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Population Losses in the Holodomor and the Destruction of Related Archives: New Archival Evidence

HENNADII BORIAK

THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF STUDIES of the demographic consequences of the 1932–33 Ukrainian Famine includes hundreds of research papers and dates to the beginning of the catastrophe itself. The declassification of Soviet archives of state statistics in 1987 ushered in the new phase of demographic studies that we have today. Publications of leading historians and demographers—such as Stanislav Kul’chyts’kyi, Stephen Wheatcroft, Steven Rosefield, Robert Conquest, Sergei Maksudov (Alexander Babyonyshev), Vsevolod Tsaplin, Serguei Adamets, Serhii Pyrozhkov, Arnol’d Perkovs’kyi, Oleh Wolowyna, Jacques Vallin, France Meslé, Omelian Rudnyts’kyi, and others—present a wide range of population loss estimates derived from the same set of statistical sources.

In historical literature, the most comprehensive review of these estimates and of the sources used was published in 2003 by Kul’chyts’kyi.¹ At a conference in Kyiv in September 2008, a group of authors from the Institute for Demography and Social Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine made public the first official report on the reconstruction of the main parameters of the demographic dynamics in Ukraine during 1927–38.² They concluded optimistically: “A massive legacy of statistical data, as yet considerably scattered among archives, is still awaiting analysis.”³ I agree with this prognosis wholeheartedly with only one reservation—namely, that the aforementioned statistical legacy is not scattered, but concentrated in the archives.

As an archivist and historian, and not a demographer, I would like to characterize in some detail the source base, or as demographers say, the demostatistical legacy of the 1920s–1930s. Practitioners typically identify three components of this base:

1. **MATERIALS OF THREE POPULATION CENSUSES: 1926, 1937 AND 1939.** The 1926 census was performed under remarkably positive conditions and became a leading example of the best methodological and organizational practices. The culture of census taking and statistical processing was more developed in Ukraine in comparison to the all-Union level, especially with regard to data

analysis. For example, census results in Ukraine were published first as a three-part serial entitled "Preliminary Results," followed by a ten-part publication entitled "Brief Summaries," and finally fifty-six volumes of data.⁴

The 1937 census was also prepared and performed appropriately, although some procedures were streamlined. Its tragic fate is common knowledge as it could not hide huge population losses, particularly for Ukraine: the demographic decline amounted to 4.3 million persons compared to 1926. For half a century, a special resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR (RNK) proclaimed this census defective because of population undercounting. Census materials were classified and individuals linked to the conduct of the census were repressed. The surviving fragments were published for the first time in Moscow only in 1991, and more recently in 2007.⁵

In terms of related materials, there are statistical appendices to memoranda from 1935–37 addressed to party and state leaders of Ukraine from O. Asatkin, head of the Administration of Economic Accounting of the Ukrainian SSR (Upravlinnia narodno-hospodars'koho obliku; hereafter UNHO). This unique document collection from the former party central archives of Ukraine was published in 2003 in Kyiv by Hennadii Yefimenko. The material contains data on the current state of population registration in 1935, preliminary results of the 1937 census based on oblast and raion administrative divisions, and other documents on rational and technical aspects of the 1937 census.

The third census, conducted in 1939, was recognized by the Kremlin as satisfactory in the context of demographic forecasting. A brief census summary was published in the spring of 1941, and the major results in 1992.⁶

2. THE SPECIAL REGISTRATION of the urban population in Ukraine undertaken in 1931 as a consequence of the rapid growth of urban centers. The result was published in a special edition in 1933.⁷

3. STATISTICAL DATA ON THE ONGOING NATURAL AND ORGANIZED MIGRATION. This information was the result of the successful development and implementation of a statistical survey system for tracking population movement in Ukraine. The network of ZAGS (Civil Registry of Vital Statistics) offices became a key unit of state statistics.

Notably, Ukraine successfully developed (in comparison with other republics) a ZAGS program. The national statistics strongly emphasized social and ethnic components, and various combinations were implemented in the processing of current data. In addition to annual summary reports, monthly preliminary reports were released on a regular basis. These materials were openly published in the late 1920s to early 1930s with a high degree of regularity (in particular, in more than 150 issues of the *Statistics of Ukraine* UNHO series). These sources today remain understudied.

Fragmentary data on the payment of agricultural taxes compiled by the People's Commissariat for Finances of the Ukrainian SSR (Narkomfin) can

also be considered here, since estimates of the rural population based on this data should be quite accurate.⁸ For that reason the accuracy of the 1934–35 registration data of the Narkomfin with regard to the rural population and, consequently, the demographic decline in Ukraine were subject to sharp criticism by the party leaders.

