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Requested response to proposed resolution in Belgian House of Representatives regarding the 'Holodomor.'

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The main points of the draft resolutions and amendments sent to me by email were:

Document 1518

"... in the early 1930s ... 25% to 50% of ethnic Ukrainians died of unnatural causes during the Holodomor, by the actions and under the administration of the Soviets"

"... documents and policies of the time which indicate that the Holodomor was the result of a malicious and systematic policy of the Soviets to decimate massively the Ukrainian people"

"... asks the Federal government to recognize the Holodomor as genocide against the Ukrainian people"

Document 2479

"...the "Holodomor" famine of 1932-1933 which condemned several millions of Ukrainians to an atrocious death was planned by the Stalinist regime and constituted the sad culmination of an unprecedented offensive against the Ukrainian elites, intelligentsia and Ukrainian [sic] Church, as well as against Ukrainian culture, which abruptly ended the "Ukrainization" policy pursued since the 1920s"

Document 2479 amendments:

Request 1.f. (new) Insert a request 1.f., to read as follows:

"1.f. attaches particular importance to the recognition, condemnation and remembrance of the Holodomor at a time when new massive crimes are being committed in Ukraine by Russia;"

In order to explain most clearly the problems with all of these points, I will address them in the following way:

1. In response to the assertions in documents 1518 and 2479 that the famine was the result of intentional policies and plans to “decimate” the Ukrainian people, the first section will explain the causes and character of the famine of the Soviet famine of 1931-1933.
2. In response to the assertion that the famine killed 25%-50% of Ukrainians, the second section will explain the lack of evidence for this claim and what census data show.
3. In response to the request to recognize the “Holodomor” as a genocide, this section will apply the findings of the above two sections to the UN definition of genocide.
4. In response to the portion of the statement in document 2479 connecting the famine to an alleged suppression of Ukrainian culture, this section will present evidence showing that the Soviet regime did not suppress but allowed and even supported the development of Ukrainian culture to a significant degree.
5. In response to the connection drawn in the amendment to document 2479 connecting the famine to the current Russian-Ukrainian war, this section will briefly consider certain issues in connecting these two disparate events.

I will provide references to important sources for these points, but readers should recognize that there are many more sources that support these points than I can review in this relatively short and concise discussion.

## 1. The Soviet famine of 1931-1933

In order to make clear that this famine was not a ‘planned’ or ‘man-made’ or ‘intentional’ famine ‘artificially’ imposed on Ukraine, this section addresses the following points:

### a. Background:

= the history of famines in Russia and the early Soviet period, almost entirely caused by chronic environmental disasters

= the government’s recognition of chronic famines as the result of peasants’ agricultural backwardness, and collectivization of Soviet agriculture as part of an effort to modernize it.

### b. The causes of the 1931-1933 famine:

= the issue of ‘grain procurements,’ the regime’s concessions to Ukraine, and the unavoidable conclusion from this evidence that the 1932 harvest was small

= the causes of the small 1932 harvest

### c. The Soviet regime’s view of and responses to the famine crisis

#### a. Background:

= famines in Russia and the early Soviet period, the result of chronic environmental disasters

I am at present writing a history of famines and responses to them in Russia and the USSR. My research has shown that Russia / USSR had a 1000-year history of serious crop failures that caused famines. These disasters ultimately induced the Russian government to develop elaborate systems of agricultural monitoring and food supply provision by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Ukrainian provinces in the Russian Empire often had crop failures and received aid.

Beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russian officials and specialists connected these chronic crop failures to peasants’ lack of education and technological backwardness in their farming. This awareness motivated Russian agricultural policy measures, including the famous Stolypin reform of 1906-1915. That agricultural program also included a reform of famine relief, reflecting the relationship officials saw between backwardness and crop failures.

During its first 12 years, the USSR continued this pattern of crop failures and famines. The new regime inherited the food crisis of WWI, which worsened during the Civil War of 1918-1920, and culminated in crop failures in 1920 and 1921. These caused a serious famine, for which the USSR appealed for and received relief from the USA and other countries. At first Soviet leaders thought Ukraine was spared this disaster and requisitioned food from Ukraine, but when it became clear that Ukraine also had crop failures in these years, Soviet leaders and foreign relief agencies also provided relief to the Ukraine Soviet Socialist Republic.

Then, in 1923-1924 the USSR again had crop failures, organized a famine relief committee, and imported food to feed famine victims, including in Ukraine.<sup>1</sup> In 1927-1928 crop failures again struck the USSR, especially in Ukraine. In 1928 the Soviet Ukrainian government set up another famine relief committee, obtained food from other Soviet republics and fed starving peasants, as well as providing forage for livestock and other assistance. The Soviet government also imported food during this crisis.<sup>2</sup> This Ukrainian crisis was far from the only food supply crisis in this period. The Soviet government had to set up rationing system to feed townspeople, and procured food from villages, because supplies to towns declined and prices sharply rose (there was a significant private sector in trade in this period).

= the government's recognition of chronic famines as the result of peasants' agricultural backwardness, and the decision to collectivize Soviet agriculture to overcome this.

Soviet leaders had lived through the late Tsarist period, were familiar with and shared the the widespread views that peasant farming was backward in knowledge and technology and highly underproductive. Based on these views and on their experiences with three major famines, Soviet leaders decided in 1929 to "collectivize" Soviet peasant agriculture, emulating U.S. large-scale mechanized farming, to overcome this persistent pattern of crop failures and famines.<sup>3</sup>

Collectivization is related to the Ukrainian nationalist interpretation of the famine in the following way: nationalist writers attack collectivization as a terrible disaster and catastrophe that ruined Soviet agriculture. They claim that all the peasants opposed it and put up massive resistance, and some argue that the famine was a result of collectivization or an effort by the regime to suppress opposition to collectivization. The true story is quite different.

= Before collectivization, virtually all Soviet peasants, including Ukrainian peasants, lived in villages, in which peasants farmed by dividing their lands into large fields for particular crops, and then dividing those fields into strips allocated to each household, a pattern they had used for centuries before. The Stolypin reform of 1906-1915, which tried to consolidate peasants' strips into single plots, was mostly reversed during the Civil War, and as the Civil War subsided in 1920-1921, most Soviet peasants, including in Ukraine, seized the lands of the landlords, and of the few large-holding wealthy peasants, and divided them into strips, restoring the old system.

By the 1920s, most peasants in the USSR, including in Ukraine, farmed using this archaic system, usually with dozens of strips scattered across the village, sometimes many kilometers

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<sup>1</sup> My conference paper on this famine was published in a collection of my articles in France in French translation in 2017 ("La famine soviétique "inconnue" de 1924-1925," in *Famine et Transformation Agricole en URSS*, Editions Delga, Paris, 2017, 400p).

<sup>2</sup> I published the first study of this famine in 2001: "Grain Crisis or Famine? The Ukrainian State Commission for Aid to Crop Failure Victims and the Ukrainian Famine of 1928-1929," in D. J. Raleigh, ed., *Provincial Landscapes: Local Dimensions of Soviet Power* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001). A Ukrainian scholar, Liudmila Hrynevych, in her later book *Holod 1928-1929 rr. u Radians'kyy Ukraini* (Kyiv: Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, 2013) on pp. 7-9 wrote that this famine was unknown, even among Ukrainian scholars, until the publication of my article on it.

<sup>3</sup> I documented these points in: "Stalin, Soviet Agriculture, and Collectivization," in *Food and Conflict in Europe in the Age of the Two World Wars*, ed. Frank Trentmann and Fleming Just, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 109-142.

apart. This system held back modernization, and also removed from cultivation about 10% of the land because border between strips were not farmed but spread weeds to crops. Many peasants disliked this farming system, but could not escape it, because of politics in the villages.<sup>4</sup>

The basic idea of collectivization was to break up this medieval system and restructure peasant farming on the model of large-scale mechanized farming in the United States. The regime even brought a famous U.S. advocate of such farming, Thomas D. Campbell, to the USSR to advise Soviet personnel on his approaches. Collectivization involved consolidating the interstriped fields into large, consolidated fields, which the peasants farmed in groups called 'brigades.' This was not a disaster for farming; Soviet specialists studied how the collective farms (kolkhozy) functioned and after the first collectivization campaign, they found that kolkhozy farmed more land in 1930 than the previous village employing only about half the peasants that worked that land before, which freed labor for industry. There were issues regarding labor organization and payment for work, which officials and farms worked on extensively, but these problems were nothing like those of interstriped fields. The main tragedy of collectivization was the regime's decision to exile the most oppositional peasants, whom they called 'kulaks,' which caused unnecessary suffering from about four million peasants for several years.

