroganov, and Kharkiv and Donetsk obkom secretary Roman Terekhov, the second-tier officials who had protested the procurements most vigorously, were removed from their posts.<sup>52</sup> This meant placing Ukraine directly under Moscow's control through the person of Postyshev, who acted as Stalin's viceroy.

Postyshev immediately ruled out any aid to the countryside and even sent procurement brigades to seize what was left—mainly that part of the harvest that had been distributed to collective farmers. This could not have been large, because only 22.7 percent of the collective farms had distributed any grain whatsoever to their members.<sup>53</sup>

## Demise of Ukrainization

While the published sections of the January decree referred only to the failure of the Ukrainian procurement campaign to meet its quota, Postyshev later indicated that the decree also dealt with nationality policy. Other Soviet officials never contradicted him on this. In any case, a campaign against an initially unidentified Ukrainian national deviation was begun, and it was conducted in a manner reminiscent of the campaign against a "right deviation" that had preceded attacks on Nikolay Bukharin in 1929. On February 28, 1933, a major government reshuffle was announced, transferring Skrypnyk from his post as commissar of education to that of deputy premier and head of the Ukrainian State Planning Commission.<sup>54</sup> On March 4, *Pravda* carried a self-critical letter from

the leadership in Soviet Byelorussia, confessing to "errors in the nationality question." A few days later *Visti VUTsVK*, the daily newspaper of the Soviet Ukrainian government, published a lead editorial informing its readers that the Byelorussians' letter was relevant to Ukraine as well.<sup>55</sup> In late April a special conference on nationality policy was held under the sponsorship of the Ukrainian Central Committee and served as a forum for denouncing national deviations in educational and linguistic policy.<sup>56</sup> Clearly, a final assault against Skrypnyk was being prepared. This came at the Ukrainian Central Committee's June plenum. Skrypnyk's speech was never published, but according to accounts that leaked out, he denied that hitherto loyal communists were guilty of national deviation and of intentionally sabotaging the grain procurement campaign. He asserted that opposition was the inevitable consequence of the policies imposed by Moscow, the restrictions on Ukraine's autonomy, and the famine, for which he laid the blame squarely at Moscow's door.<sup>57</sup>

Postyshev's speech, on the other hand, was published under the telling headline: "We Are Mobilizing the Masses for the Immediate Delivery of Grain to the State." He defended the compulsory procurements policy and made it clear that it was Skrypnyk who had been the target of his campaign against "national deviations." He portrayed Skrypnyk as a leader of nationalist heretics, the protector of "nationalistic wreckers" responsible for the inadequate fulfillment of grain procurements. Interestingly, the only specific charge against Skrypnyk in Postyshev's stream of abuse was Skrypnyk's advocacy of orthographic changes tending to make Ukrainian spelling more distinct from Russian, something that "served only the annexationist designs of the Polish landlords."<sup>58</sup>

A few days later Skrypnyk's erstwhile colleagues joined in a rather unsavory competition in denunciations. Andriy Khvylya, the post-Skrypnyk deputy commissar of education, declared:

*The fundamental cause of errors in the procurement of grain during the past year consists in the fact that many of Ukraine's party organizations did not exercise the requisite Bolshevik vigilance and uncompromising attitude toward hostile elements, which is rooted in the very fact that they sabotaged us at every turn of*

<sup>52</sup>Dmytryshyn, op. cit., p. 135; "Decree of the CC of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) of January 24, 1933, and the Tasks of the Bolsheviks of Ukraine," *Bil'shovyk Ukrainy* (Kharkiv), No. 3, 1933, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup>Hanzha et al., loc. cit., p. 202.

<sup>54</sup>*Visti VUTsVK*, Mar. 1, 1933.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, Mar. 11, 1933.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, May 1, 1933.

<sup>57</sup>Ewald Ammende, *Human Life in Russia*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1936, pp. 122-23.

<sup>58</sup>*Visti VUTsVK*, June 22, 1933.