The three demo-statistical components just described form the basis for research of the famine's demographic consequences. In fact, almost all of these statistical records are in Moscow in the records of the Central National Economic Survey Administration (Tsentral'noe Upravlenie narodno-khoziaistvennogo ucheta) under the Gosplan of the USSR, which are located today in the Russian State Archives of the Economy (RSAE, fond 1562). The extremely good state of preservation of the above documents in Moscow is significant, taking into account the absolute poverty of similar archival fonds of the Ukrainian authorities in Kyiv, above all, UNHO and Narkomfin, which do not have even a single scrap of data from the population census, current statistics, or taxation registry.

Now let us focus on some related new archival sources.

DEATH REGISTERS

The 1932–33 death registration books of local ZAGS offices are a completely different type of source than the above-noted statistical data, and most importantly, they have not been studied or included in the demo-statistical source base. There has been a broadly held belief since the early 1990s that these books were destroyed during the transfer of ZAGS to the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVS) in 1934.⁹ But this turns out not to be the case.

In 2007 the seventy-five-year statute of limitation for the 1932 death registers held in local archives of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine ran out. Until then these records were closed to researchers due to their sensitive personal information. When, against all expectations, the number of books that survived became known, the State Committee on Archives of Ukraine launched a large-scale project to transfer all of these registers to state archives to ensure their preservation. As a result 3,539 books were collected. These represent more than 4,800 localities (in most cases, village councils), amounting to 42 percent of all settlements in Ukraine as of 1933.

The largest number of books come primarily from the northeastern regions: Sumy and Kharkiv oblasts (698 and 593 books respectively). Dnipropetrovsk oblast and Zaporizhzhia oblast have about 260 books each. Vinnytsia oblast has 180, Chernihiv 170, Odesa 165, Cherkasy 162, Khmelnytskyi 103, and 129 books come from Kyiv oblast. Fewer than 100 books are in Zhytomyr oblast (87), Kirovohrad oblast (82), and in the city of Kyiv (77). The smallest number

of books is found in the southeastern regions: Poltava (44), Mykolaïv (64), and Kherson oblasts (15).

Geographically, the following present-day oblasts are represented most comprehensively: Chernihiv (92 percent of the territory), Zaporizhzhia (90 percent), Sumy (80 percent), Kyiv, Khmelnytskyi and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts (all 70 percent), Kirovohrad oblast (60 percent), Zhytomyr oblast (54 percent); least well documented are Luhansk and Cherkasy oblasts (about 50 percent), Kherson (40 percent), Poltava (38 percent), Mykolaïv (24 percent), and Odesa oblasts (20 percent).¹⁰

According to preliminary estimates, the above books cover from one third to one half of the territory of the Ukrainian SSR. The number of registered deaths amounts to 654,636 for two years. But what does this number tell us?

First and foremost, we are reminded again of the European-like standard of death registration that was practiced. The "Guidelines on Procedure Related to the Recording of Deaths in Death Registration Books" dating back probably to 1930, clearly instructed registrars to handle these records as "state documents" and to store them in good condition in "safe places."¹¹ Registrars would be penalized for inaccurate or deliberately false registration as well as for the lack of information or for damaging books.

The books were prepared in a single copy, but vital statistic records had to be recopied, and the copies sent monthly to a local state statistical body for processing and then returned for permanent storage. This procedure had been in operation since 1930.¹² And according to the "Guidelines to Archival Matters in Village Councils [...]" issued by the Central Archives Administration in 1932, vital statistics books were to be kept on site and not transferred to city or district archives. Transfer terms and procedures had to be defined by a special order of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (VUTsVK).¹³

There are at least four types of forms found in these books.

1. The standard (and the most common) form was highly detailed and included nineteen items (according to the above-mentioned 1930 guidelines): (1) name; (2) permanent residence and address; (3) date of death; (4) sex; (5) age; (6) for children less than one year old: date of birth; birth order in the family (e.g., first, second, etc.); mother's marital status, parents' age; (7) citizenship; (8) nationality; (9) marital status of the deceased; (10) social status (independent/dependent); (11) occupation, position; state provision (pension, stipend); other allowance sources; (12) occupational position: worker, employee, artisan; for peasantry: member of kolkhoz (commune, artel etc.) or not; (13) name of enterprise, institution, organization; (14) where died: at home, in hospital, orphanage; provision of medical assistance; (15) cause of death according to the death certificate or the declarant; (16) permanent residence of the declarant; (17) signature of the