= During the first collectivization campaign, December 1929-March 1930, there was some opposition to collectivization. As Lynn Viola documented in her book *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin* (Oxford, 1996), from archival sources, all the evidence that the regime had showed that about three million peasants put up some sort of resistance to collectivization. Most of that resistance, over 90%, was non-violent and non-insurrectionary. Yet there were over 110 million peasants in the USSR at this time; even if one considers just the adults, that number reached approximately 70 million peasants. The evidence thus shows that fewer than 5% of the peasants 'resisted' collectivization. In a study of one peasant rebellion in Riazan oblast' north of Ukraine, the U.S. scholar Tracy McDonald noted that she was surprised by how rare and limited peasant resistance was to collectivization. In addition, a large document collection on collectivization in Riazan oblast', which I reviewed, included documents that showed that when peasants did put up resistance, it was often because they wanted certain things to be done differently, such as allowing them to keep their cows rather than putting all the animals in a large stockade, and the local officials in such cases usually gave in to such peasant demands.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Ukrainian nationalists' claims of overwhelming peasant resistance to collectivization are greatly exaggerated, partly incorrect, and highly misleading.

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<sup>4</sup> On these points as they applied to Ukraine, see: V. Kachinskii, *Ocherki Agrarnoi Revoliutsii na Ukraine*, vup.1, Khar'kiv, 1922; Graham Tan, "Transformation versus Tradition: Agrarian Policy and Government-Peasant Relations in Right-Bank Ukraine 1920-1923," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 52:5, 2000, 915-937.

<sup>5</sup> On these points see my article: "Soviet Peasants and Collectivization, 1930-1939: Resistance and Adaptation," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, v. 31 nos 3-4, April/July 2004, 427-546 (republished in Stephen Wegren, ed., *Rural Adaptation in Russia*, New York: Routledge, 2005); Tracy McDonald, "A peasant rebellion in Stalin's Russia: The Pitelinskii Uprising, Riazan, 1930," in Lynn Viola, ed., *Contending with Stalinism*, Cornell, 2002; Viola et al., eds., *Riazanskaia derevnia v 1929-1930: Khronika golovokruzheniia. Dokumenty i materialy*, Moscow, 1998.

= The claim that the 1931-33 famine was an attempt to suppress peasants' continued resistance to collectivization has no evidence to support it. Viola's book showed that the resistance of early 1930 was either suppressed or compromised by late spring that year, and no comparable resistance recurred afterwards. The second collectivization campaign of 1930-1931 elicited practically no resistance, certain none on any scale approaching that of early 1930, which as noted above involved at most five percent of the peasants in any case.

The claim that the famine was itself a result of collectivization, as the above evidence shows, is also unsupported. As noted above, collective farms were more productive and efficient in 1930 than peasants' traditional interstriped farms. In addition, the recovery from the 1931-1933 famine depended on the peasants' work in collective farms, which included by that time some 60% of peasants. If collective farming caused famine, then there should have been a terrible famine in 1930 and again in 1933 and every year afterwards as collectivization expanded to encompass virtually all the peasants. Since this did not happen, we have to review the events that led up to the famine, specifically the environmental factors that caused serious crop failures.

#### b. The causes of the famine

= The issue of grain supplies removed from the villages, or grain procurements:

In order to show the importance of environmental causes of the famine, it is necessary to address what Ukrainian nationalists and some others identify as the proximate cause of the famine: the grain procurements that the Soviet government imposed on the villages. Their argument is that the Soviet government intentionally starved the peasants by taking 'all of their grain' exclusively in order to starve them.

The Ukrainian nationalist depiction of this history, exemplified in most Ukrainian nationalist articles and books, and in a few document collections like *The Holodomor Reader* by Bohdan Klid and Alexander Motyl (Edmonton, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 2012), simply report that the Soviet regime kept demanding more and more grain from the peasants, and took it all away, and they starved to death. These writings also minimize, ignore, and/or deny that the Soviet government provided any famine relief.

These claims are based on highly selective use of a limited array of sources and publications, and on ignoring and suppressing contrary evidence. That evidence, discussed below, shows a very different history.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In the following discussion, I cite archival evidence that was published in Soviet and especially post-Soviet document collections. The most important was Ruslan Pyrih, et al., eds, *Holodomor 1932-1933 rokiv v Ukraini: dokumenty i materialy*, Kyiv: Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Institute of History of Ukraine, 2007. This document collection, 1140 pgs long, is particularly important because it contains evidence that significantly contradicts and disproves most of the

The relevant points regarding Soviet grain procurements in 1932 are as follows:

1. The Soviet government prepared grain procurement plans based on official estimates for harvests. These estimates were prepared by special agencies set up in these years that worked from pre-harvest estimates, which tended to predict larger harvests than actually occurred.<sup>7</sup>

These estimates overstated the harvest for 1931, and as a result the procurements from that harvest left many peasants starving, especially in Ukraine, the Volga basin, and West Siberia. The Soviet government in February and May 1932 provided Ukraine and other regions with food and seed aid (at least 970,000 tons) to alleviate this crisis [Pyrih, 63-64, 156]. The Ukrainian nationalist writings on the famine that I have seen, including Klid & Motyl and Applebaum's *Red Famine*, do not mention these sources or this famine relief aid, or else minimize them.

2. In an additional response to this crisis, Soviet leaders decided to make an important concession to the peasants with the goal of reducing reliance on such procurements. During the first few years of the first five-year plan that began in 1928, the regime had utterly opposed 'capitalism' including peasants selling food at local markets, and frequently sent police forces to confiscate such goods and shut down markets. But over the winter of 1931-1932 and the food crisis in the towns, in which 40 million people were living on a rationing system, the leaders decided to backtrack and allow peasants to sell surplus produce on those markets. This decision was published in a government / Communist Party (Sovnarkom / Central Committee or SNK /TsK) decree on 6 May 1932: "O plane khlebozagotovok iz urozhaiia 1932 g. i razvertyvanii kolkhoznoi torgovli khlebom" [on the plan of grain procurements from the harvest of 1932 and the development of kolkhoz trade in grain].<sup>8</sup>

This decree recognized that grain trade by kolkhozy and kolkhoz peasants could supplement grain procurements for supplying the town population. On that assumption, the decree significantly reduced grain procurements from the levels of 1931. The decree stated that it reduced total procurements from 22.4 million tons to 18.1 million tons, in other words about 20%. In fact, however, as a Soviet historian showed, the reduction was much larger, because in December 1931 the trade commissariat had set the procurement quota for 1932 preliminarily at 29.5 million tons, so the real reduction was almost 40%.<sup>9</sup>

The May 6 decree also specified the reduced procurement quotas for virtually every province and republic. First on the list, with by far the largest reduction, was the Ukrainian SSR, for which the procurement quota was reduced from 7.1 million tons to 5.8 million tons, or about 18%.

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claims of the Ukrainian nationalist interpretation of the famine, yet it was published in independent Ukraine by respected Ukrainian academic institutions.

<sup>7</sup> I discussed this based on previously ignored archival evidence in my Treadgold Paper *Statistical Falsification in the Soviet Union* (2001), which is available on academia.edu.

<sup>8</sup> This decree was published in the Soviet press and in later document collections, such as P. N. Sharova, ed., *Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziaistva*, Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1957, 411-413. Most scholarly studies discuss this, but most Ukrainian nationalist publications, like Kild and Motyl's *The Holodomor Reader*, omit it.

<sup>9</sup> I documented this in my first article in 1991, "The Harvest of 1932 and the Famine of 1933," 71-72.

The government needed to fulfill those procurement plans first of all to feed people in the towns. Because of food shortages, there were major protests and strikes and even incipient rebellions by workers over lack of food. The government had also been exporting some grain to purchase industrial and agricultural equipment abroad, including tractors and combines, and while it greatly reduced exports in 1932 it still needed to export some grain to repay debts. In other words, the Soviet regime conducted grain procurements not to starve the peasants, but mainly to feed starving people in the towns and obtain supplies for agricultural production.<sup>10</sup>

4. After the 1932 harvest was gathered, however, the Soviet government encountered great difficulty in fulfilling these reduced procurement plans, especially in Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and certain other regions. Farms tried to postpone turning over procurements or turned over less than their monthly quota. The Soviet government applied two approaches to these problems. One was to try and get more out of the villages, by various coercive tactics, by intense persuasion, and by providing more consumer goods to the villages. The Ukrainian nationalist publications emphasize the regime's insistence on fulfillment of procurements and the coercive tactics used by some officials.