*our activity.... And our commissariat of education not only failed to expose wrecking, but, on the contrary, sheltered wrecking elements. Worse, the commissar himself ... Comrade Skrypnyk, made it possible for these elements to conceal their activities in linguistics....*<sup>59</sup>

Panas Lyubchenko, then a secretary of the Ukrainian Central Committee and destined to become head of the Ukrainian Council of People's Commissars within the year, linked Skrypnyk with the cultural "wrecking" exposed at the 1930 trial of members of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine, and held him responsible for "kulak Ukrainian nationalist deviations" in linguistics, literature, literary scholarship, and historical writing.<sup>60</sup>

Skrypnyk, who committed suicide on July 6, 1933, was no longer alive when Nikolay Popov, a secretary of the Ukrainian Central Committee since March 1933, linked the struggle to extract grain to the struggle against Skrypnyk, both apparently being equally necessary to transform Ukraine into a model Soviet republic:

*The task of raising our agriculture cannot be accomplished unless we correct errors which have been permitted in the national question, unless we purge our party, our state, cultural, agricultural, collective-farm and other institutions of bourgeois nationalists, without mobilizing the entire party mass to fight nationalism, without strengthening our efforts to bring the masses up in the spirit of internationalism.... Bolshevik nationality policy, most intimately connected with all our party's tasks ... will be a mighty weapon for the consolidation of Soviet Ukraine as an indivisible part of the Soviet Union.... We face here and now the task of making Soviet Ukraine into a model Soviet republic.*<sup>61</sup>

By then Postyshev had already set about making Soviet Ukraine a model Soviet republic. In March 1933, the Ukrainian deputy secretary of agriculture and 22 others were shot for alleged attempts to sabotage agriculture. Other alleged conspiracies were connected with the old revolutionary Ukrainian parties, the Poles, and the underground Ukrainian Military Or-



*Mykola Khvylovyi, a communist writer active in the Ukrainization of the 1920's and early 1930's; he committed suicide in May 1933 as a result of Moscow's policies of grain procurement and repression of Ukrainian intellectuals.*

—Frontispiece of Vol. 2 of Khvylovyi's collected works, *Tvory*, Ellicott City, MD, Smoloskyp, 1980.

ganization in Western Ukraine.<sup>62</sup> Virtually all prominent communist dissenters from the past were arrested at this time in what became known as the "Postyshev terror." Arrests of writers became a wholesale process; and of the 259 Ukrainian writers whose works were published in Soviet Ukraine in 1930, only 36 had their works still printed after 1938.<sup>63</sup>

Visible reminders of Ukraine's distinctiveness began to disappear. For example, Vasyl Ellan-Blakytny had been revered as a sort of founding saint of Ukrainian proletarian literature. His statue stood at a principal intersection in Kharkiv—until one day a truck ran into it. The statue was not replaced.<sup>64</sup> As

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., June 30, 1933.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., July 7, 1933.

<sup>61</sup>M. M. Popov, "On Nationalist Deviations in the Ranks of the Ukrainian Party Organization and Tasks of Struggle with Them," *Chervonyi shlyakh* (Kharkiv), No. 7, 1933, pp. 110, 126.

<sup>62</sup>Hryhory Kostyuk, *Stalinist Rule in the Ukraine: A Study in the Decade of Mass Terror, 1929-1939*, London, Atlantic Books, 1960, pp. 46, 85.

<sup>63</sup>Bohdan Nahaylo, *The Ukrainians*, London, Minority Rights Group, 1981, p. 8.

<sup>64</sup>Kostyuk, op. cit., p. 47.

time passed, not only statues but also artistic and architectural monuments to the Ukrainian past either fell prey to trucks or were removed to make way for new projects, many of which never materialized.<sup>65</sup>

In the remaining months of 1933 many of the organizations and individuals that had been central to Ukraine's intellectual life in the 1920's simply disappeared. Linguists, fiction writers, historians, poets—virtually everyone who had anything to do with creating a distinctly Ukrainian cultural scene in the 1920's—disappeared. Ukrainization became a dead letter. Concessions to Ukrainian national identity came to an end.

## Postscript

A changed ideology in the national sphere made itself felt in late 1934 with the publication of a decree denouncing the hitherto dominant Marxist historical school in Russia, the followers of M. N. Pokrovskiy, who had narrated Russian history as the history of an oppressive empire, a prison of peoples.<sup>66</sup> Instead, a new history of the USSR portrayed the extension of the Russian empire as a progressive process. Tsars were rehabilitated as state-builders. This interpretation was intended to be the basis for a new national ideology, Soviet patriotism, which held that national differences within the Soviet Union were secondary to the shared history and loyalty that united all Soviet citizens. A German scholar, in describing the new self-definition of the USSR, called it "a kind of *Reichsidee* for a new Soviet imperialism."<sup>67</sup> Others have likened it to the prerevolutionary slogan of "Russia one and indivisible."