Yet these events were only part of the story. In addition to these efforts to extract more grain from the countryside, the Soviet government also issued a series of decrees from August 1932 to January 1933 that further reduced the procurement quotas. The large Ukrainian document collection that I referenced above (Pyrih, 2007) has those decrees and correspondence related to them. Later Ukrainian nationalist writers consequently could have used these sources, but most of those completely ignore them.<sup>11</sup>

The first of these reductions came in August 1932. After receiving appeals from Ukrainian leaders, Stalin proposed reducing the grain procurement plan by 40 million puds [656,000 tons], about 10% of the grain procurement plan that remained for Ukraine to fulfill. This proposal was approved and implemented in about 10 days. Officials reduced the procurement plan by 39.5 million puds, leaving half a million puds to be held back for later use. During the preparation of this measure, Stalin wrote to his subordinate Kaganovich containing the following passage:

“As is evident from the materials, not only the Ukrainians but also the North Caucasus, Middle Volga, Western Siberia, Kazakhstan and Bashkiria will speak with the Central Committee about reducing the grain procurement plan. I advise satisfying for the time being only the Ukrainians, reducing their plan by 30 million and only in extreme case by 35-40 million. As for the others, postpone discussion with them until the end of August.” (Pyrih, 290-298).

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<sup>10</sup> On this history see, among other sources, Jeffrey Rossman, “A Workers’ Strike in Stalin’s Russia: The Vichuga Uprising of April 1932,” in Lynne Viola, ed., *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s*, Cornell 2002, 44-83, and also his article “The Teikovo Cotton Workers’ Strike of April 1932: Class, Gender, and Identity Politics in Stalin’s Russia,” *Russian Review*, January 1997, 44-69, and more generally R. W. Davies, *Crisis and Progress in the Soviet Economy, 1931-1933*, MacMillan 1996.

<sup>11</sup> I documented in my 1991 article (“The 1932 Harvest,” 73, fn.14), based on a Ukrainian scholarly article, and as far as I can tell, no western scholar had ever noted this before. At that time, I did not have access to the actual decrees which were secret.



Stalin here clearly indicated that he considered reducing procurements for Ukraine a higher priority than for other regions. This attitude does not fit with the claims that Stalin and other leaders aimed to kill Ukrainians. No nationalist publication that I have seen cites this source.

The second of the later reductions took place in late October 1932, when Stalin's associate Molotov, again after meetings with Ukrainian leaders, proposed reducing Ukraine's procurement target by 70 million puds [1.1 million tons], including reductions for kolkhozy, sovkhozy, and individual peasants. This was rapidly approved and implemented. (Pyrih, 355-360)

Here again, the regime reduced procurements substantially and only for Ukraine, in response to appeals by Ukrainian authorities, who were trying to compromise between the demands and needs of the central government and the desperate situation of peasants and others in Ukraine, and other Soviet leaders again agreed to this compromise. These actions also do not fit with the claim that Stalin only wanted to kill Ukrainians.

The third later reduction took place in mid-January 1933, again in response to appeals from Ukrainians and from some other regions. In this decree, the Soviet government reduced the grain procurement plan by 28 million puds, 459,000 tons, in Ukraine, and much smaller amounts in three other regions (2 million puds in the North Caucasus, and half a million puds in the Urals and Kazakhstan; Pyrih, 597-602).

As a result of these four substantial reductions, the procurement plan for collective farms and individual peasants in Ukraine was reduced from the 1931 level of 434 puds or 7.1 million tons to 218 million puds, or 3.57 million tons, essentially half of the 1931 plan. The total final plan for 1932 was slightly higher, 260 million puds or 4.2 million tons, because it included procurements from sovkhozy, but sovkhozy had only a small share of the population. No other Soviet region had its procurements reduced by that percentage or anything close to that amount.

Clearly Ukraine received privileged treatment in this area. The Ukrainian nationalist publications emphasize the coercive character of Soviet collection of grain procurements in Ukraine, but such measures were applied to several other regions of the USSR. Yet no other region or republic had its procurements cut by the percentage and amounts that they were cut in Ukraine. These reductions clearly contradict the claims by Ukrainian nationalists that Stalin and the Soviet regime "intended" and "planned" the famine to "decimate Ukrainians." These reductions show quite the opposite: that Stalin and the Soviet regime made repeated efforts to accommodate Ukraine's food needs while trying to balance them with the needs of the towns and economy.

= the small 1932 harvest and its causes

Ukraine's procurements were thus reduced to about half of those of 1931, yet what followed those reduced procurements was a much worse famine than the one that followed the procurements of 1931. The only possible explanation for a large famine after greatly reduced procurements has to be a very small harvest in 1932. Despite all of the complexities in this period, if Ukraine had had a large harvest in 1932 along with much reduced procurements, we would not be discussing a famine. This incontestable fact of a small 1932 harvest is the largest and most serious omission in all of the Ukrainian nationalist arguments.

There are two parts to this point about the harvest of 1932. The first part is the statistical evidence for the low harvest, and the second concerns the causes of that low harvest.

1. Statistics of the 1932 harvest: As I discussed above, the official estimates for the harvests in the 1930s were based on pre-harvest estimates that greatly overstated the harvest. In my 1991 article I used previously secret Soviet archival evidence from the annual reports of the collective farms. These reports contained final harvest data, not pre-harvest estimates, and came from many collective farms, including over 47% of collective farms in Ukraine, which included over 1/3 of Ukraine's farms and farmers. My sources included also studies by late Soviet scholars documenting the importance of these sources. It should also be noted that while the annual report data do not cover all the farms, they are a much larger sample of harvest data than that used for the pre-harvest estimates, and they are also final results after the harvest was completed.<sup>12</sup>

The annual report data substantially differed from the official estimates. In a few regions, such as West Siberia, the annual report data for 1932 were higher than the official estimates. But in Ukraine, the annual report data showed harvests in each oblast about half those recorded in the official pre-harvest estimates. What is also noteworthy is that the annual report data for 1933, for the harvest that ended the famine, were nearly double the levels of 1932.

In other words, the fact that famine followed the collection of much reduced procurements from the 1932 harvest clearly indicated that there must have been a low harvest, and the annual report data document an extremely low harvest in Ukraine and certain other regions in 1932. The combination of the previously secret sources on reduced procurements and the annual reports showing a small harvest clearly document that the fundamental explanation of the famine of 1932-1933 has to be the small harvests of 1932.

2. Causes of the small 1932 harvest: This part of the history is perhaps the most remarkable.

It has been known since 1931 that a serious drought struck much of the USSR that year, including Ukraine; the regime even held a public conference on drought and published the proceedings in early 1932. In 1932, a few places had drought, but Soviet farms, especially in Ukraine, endured a complex and often devastating combination of agricultural disasters, including plant diseases, insect and rodent infestations, and weeds. The first historical publication of the evidence for these events was my paper *Natural Disaster and Human Action in the Soviet Famine of 1931-1933*, University of Pittsburgh: Carl Beck Papers #1506, 2001). This was based on archives and scientific studies from the period, both Soviet and western, including a Soviet scientific article from late 1932 that estimated that rust and smut diseases alone caused losses of over 9 million tons of grain.

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<sup>12</sup> Tauger, "The 1932 Harvest and the Famine of 1933," 77-84. Some Ukrainian nationalists tried to discredit these by claiming that the peasants were lying in order to get more food, but those claims are false because these reports were not appeals for aid to the government, they were annual reports that included all kinds of other statistical data, including personnel information, wages earned, land area cultivated and so forth.

In 2015 during a research trip to Russia, I found a substantial number of archival sources that further documented most of these environmental factors. No historical study even mentioned these sources, yet they are the most revealing sources on agricultural conditions for 1932.<sup>13</sup>

The environmental background to the 1932-1933 famine has the following components. Please note that I have documented all of these points from archival and scientific evidence in my earlier publications as well as in new sources I am preparing to publish now.

= Weather: As noted above, 1931 witnessed a serious drought that affected many regions of the USSR, and the regime distributed almost one million tons of food grain and seed to those parts of the USSR in early 1932, which clearly indicated the seriousness of the drought and the regime's concern to help the peasants survive and produce a new harvest.

In 1932 drought affected several smaller areas again, but 1932 in general was a warm and very humid year. In several regions, including in Kyiv and other parts of Ukraine, in 1932 extremely heavy rainfall and hail damaged crops and caused serious flooding. More generally, however, the extremely warm and humid weather served as the basis for the following disasters.

= Plant diseases: this aspect of Soviet agriculture in 1932 was overlooked by western and Soviet historians until my work, but it is well documented in Soviet and western scientific sources and Soviet archival sources.

The most devastating infestation was rust [*puccinia graminis* and other varieties]. Late Imperial Russian and early Soviet scientific sources had documented rust infestations for years, but 1932 was exceptional. A major rust infestation began in early 1932 in central Europe and spread by winds both west and east; scientific observers witnessed clouds of spores in the wind. It caused major crop failures in Romania, Yugoslavia, and Germany. The infestation also affected Italy, but the Italian agronomist Nazareno Strampelli had bred rust resistant semidwarf wheat varieties (the first real "Green Revolution"), and Italy suffered much less from the infestation.<sup>14</sup>

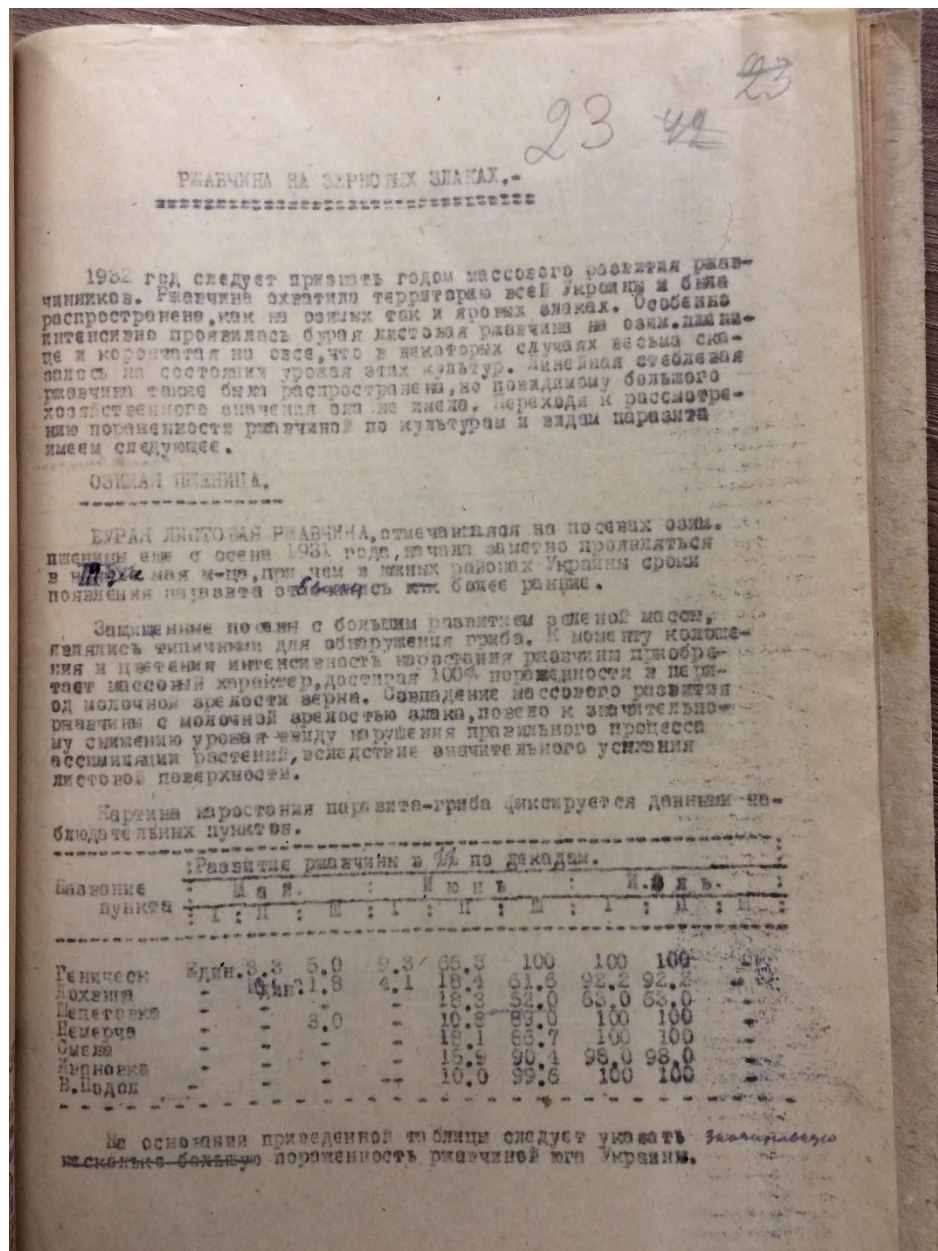
When the rust spread to the USSR, it infested Ukrainian crops first of all, then spread east, north, and south. In addition, Soviet regions also had their own rust sources that further spread the disease. By mid-1932, archival and later published sources reported that the rust infestation infected up to 100% of wheat, barley, rye, and oat crops in Ukraine, and similarly high levels in the North Caucasus. In the Volga basin and the Central Blackearth region north of Ukraine, infestations were overall lower but in some places just as high. One source that I cited in my paper *Natural Disasters* stated that rust reduced wheat crops in the North Caucasus 50%, and Ukraine had similar losses.

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<sup>13</sup> Applebaum, at the end of *Red Famine*, referred to my work and my points about plant diseases, but claimed there was no archival evidence: "Tauger argues that the Ukrainian famine of 1932-1933 was caused by poor weather and plant diseases (for which there is no archival evidence) and thus was not a 'genocide.'" (*Red Famine*, 419, fn.24) In fact I found much archival evidence, as the following passage discusses. Applebaum also ignored the archival and scientific evidence I cited in my publication.

<sup>14</sup> On Strampelli, see Sergio Salvi, *L'uomo che voleva nutrire il mondo: i primi 150 anni di Nazareno Strampelli*, (Pollenza: 2016).

Below I have a page from one of the new archival sources I have, a document that summarizes the infestations in Ukraine. The page below is the beginning of the document's section on rust:



Translation:

### RUST ON GRAIN CROPS

The year 1932 should be recognized as a year of mass development of rusts. Rust encompassed the territory of all of Ukraine and was distributed both on winter and spring grain crops. Brown leaf rust especially intensively appeared on winter wheat and crown [rust] on oats, which in some cases was quite strongly reflected in the condition of the harvest of these crops. Linear stem rust

also was widespread, but apparently did not have large economic significance. Turning to a review of the infestation of rust by crops and types of parasites we have the following.

#### Winter Wheat

BROWN LEAF RUST, noted on sowings of winter wheat already from Fall 1931, began to appear noticeably in the third decade of May, in particular in southern districts of Ukraine the time of appearance of the parasite was earlier.

The protected [zashchishchennye] sowings with large development of green mass, were typical for the exposure of the fungus. At the moment of forming ears and flowers the intensiveness of the growth of rust acquired a mass character, reaching 100% infestation in the period of milky ripeness of the grain. The coincidence of mass development of rust with milky ripeness of the grains led to significant lowering of the harvest in view of the disturbance of the correct process of assimilation of the plant, as a result of the drying of leaf surface.

[then follows statistical data and reports on rust on other crops.]

Other diseases also reduced grain crops in Ukraine and outside, especially smut (*Ustilago tritici* and other types) and ergot (*Claviceps purpurea* and other types). Archival sources documented these and urged officials to make sure harvested crops were cleaned lest these diseases caused serious illness to consumers. Below, as an example of the new sources, is the concluding page of the section of the above document on smut infestations on several categories of grain crops in Ukraine:

- 29 - 1724

ВЫВОДЫ ПО ОБСЛЕДОВАНИЮ ГОЛОВНИ.-

На основании имеющихся материалов и изложенного в отчетах о зараженности головицей каждой культуры, следует прийти к выводам.