Ideology mirrored politics. By the time the 1936 Soviet Constitution was adopted, the Soviet Union had become a state in which the administrative competence of its constituent republics had been sharply reduced and that of the Union greatly enlarged.<sup>68</sup> The ideology of Soviet patriotism dominated by Russian

culture and centralism was in no small part a legacy of the Ukrainian famine. While the suppression of national self-assertion and the introduction of centralization were principal features of overall Soviet policy in the 1930's, the Ukrainians, as the largest and most self-assertive non-Russian nation, seemed to be singled out for special treatment. Only they had to suffer the loss of several million villagers to starvation in an artificially contrived famine. Placed in this context, the famine of 1933 makes sense as one of a series of policies designed to neutralize Ukrainians as a political factor, indeed, as a social organism in the Soviet Union. These policies entailed the destruction of the spiritual and cultural elites of Ukraine and the subordination of the Ukrainian structures to central ones; the destruction of the officially sanctioned Ukrainian Communist political leadership as a distinct force in Soviet politics (almost all of those who turned on Skrypnyk perished as well in the 1937–38 purges); the abandonment of Ukrainization and the gradual abolition of structures designed to prevent the assimilation of Ukrainians entering Russified urban and industrial environments; and a body blow against the main constituency of Ukrainian nationalism—the peasantry. In sum, one cannot understand the famine without understanding the turnabout in Soviet nationalities policy—from seeking to foster to seeking to absorb national cultures. By the same token, one cannot understand how this policy was imposed without reference to the famine. The famine must therefore be understood within the context of an attempt to impose a final solution on the "Ukrainian problem" as it had hitherto existed.

Nevertheless, the Soviet state never solved its "Ukrainian problem," which still haunts Soviet leaders. Stalin himself helped to undermine his policy by annexing Ukrainian territories from Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia during World War II. Western Ukraine never went through such devastation as the famine and related repressions of the 1930's, and it was inevitable that the traditional cross-fertilization of ideas between Western and Eastern Ukraine would flourish when the two parts became united. In the 1960's a dissident movement arose that included Ukrainians from all Ukrainian territories and combined demands for national and human rights, while even the Soviet Ukrainian government under Petro Shelest edged a little further away from Moscow for a brief moment. Shelest was removed and the dissidents were arrested. Yet, after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, a Helsinki Monitoring Group, similar to and connected with counterparts in other parts of the Soviet Union, was formed in Kiev. Attempts to

<sup>65</sup>Titus Hewryk, *The Lost Architecture of Kiev*, New York, The Ukrainian Museum, 1982; and B. Mikorsky, *Razrusheniye kul'turno-istoricheskikh pamyatnikov v Kiyevе v 1934–1936 godakh* (Destruction of Cultural and Historical Monuments in Kiev in 1934–36), Munich, Institute for the Study of the USSR, 1951.

<sup>66</sup>A good selection of Pokrovskiy's works in translation, introduced by a useful exposition, is M. N. Pokrovskii, *Russia in World History: Selected Essays*, tr. and ed. by R. Szporluk, Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan Press, 1970.

<sup>67</sup>Erwin Oberländer, *Sowjetpatriotismus und Geschicthe: Dokumentation* (Soviet Patriotism and History: Documentation), Köln, Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1967, p. 21.

<sup>68</sup>The process of increasing Union competence at the expense of Republic authority is traced by V. Sadovs'ky, *Natsional'na polityka Sovitiv na Ukraini. Pratsi ukrains'koho naukovoho instytutu* (National Policy of the Soviets in Ukraine. Works of the Ukrainian Scientific Institute), vol. 39 (Warsaw, 1937), pp. 102–16.

## Famine and Nationalism in Soviet Ukraine

abolish the Ukrainian national churches have succeeded only in changing the official affiliation—not the spiritual essence—of Ukrainian Christianity.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>The USSR banned the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in 1930 and the Uniate Catholic Church in 1946. One measure of the continued strength of the Ukrainian Catholics is the fact that the region of their traditional dominance, Western Ukraine, now contains one-fourth of all officially sanctioned Orthodox parishes in the USSR, which are kept open only to prevent a greater portion of the population from attending underground Uniate churches.