1. - 1932 год должен быть отмечен массовым развитием головневых грибов на всех зерновых культурах, что привело к значительному снижению урожая.
2. - Развитие головни в этом году в основном обуславливалось: - несоблюдением или неточным выполнением правил техники протравливания /недостаточное выдерживание зерна в фунгициде, и сплюснение топления зерна после протравливания, непротравливание тары и семян/.
3. - Ослаблением нормального роста всходов из-за позднего посева озимей и вредного воздействия весенних холодов на ранние ярыные посевы.
4. - Плохим качеством проведения должных нормативов агротехники, выражавшихся в слабом сортировании посевов зерна, неадекватной глубине заделки семян, нанесением соответствующих удобрений и несоблюдением правильного севооборота.
5. - Недостаточным вниманиемхоз.организаций к вопросу распространения устойчивых сортов против головни.

В качестве прогноза развития головни в 1933 году на Украине необходимо указать на вероятность проявления головневых в размерах 1932 года.

Осуществление должных мероприятий по химической и термической борьбе, проводимых с точным соблюдением всех технических правил, является важнейшим фактором, могущим сильно снизить распространение головни в посевах 1933 года. Относительно развития головни на озимой пшенице отмечаем как отрицательное явление - преобладание поздних сроков посева в этом году, что безусловно может повлечь интенсивность поражения посевов, особенно при усложнении и длительности протравливания посевного материала.

Translation:

Conclusions from the survey of smut.

The available materials and explanation in the survey of infestation of smut of each crop lead to the following conclusions:

1. 1932 should be noted for mass development of smut fungi on all grain crops, which led to significant lowering of the harvest.

2. The development of smut this year was basically determined by: the failure to observe or imprecise fulfillment of the rules of the techniques of seed treatment (insufficient holding of seed in fungicide, exceptional holding of seed after treatment, failure to treat seeders and seed bags).
3. Weakening of the normal growth of sprouts because of late sowing of winter crops and harmful influence of spring cold weather on early spring sowings.
4. Bad quality implementation of necessary norms of agrotechnology in weak sorting of seed grain, insufficiently deep planting of seed, failure to apply the necessary amount of fertilizer, and failure to observe correct crop rotations.
5. Insufficient attention of economic organizations to the question of distribution of varieties resistant to smut.

As a prognosis of the development of smut in 1933 in Ukraine it is necessary to indicate likelihood of the appearance of smut in the magnitude of 1932.

Realization of the necessary measures for chemical and temperature struggle, carried out with accurate observation of all technical rules, are the most important factors capable of strongly reducing distribution of smut in the sowings of 1933. The relative development of smut on winter wheat was noted as a negative phenomenon – the dominance of late sowings this year, which without doubt can raise the intensity of infestation of sowings, especially under conditions of inattentive treatment of sowing materials.

These and many other archival sources I have document and confirm the conclusions that I and a few other scholars have drawn from published scientific sources, both Soviet and western, that reported on the massive plant disease infestations of 1932 in the USSR and the sharp reductions they caused in the country's grain harvests, most of all in Ukraine.

= Agricultural pests: In addition to diseases, the USSR endured serious insect infestations that devastated grain and other crops in Ukraine and outside it. These included several types of locusts that spread from Central Asia and Iran, meadow moths, aphids, corn borers, and several other insects that damaged or destroyed whole fields. Insects and diseases also affected many other farm crops including sugar beets, an important crop in Ukraine, many types of vegetables and fruits, and also forage crops for livestock.

Rodents also caused serious crop damages in Ukraine and elsewhere. Some of these animals demonstrated a 10-11 year cycle of mass reproduction, and 1932 was right on their schedule. Others apparently increased in number because of flawed harvesting that left some grain on fields, providing food that enabled the animals to massively reproduce and eat up whole fields.

Soviet agricultural agencies did have some access to pesticides and other methods to fight these insect and rodent infestations, but the infestations grew so fast and became so large that these measures often could not be applied in time everywhere and often had limited effectiveness. One ironic aspect was that fungal infestations, similar to rust, also killed some of the insects.



= These infestations greatly reduced harvests. They were accompanied by other practical problems in farming. Because of the droughts and other agricultural problems that reduced forage crops, and mismanagement and destructive actions by some peasants, Soviet farms often had serious shortages of draft livestock. Agricultural and government authorities tried to deal with this by encouraging livestock breeding, redistributing animals from surplus regions to needy ones, forcing the construction of Soviet farm machine factories, and importing tractors from abroad. To pay for these imports, the Soviets exported grain, as noted above, and other items.

In addition, Soviet farming had labor problems. Some farms, especially the larger sovkhozy, needed more labor than they had. Some kolkhozy had this problem as well. Some peasants expressed opposition to collectivization by disrupting farm work, damaging equipment, refusing to work until they received food aid, and even burning some crop fields. These were isolated incidents: the plant diseases, insects, and rodents were much more significant causes of famine.

Archival documents and other sources suggest that most peasants tried to work as well as they could. But the problems they faced were much worse than previously. A particularly telling example was weeds. Because of the favorable warm and humid weather, and also because some Soviet agronomists promoted shallow plowing before planting which did not uproot incipient weeds, weed plants proliferated on many fields and reduced harvests, as well as contaminating grain seed and food supplies. Kolkhozy and sovkhozy tried to organize weeding efforts, but it was difficult to weed such large fields, and they lacked good chemical anti-weed compounds.

Soviet agricultural in 1932 thus encountered a unique and exceptional devastating combination of natural disasters and agricultural problems, most of which would have been difficult to predict and were in the 1930s very difficult to control. Most of these factors would have harmed crops even on traditional interstripped fields. Collectivization in some ways contributed to the crisis because it enlarged crop fields so the diseases, insects, mice, and weeds could spread more easily. Yet in 1933, collectivization enabled the farmers to work to prevent these problems from recurring, so I would not attribute very much blame to collectivization for these disasters.<sup>15</sup>

### c. Soviet leaders' views of and responses to the famine

Ukrainian nationalists argue that the famine was 'man-made' and 'genocide' by the intentions of Soviet leaders, but they provided no direct evidence of any explicit statement by the leaders saying that they intended to kill Ukrainians. When we examine how Soviet leaders responded to this crisis, however, the picture is completely different from this Ukrainian nationalist story.

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<sup>15</sup> In addition to my work, a Ukrainian scholar, Dr. Nazar Nazarenko, a professor of chemistry and ecology, co-authored an article in 2019 in a Russian scientific periodical that documented these points as well, using some of the same sources that I used as well as certain others: "Sornaia rastitel'nost', bolezni i vrediteli kak factory goloda 1932-1933 godov" [weeds, diseases, and plant pests as factors of the famine of 1932-1933], Nazar Nikolaevich Nazarenko (doctor of sciences, professor of chemistry and ecology & methodology of chem teaching, South Urals state humanitarian-pedagogical university, Chel'iabinsk, RF) and Anatolii Viktorovich Bashkin (coordinator of Project 'Istoricheskie materialy', Moscow RF), *Samarskii nauchnyi vestnik*, 2019 v.8 no.1 (26). I have been in contact with Professor Nazarenko, and he told me that he highly respects my work and recognizes that my work was the first to bring up these issues.



First of all, Soviet leaders faced an unprecedented avalanche of crises. In foreign relations, they faced the rise of fascism in Germany, the Japanese conquest of Manchuria and deployment of Japanese forces on their Siberian borders, and the worsening of the Great Depression. Domestically, they faced food crises in the towns, as mentioned above, the difficulty of maintaining the massive construction projects of the first five-year plan, and growing opposition within the ranks of the government and communist party, in addition to all of these problems in agriculture and more. Post-Soviet Russian scholars have published the agendas of the politbiuro meetings for the Stalin period, and in 1931-1933 the agendas had hundreds of items; it would have been extremely stressful and difficult even to sit through those endless meetings, let alone make decisions on all those issues.

Then, Stalin distrusted his underlings, in Ukraine and elsewhere. Ukrainian officials repeatedly appealed to Stalin to make concessions, and as noted above he frequently satisfied those appeals. But other times he expressed doubt about their demands, especially when they warned him that the harvests were low. They told him there were bad weather conditions in 1932, but he argued against this, saying that the drought in 1931 was worse. Crimean officials told Stalin in summer 1932 that they had a crop failure from drought, and Stalin responded by writing 'unconvincing.' Stalin was informed about the greatly reduced grain procurements in Ukraine, but he blamed it on Ukrainian officials for conducting the procurements in an 'inflexible' way.

Yet at the same time, Soviet authorities also implicitly recognized that there was a problem with the harvests in other decrees and directives they issued in this period. These included not only the reductions in procurement quotas discussed above, but also in several measures explicitly oriented toward increasing harvest yields and improving seed.

Perhaps the strongest evidence that the leaders at least partly recognized the crop failure was the substantial famine relief and seed aid they provided after stopping procurements in early February 1933. This is a point that Ukrainian nationalists deny (as Applebaum did in her book) or minimize. Yet the post-Soviet document collections, especially the Pyrih volume cited above but also others, include hundreds of documents about food and seed aid to peasants during winter and spring 1933. These documents include many reports on famine conditions, on people starving and dying in towns as well as villages, but also contain appeals for aid and reports on distribution of aid to famine victims.

Most of these decrees were secret: Stalin and other Soviet leaders, characteristically paranoid, fear that the 'capitalists' would attack them if they found out they were weakened by famine. But the regime had accumulated reserves in case of such a crisis, and routinely shipped back to villages some of the grain procured, as they did after the 1931 drought. After 1932, the government shipped two million tons from the reserves and more than three million tons from procurements back to the villages in the first part of 1933.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> I published this information in my 1991 article, and it has been substantiated in several other publications since. One was Tauger, R. W. Davies, S. G. Wheatcroft, "Soviet Grain Stocks and the Famine of 1932-1933," *Slavic Review* v. 54 no. 3, Fall 1995, 642-657. Yet most Ukrainian nationalist writers, and others like Applebaum, simply repeat the claim that the Soviet government and Stalin in particular only wanted to kill Ukrainians, while ignoring or denying the vast contrary evidence in both sources and scholarship.

The regime tended to provide aid to personnel who could work, such as tractor drivers in villages and workers in factories. Yet they also provided aid to children in schools, to women with small children, and other needy people. They did not provide enough aid, and it probably could have been managed better. But this sources do not give an impression of a ‘man-made’ or ‘artificial’ or ‘planned’ famine. They provide much more an impression of an incompetent government dealing with a crisis beyond their capabilities.

This direction of aid towards those who could work also aimed to ensure that the farms produced a harvest in 1933, and that policy worked: as noted above, the annual report data showed a much larger harvest in 1933, which was the result of both Soviet aid policies and peasants’ recognition that they had to produce more in 1933.<sup>17</sup>

One other aspect of responses to the famine that I would just like to mention was the effort by the Ukrainian agronomist Pavel Luk’ianenko, who worked at a research institute in the Kuban region of the North Caucasus east of Ukraine, to develop rust-resistant wheat varieties. He published in 1933 a substantial agronomic study of the 1932 rust infestation in his region and of the lack of resistant wheat varieties. He then set out to breed varieties resistant to rust, and ultimately semidwarf varieties like those Normal Borlaug bred in the Green Revolution in Mexico soon afterwards. The Soviet famine thus led to a smaller “Green Revolution” in the USSR by the 1960s.<sup>18</sup>

The evidence and history presented in this section shows the following points:

Russia had a long history of natural disasters that caused crop failures and famines, and this pattern persisted in the early years of the USSR;

Soviet leaders like Russian leaders before them attributed this pattern to the backwardness of peasant farming;

Soviet leaders undertook to alleviate that backwardness with collectivization and mechanized farming, which was not a disaster but did involve many difficulties;

after the 1931 drought, Soviet leaders decided to try to stimulate grain production and procurements by reducing the required quota to encourage peasants to sell surpluses on the market;

the procurements from 1932 were officially reduced almost by half in Ukraine, but peasants had great difficulty fulfilling that reduced quota, which has to have been the result of a much smaller harvest in in 1932, and archival statistical data confirm that the harvest was much smaller than anticipated;

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<sup>17</sup> On this, see my article on “resistance and adaptation,” and also R.W. Davies, S.G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933*, Palgrave 2004.

<sup>18</sup> See Tauger, “Pavel Pateleimonovich Luk’ianenko and the Origins of the Soviet Green Revolution,” in *The Lysenko Controversy as a Global Phenomenon, v. 1: Genetics and Agriculture in the Soviet Union and Beyond*, William deJong-Lambert & Nikolai Kremontsov, eds., Palgrave, 2017.

scientific and archival evidence documents that environmental disasters reduced the harvest drastically, especially in Ukraine, along with, to a lesser extent, problems in the kolkhoz system;

Soviet leaders were skeptical about a low harvest, but during 1933 provided substantial aid to villages in food and seed, which while not sufficient to stop the famine, at least reduced its effects somewhat and enabled the peasants to produce a better harvest in 1933 that ended the famine for the most part.

This history, which is extremely well supported, is much more complete and comprehensive than the one-sided and highly propagandistic impression provided in Ukrainian nationalist writings. This history does not support the depiction of Stalin and Soviet leaders as aiming at genocide. Stalin repeatedly reduced procurement quotas in 1932, including twice exclusively and substantially for Ukraine. The regime also provided food and seed aid, and also tractors and other equipment, for farmers during the peak of the crisis. All of this information is incompatible with the accusation of a 'man-made,' 'artificial,' 'planned' famine and with the accusation of genocide (discussed in a separate section below).

## 2. Famine mortality

This claim asserts that “25%-50%” of “ethnic Ukrainians” died of “unnatural causes” in the Holodomor. The following discussion is based on the 1937 Soviet census, which the Stalin regime found to be too low and suppressed, but its data was retained in Soviet archives.

The data from this census was finally published under the Gorbachev-era Soviet regime in 1991 by the Soviet Academy of Sciences: *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1937 g. Kratkie itogi*. [All-union population census 1937: concise results], Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1991. 239 pgs.

Specialists consider this census basically reliable.

According to this census, the population of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in the two census years 1926 and 1937 was:

1926 - 28,925,976    1937 - 28,387,609    [Vsesoiuznaia perepis', 44-45]

According to this census, the ‘ethnic Ukrainian’ population in Ukraine in 1926 and 1937 were:

Ukrainian population in Ukraine    1926 - 23,218,860    1937 – 22,212,525

[Source for 1926 Ukrainian population: data from 1926 census on website ‘Demoskop’:  
[http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr\\_nac\\_26.php?reg=4](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/ussr_nac_26.php?reg=4) ]

First, it must be recognized that national identities were not always fixed: the censuses did not have a category for people of mixed origin. The Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev had a Russian father and a Ukrainian mother (Martin McCauley, *Gorbachev: Profiles in Power*, 1998, p.15) Because of such cases, people could change their national identity on their internal passports, and sometimes people mis-identified their nationality for various reasons.

Second, this claim that 25%-50% of Ukrainians died in the famine is impossible to reconcile with this census evidence. Based on the 1926 census, the Ukrainian population in Ukraine by 1932 would probably have reached approximately 24 million. If 25% -50% of that population had died in the famine, that would have left between 12 million and 18 million people by the end of the famine in 1933-1934. These figures would include males and females of all age groups, so the number of reproductive-age women was much smaller: perhaps 6 to 9 million women and girls, of whom perhaps 4 to 6 million were of reproductive age.

To reach the number identified in the 1937 census of over 22 million Ukrainians in Ukraine, those 4-6 million remaining Ukrainian reproductive-age women would have had to given birth to between 4 million and 10 million children between 1934 and 1937 (birthrates during the famine were very low in Ukraine and elsewhere). According to the 1937 census, the number of children in the entire Soviet Union aged 0-3 by the time of the census was approximately 12.5 million. In other words, these Ukrainian women, who according to those claims would have accounted for a very small percentage (fewer than 10%) of all Soviet women, would have had to have been responsible for a disproportionate share, even up to almost 80%, of all births. This conclusion is extremely difficult to believe and to support.

Third, the fact that this claim uses the estimates of '25%-50%' of Ukrainians indicates that the estimate is speculative. The reason it is speculative is the underlying fact, which they do not explain, that there is no clear evidence regarding the total mortality in the famine. The fact that this document claims that somewhere between 6 million and 12 million people died means that they have no unambiguous evidence at all to support those figures, and they are making an exaggerated claim to impress gullible but ignorant readers.

Scholars working more critically with available evidence have made much smaller estimates of mortality. For example, a book of articles called *After the Holodomor* (Cambridge, MA, 2014) contains an article by a group of French scholars who used careful calculations and contextual analysis to argue that mortality in the famine in Ukraine was 2.6 million. Other politicized essays in the same book completely ignored their analysis and claimed with no evidence that over 7 million died in the famine (pp. 247, 262). The journalist Anne Applebaum, whose work is highly biased toward Ukrainian nationalism (as I will discuss below), nonetheless asserts that the consensus among scholars about famine deaths is about 4 million, which is much less than the 25%-50% claim (Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 279-280).<sup>19</sup>

This claim of 25%-50% mortality in Ukraine reminded me of an incident that shows the politicized nature of this claim. In 2008 I was invited to Kyiv to present a book of my articles on the famine and related topics translated into Russian by a publisher there. An interview with me was shown on Russian TV, and soon after I received an email from a student in Donetsk, who wrote that in her school, the teachers taught that 7 million to 15 million Ukrainians died in the famine, without evidence:

We have now a kind of national policy in this question. Approved by central government. In the year 1932-33 - there was an artificial famine, made by Moscow with only the task - to kill as much Ukrainian people as it's possible. Total amount is between 7 and 15 millions of dead.