Only a few years ago there were Western scholars who argued that the USSR would assimilate the Ukrainians in a relatively brief period of time. No one makes such predictions today. It is difficult to see how the problem of the Soviet Union's non-Russian nations, having defied the most brutal attempts at solution, can ever be solved to the government's satisfaction.



# Notes & Views

## Polish Stalemate

By Casimir Garnysz

IF POLAND today resembles the state depicted in George Orwell's 1984, the resemblance is of a peculiar kind: a strong police state endowed with the most advanced means for suppressing civil unrest, yet a weak state, deeply afraid of its citizens; a state that can rule but cannot govern, and that has maneuvered itself into a spectacular civil-political stalemate.

The results of General Wojciech Jaruzelski's "state of war" have been mixed. He has won some important battles, but has also suffered serious defeats. As admitted even by some members of the Government Commission on Economic Reform, Poland's economy remains in critical condition: constant modification of rules and regulations creates chaos in economic management and increases its inefficiency; a virtual freeze on investment is bringing about a progressive industrial decapitalization; the gap between supply and demand in the consumer market remains as wide as ever.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of society regards communist rule as illegitimate and responds to it with sullen foot-dragging. Although Solidarity has been de-legalized and its strikes and street demonstrations crushed, numerous Solidarity activities continue underground. In all probability, Poland's economic problems cannot be resolved unless the system is reformed politically. The behavior of the Poles during the Pope's visit in June

1983 gave a spectacular confirmation to Solidarity's fundamental message that there can be no economic turnaround without the ruling party granting to society a Magna Charta—an honest and binding agreement to establish a system of moderate political pluralism, with the freedoms of speech and press restored and legally guaranteed. In the unlikely event of such an agreement, the Polish crisis would subside; without it, a crisis will begin anew, perhaps in an even more virulent form. Thus the problems facing the group known to Polish society as the "owners of People's Poland" are serious and their resolution remains a cliffhanger. In order to resolve the crisis, Poland's rulers have resorted to a variety of means. The forcible methods of pacifying the population have been detailed elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> This essay will instead focus on the attempt of the Jaruzelski regime to gain popular support through control and manipulation of public opinion.

DURING 1982, General Jaruzelski's government repeatedly applied a "torture of hope" to Polish society. Thus, on May 3, the anniversary of the 1791 Polish Constitution, General Jaruzelski delivered a speech in Parliament, which hinted that the state of war was about to be lifted and that political prisoners were soon to be released. His call was for "reconciliation." Yet virtually at the same time the ZOMO riot squads started beating up casual pedestrians, people in side-

<sup>1</sup>For evaluations of the Polish economy, see the report of the Government Commission on Economic Reform, *Rzeczpospolita* (Warsaw), Feb. 22, 1984; a report from a conference of the Institute of Organization and Management, Tomasz Jezioranski, "Two years of Economic Reform," *Zycie Gospodarcze* (Warsaw), Jan. 22, 1984; a discussion organized by the journals *Veto* and *Polityka* on the state of the economic reform, in *Polityka* (Warsaw), Jan. 7, 1984; and Marek Misiak, "The Economy in 1983: At the Beginning of the Road," *Zycie Gospodarcze*, Jan. 22, 1984 (based on reports of the Statistical Bureau).

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<sup>2</sup>On the hard methods of repression used by the Jaruzelski government, see the reports in *Biuletyn Informacyjny* published since the beginning of 1982 by the Committee in Support of Solidarity, New York. See also "Military Penal Camps," in "Poland Under Jaruzelski—Part II," *Survey* (London), Autumn 1982, pp. 69–70; Tomasz Mianowicz, "The Department of Disinformation at Work," in "Poland Under Jaruzelski—Part I," *Survey*, Summer 1982, pp. 36–42; Michal Kolodziej, "The Universities under Martial Law," in "Poland Under Jaruzelski—Part I," pp. 47–52; Hanna Filipowicz, "From Solidarity to Arts Control," in "Poland Under Jaruzelski—Part II," pp. 13–26; and Alina Perth-Grabowska, "Forgeries, Composite Photographs, Denunciations and Disinformation," *Studium Papers* (Ann Arbor, MI), January 1984, pp. 26–30.