To be honest - it's difficult to believe in it. There's too much of slogans and absolutely no documents and proofs.

As I think, the main reason for this program is to unite the nation. The easiest way to do it - to find an enemy that couldn't strike back (like our past). We blame Stalin - well known monster with a good reputation and Russians that are extremely unpopular at the west Ukraine... mostly, because after our separation they live better than we do...

So, it looks like that instead of doing something with our economy we would fight against our past...

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<sup>19</sup> A good discussion of the problems of estimating losses that reaches similar conclusions is in R.W. Davies, S.G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture 1931-1933*, Palgrave 2004, 412-424.

The Belgian proposed resolution clearly is attempting to spread this propaganda.

Finally, the Soviet famine and the mortality and suffering it caused were not limited to Ukraine but affected many, perhaps most other areas of the USSR. An important study that documents the extent of the famine (although unfortunately not so well its environmental causes) is *Golod 1932-1933 godov v SSSR: Ukrainam Kazakhstan, Severnyi Kavkaz, Povolzh'e, Tsentral'no-Chernozemaia oblast', Zapadnaia Sibir', Ural*. (Moscow, 2009), by the late Russian scholar Nikolai A. Ivnitskii, who lived through the famine in the Central Blackearth oblast' north of Ukraine. I met Professor Ivnitskii multiple times in the 1990s and 2000s, and he was by no means a Russian nationalist or a supporter of Putin. The famine also affected Belarus, as documented on country's historical institute website: <http://inbelhist.org/golodomor-v-belarusi/>

Ukrainian nationalist propaganda usually omits any mention of famine elsewhere, but in fact the famine was a virtually Soviet-wide catastrophe caused by the natural disasters discuss above.

### 3. The famine and the definition of genocide:

The concept of genocide is controversial, and the UN definition is ambiguous. But if we apply it to the actual events that took place during this famine crisis, and not just to the extremely incomplete, biased, and partly false depiction of it by the Ukrainian nationalists, I think it becomes pretty clear that this famine was not genocide.

The UN definition of genocide lists the following points:

- 1 - killing members of the group
- 2 - causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
- 3 - deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction, in whole or in part
- 4 - imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
- 5 - forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

Certain of these do not apply to this famine crisis. From the evidence that I have seen, the Soviets did not forcibly transfer Ukrainian children to other families. They did not try to prevent births; in fact, the Soviets abolished the right to abortion at the end of World War II, and during this period they also provided maternity benefits for women. The Soviet Union was natalist, trying to encourage population growth.

Then, for the first three categories, it seems problematic to claim that the regime was 'intentionally killing' Ukrainians when it shipped millions of tons of grain back to the villages in 1932 and 1933. It did not provide enough relief to stop the famine, but it did ship millions of tons of food back to villages that did save many lives.

Furthermore, the insufficiency of relief was a result of the fact that virtually the whole USSR was faced with food shortages, that the regime had to provide food to more than 40-50 million people on government-supplied rations in the cities, and the government even had to drop whole groups of people in the cities from the rationing system at different points in this period because of insufficient supplies for rations.

The "Ukrainian Holodomor" was thus only one aspect of a national food crisis in 1931-1933 that resulted from significant, unanticipated, and misunderstood agricultural and environmental disasters, several other managerial and administrative problems, and incompetent leadership. These problems were quite different from real genocide, for example when the Nazis lined Jewish people up along Babii Iar (incidentally with the assistance of Ukrainian nationalist fighters who sided with the Nazis during WWII) and shooting them with machine guns.

The claims that Soviet leaders 'deliberately inflicted conditions calculated to bring destruction' or 'bodily and mental harm' seem rather problematic to apply to the circumstances described

above. The clouds of rust spores blown by the wind from East Europe that settled on Soviet crops, the poisonous ergot sclerotia spread both by wind and by inadequate seed cleaning, the swarms of locusts and moth caterpillars and mice gobbling up crops, and the weeds growing wildly on large fields - I simply cannot accept the idea that Soviet leaders wanted or intended to have these disasters happen.

In 1997 I once discussed the idea of a 'man-made' famine with the late Soviet scholar Nikolai Ivnitskii, who lived through the famine in the Central Blackearth region just north of Ukraine. He completely rejected this argument, saying that it would be like someone sawing off the limb of a tree on which they were sitting. I think he had a good point: the last thing the Soviets needed was the large-scale deaths of the food producers on whom their system depended.

This is not to minimize the suffering and tragic deaths of so many people both in and outside of Ukraine during this crisis. The Soviet regime's refusal to import sufficient food to alleviate the famine when many groups abroad offered such aid was definitely a criminal action. Yet the causes of the famine, the leaders' misunderstanding of it, their efforts to accommodate Ukraine by reducing procurements, and the efforts they made to provide some famine relief and help Ukraine and other regions produce a good harvest in 1933 to end the famine, seem clearly to me to show that the regime's failure to import food would not fit the definition of genocide. It was the decision of a paranoid, ideological, inconsistent, and incompetent leadership, not a carefully planned and carried out program of destruction like the Holocaust.



#### 4. The Soviet regime and Ukrainian culture

The Ukrainian nationalist claim is that the Soviets reversed the policy of “Ukrainization” in the 1930s by suppressing Ukrainian language and culture and imposing Russian language and culture on Ukraine. An extreme example of this is Applebaum’s assertion – with no evidence – that from the 1930s to the 1980s “Sovietization often took the form of Russification: the Ukrainian language was demoted, Ukrainian history was not taught.” (*Red Famine*, p. xxviii)

This is actually a large topic, so I will use this example of Ukrainian history studies in Ukraine as an example of the larger topic. After reading Applebaum’s quote, I investigated and found numerous Ukrainian history textbooks and historical studies published in Ukraine all through the Soviet period. Since the nationalist argument admits that the Soviets did support Ukrainian culture in the 1920s, we can begin in the 1930s, the period when the Soviets allegedly began suppression of Ukrainian culture. The books I list below I found mostly using Worldcat, which accesses western libraries; there are more books in Russian and Ukrainian libraries.

In 1932, the year the famine crisis began, at least these two books on Ukrainian history in Ukrainian were published in Kyiv:

D. I. Bahalii, ed., *Narysy z sociaal’no-ekonomichnoi istorii Ukrainy* [Sketches of the social-economic history of Ukraine], Kyiv 1932. This is a scholarly collection of articles edited by a respected Ukrainian historian. The tirazh or number of copies published was 1,000, relatively high for a scholarly book.

*Istoriia Ukrainy. Tom pershyy: Peredkapitalistychna doba* [History of Ukraine. First volume: precapitalist era], Kyiv: Institute of History of the all-Ukrainian Association of Marxist-Leninist Scientific-Research Institutes, 1932. This volume is over 300 pages long, covers Ukrainian history from earliest times to the great reforms of the 1860s, and was published in a tirazh of 80,000 copies, indicating it was intended to reach a broad readership. I have not been able to find subsequent volumes of this history.

*Istoriia Ukrainy. Korotky kurs* [History of Ukraine. Short course]. Kyiv: Institute of the History of Ukraine of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, 1941, by S. M. Belousov (who published other studies of Ukrainian history in this period) and five other authors. This ‘short course’ is over 400 pages, and was published in a tirazh of 75,000 copies, indicating it was intended for educational use. It covers Ukrainian history from the earliest periods up to 1940, Ukrainian culture in all periods, nationalist movements, and many other aspects of Ukrainian history. With a few alterations this book could be a good textbook even by modern standards. This book in its preface also refers to an earlier four-volume history of Ukraine, which may have been the one that began with the 1932 volume 1 listed above.

The Ukrainian Academy of Sciences also published a series of volumes in the series ‘Narysyz z istorii Ukrainy [Sketches of the history of Ukraine] during the 1930s, as well as specialized studies of particular events in Ukrainian history, and document collections on Ukrainian history and other histories in Ukrainian.

I have not found textbooks from the postwar Stalin period, but this may be a gap in western libraries, or a result of the difficulties of recovering from the war. But in the decades after Stalin, I have found numerous Ukrainian history textbooks, such as:

O. K. Kasimenko, M. I. Suprunenko, *Istoriia Ukrains'koi RSR* [History of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic], 2 vols. 1953-1958, Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. This is a substantial text, possibly for university use.

.V. Diadychenko, F. Los', V. Spys'ts'kyy, *Istoriia Ukrains'koi RSR: Pidruchnyk dlia 7-8 klasiv vos'myrychnoi shkoly* [History of Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic: textbook for 7-8 classes of 8-year school], Kyiv: State Educational publisher 'Radians'ka shkola' [Soviet school], 1962.

Los and Spys'ts'kyy also published more textbooks, including revised versions every few years.

Kasymenko, *Istoriia Ukrainskoi SSR: populiarnyi ocherk* (in Russian, clearly for Russian readers), editions in 1960 and 1965, over 480 pgs.

K. K. Dubina, *Istoriia Ukrains'koi RSR* (in Ukrainian), 1967; he also published a 'popular version' the same year, that was 409 pgs.

V. G. Sarbei, V. S. Spys'ts'kyy, *Istoriia Ukrains'koi RSR*, Kyiv: 'Radians'ka shkola' (in Ukrainian). This book is subtitled 'textbook for 9-10 classes,' and its tirazh was 255,000 copies. I received pictures of this book from an older person in Ukraine who used this textbook as a student. It is not listed in Worldcat, showing that Ukrainians published more on Ukrainian history and culture than can be found in Western libraries.

This list is just a sample: I have many more references to textbooks on general Ukrainian history and specific topics such as Ukrainian economic history, workers and peasants, Ukrainian language, literature, and music, particular towns and regions, and document collections. In the late 1970s several Ukrainian scholars published a 10-volume history of Ukraine:

### **Istoriia Ukraïns'koi RSR / Alekseï Georgievich Shevelev**

1977-1979 **Ukrainian** Book 8 volumes in 10 : illustrations, maps (some folded color) ; 25 cm Kyïv : Naukova dumka,

**Contents:** t. 1. Pervisnoobshchynnyi lad. Vynyknennïa i rozvytok feodalizmu. kn. 1. Pervisnoobshchynnyi lad i zarodzhennïa klasovoho suspil'stva. Kyiv'ska Rus.' kn. 2. Rozvytok feodalizmu. Narostannïa antyfeodal'noi i vyzvol'noi borotby.--t. 2. Vyzvol'na viïna i vozzhennïa Ukrainy z Rosiïiï. Pochatok rozkladu feodalizmu ta zarodzhennïa kapitalistychnykh vidnosyn.--t. 3. Ukraina v period rozkladu i kryzy feodal'no-kriposnyts'koi systemy. Skasuvannïa kriposnoho prava i rozvytok kapitalizmu.--t. 4. Ukraina v period imperializmu.--t. 5. Velyka ZHovtneva sošialistychna revolütsiïa i hromadiïnska viïna na Ukraini.--t. 6. Ukrainska **RSR** v period pobudovy i zmišnennïa sošialistychnoho suspil'stva.--t. 7. Ukrainska **RSR** u Velykii Vitchyzniïnnii viïni Radiïns'koho Soïuzu.--t. 8. Radiïnska Ukraina v period zmišnennïa sošializmu i postupovoho perekhodu do komunizmu. kn. 1. Ukrainska **RSR** u period zmišnennïa sošialistychnoho suspil'stva. kn. 2. Ukrainska **RSR** u period rozvynutoho sošializmu i postupovoho perekhodu do komunizmu.

In the early 1980s this multivolume history was published in Russian. The Ukrainian volumes were published in a tirazh of 30,000 each, the Russian volumes in a tirazh of 55,000 each, clearly

aiming for a wide readership. The fact that these volumes were also published in Russian (as were some Ukrainian history textbooks and popularized histories in Ukraine) was not a sign of the suppression of Ukrainian, but rather a sign that Ukrainian scholars and writers wanted to help Russian readers learn about Ukrainian history. The publication of Ukrainian history textbooks in Russian clearly indicated that Soviet Ukrainian educators and leaders wanted every student in Ukraine to learn Ukrainian history, which reflects a nationalist orientation.

These items are the tip of an iceberg of Ukrainian culture published and supported in the Soviet Union. In addition to the diverse historical studies mentioned above, Soviet Ukraine published on many aspects of Ukrainian culture, as well as novels, popular and classical music, children's books, scientific and social scientific research and textbooks, and more, despite Soviet censorship restrictions. Applebaum's claim that 'Ukrainian history was not taught,' and the assertion in the Belgian proposed resolution that 'Ukrainization was reversed' are both clearly incorrect. Such claims are part of the decades-long 'Holodomor' propaganda campaign, just like the exaggerated claims regarding mortality in the famine.

In light of this publication history, the statements by Applebaum and Ukrainian nationalists are also an insult to all those Ukrainian writers and specialists who resisted Soviet censorship and continued to develop Ukrainian studies and literature and culture as best they could. The statements by Applebaum and by the writers of the Belgian proposed resolution ignore these major efforts by a diverse group of Ukrainians who worked hard their whole lives during the whole Soviet period to promote and develop culture and learning in Ukraine. The censorship of course forced these writings to pay obeisance to Marxism-Leninism, but they were still able to include a considerable amount of factual information and their own ideas in these publications, especially since Soviet censorship could be inconsistent.

Indicative of how different Soviet treatment of Ukrainian culture was from Putin's Russia are the recent news reports that Russian occupying powers in southern Ukraine, Kherson region, are imposing Russian language, Russian textbooks, and Russian history on the local schools:

<https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-kherson-education-russian-occupation/31862426.html> .

The Soviets also taught Russian history and language in Ukraine, but as all those Ukrainian-language textbooks and numerous other publications show, Ukrainians were able to teach and promote their history, language, and culture. Putin is clearly trying to turn the clock back to an era not only before independent Ukraine, but also before Soviet Ukraine.

I think it would be unjust to Soviet Ukrainian scholars, writers, artists, scientists and others, and would perpetuate Ukrainian nationalists' suppression of their work, if the Belgian House of Representatives included these false claims of the cessation of Ukrainization in their resolution.

5: The evidence presented above about the Soviet famine and the problematic claims about the ‘Holodomor’ has nothing to do with the current Russian invasion of Ukraine. This is the case for two reasons.

First, I fully support Ukraine against Russia in this senseless and criminal invasion. My criticisms concern misrepresentations of historical events from 90 years ago that have nothing to do with the present war.

Second, the evidence presented above regarding Soviet Ukrainian publications shows that the USSR supported Ukrainian nationality. No Soviet leader ever stated anything close to Vladimir Putin’s claims that Ukraine was not a nation, that Ukrainians were just Russians and so forth. The whole concept of the USSR – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – was based on the concept of nationality. The Soviet government recognized the existence of dozens of nationalities in the USSR, employed specialists to prepare textbooks in their languages and granted them a degree of national identity and autonomy. Soviet leaders even insisted that Ukraine and Belarus be considered separate countries and granted seats in the United Nations.

The best study of this history of Soviet definition of nationalities is Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, Cornell 2014.

Consequently, I argue that the Soviet famine of 1931-1933 was an entirely separate event from the current war and is not connected to it.

On the basis of everything that I have presented here, I oppose the commemoration of the 1931-1933 Soviet famine as exclusively a Ukrainian event, as a ‘man-made’ famine ‘intentionally imposed to decimate Ukrainians,’ and as part of an alleged total suppression of Ukrainian culture. I am not opposed to commemorating victims of the famine, as long as the commemoration includes the many other victims outside Ukraine, acknowledges its complex and partly environmental causes, and the efforts by the Soviet regime, as flawed and limited as they were, to alleviate the famine and help peasants overcome it. I also think that instead of repeating the nationalists’ propaganda about suppression of Ukrainian culture, I think the commemoration should acknowledge that despite Soviet censorship, many Ukrainians continued to develop virtually every aspect of Ukrainian culture in Soviet Union, from history and language to sciences, art, music, and more. Given all of this history, I think it is important to show that Putin’s brutal and, in my view, truly genocidal war is not a revival or continuation of the Soviet system, but something much worse in every way. Thank you very much for reading this,

Mark B. Tauger