- declarant; (18) signature of the registration officer; (19) notes, including all mistakes and corrections made during registration.
2. Occasionally a simplified registration form was used even though it was not specified in the 1930 guide. It listed more precise questions with regard to the social status of the deceased person; namely, independent/dependent, means of subsistence, workplace, etc.
 3. The third version was the simplified form without the nationality line.¹⁴ It was in circulation since mid-1933. Thus, the ethnic component of the death statistics unexpectedly disappeared, at least, from certain records.
 4. Finally, in cases where no registration form was available, blank sheets of paper were used for brief registration; as, for example, in Romankovo village, Dnipropetrovsk oblast (its death record book was published in 1992).¹⁵

Generally speaking, this was a system which, under normal conditions, could have ensured the efficient registration of natural population trends. Of course, it could not work in full measure under the extreme circumstances of starvation, which paralyzed the work of the ZAGS offices. There is numerous documentary evidence testifying to mortality underestimates. According to the Central Statistics Administration in Moscow in 1933, only 50 percent of deaths were registered in Ukraine.¹⁶ Yefimenko published another piece of evidence—the report by the Deputy Commissar of People’s Health Care of the Ukrainian SSR addressed to Stanislaw Kosior (June 1933)—which stated: “Without any doubt, official figures related to the number of those who died from starvation significantly deviate from the real situation.” To prove the point, the document cites the following data from Kyiv oblast: in Skvira district the number of people who died was two times greater than recorded; in Volodarka district, four (!) times.¹⁷ Countless GPU (State Political Administration) reports also state that in many places vital statistics offices stopped registering those who died because of the high mortality rate or the absence of registrars.

Consequently, in April 1933, Ukrainian authorities resorted to a unique statistical experiment, transferring the ZAGS role in registering deaths to district outpatient clinics, with the aim of merging the medical certification of deaths with legal death records. The “Project to Streamline the Death Registration Procedure” was discussed at the Kyiv Health Care Institute in meetings with leading physicians, demographers, and UNHO experts.¹⁸

Apparently the enormous scale of mortality, the obvious failure of local registry office workers to provide comprehensive death registration, and pressure from the top to decrease the real mortality figures were behind the attempt to innovate.

According to the minutes of a meeting on 13 April 1933, Kyiv scholars tried desperately to implement the “double” assignment: on the one hand, “to ensure

active participation of health care institutions in death registration procedures as one of the preconditions for improved operational management in the campaigns to lower death overrepresentations” and, on the other hand, to follow their professional ethics—that is, to ensure accurate and appropriate registration of deaths. It was also suggested that local medical personnel would have a better awareness of the reasons for death in a specific region and that this “would enable them to undertake efficient measures against mortality.” Unfortunately, the subsequent fate of the project remains unknown.

Thus, it is clear that in the context of the newly available ZAGS record books, the statistics we have are essentially incomplete. Furthermore, extrapolations based on the available data on population losses that attempt to back-calculate the number of deaths that would have been recorded in the hypothetical total volume of books result in unexpected figures that coincide completely with the present-day minimal estimates of Holodomor deaths based on the census and other data. According to preliminary calculations, the probable number of books produced in 1932–33 could amount to 10,000 units. Respectively, the number of death records could amount to 1.5 million registrations. Taking into account the fact that the ZAGS records underestimated the deaths by at least one half, the true number of registered deaths could have amounted to 3 million persons if registered properly.

The “cause of death” vital statistics are truly unique data which, of course, require specific expertise to study. The general clinical presentation of deaths in Ukraine covers about two hundred diagnoses; their typology and frequency varies with region, season, age, sex, occupation, etc. Thus, direct indications of death because of starvation (“exhaustion,” “avitaminosis,” “dystrophy,” “dropsy [edema],” “lack of protein,” “unbalanced diet,” “starvation,” “malnutrition,” “bread-free,” “eating chaff,” etc.) constitute 7–10 percent (for Khmelnytskyi oblast) to 20 percent (Luhansk oblast) and even up to 30 percent (Cherkasy oblast) of the total registered deaths, contrary to the 1.5–2 percent that was stated in an earlier paper.¹⁹

In most cases (30 to 50 percent of all vital statistics registers) the cause of death was indicated as “unknown,” “not identified”; sometimes the identified “starvation” diagnosis was falsified and replaced by “unknown.”²⁰

The second most frequent category is “old age” and “old age dementia” diagnoses (10–20 percent), and the third, cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases (about 10 percent). Surprisingly, gastric diseases take the fourth and fifth places (7–8 percent). Presumably, the diagnoses of infectious diseases were far from accurate (despite epidemics, “camp fever” and “typhoid fever” diagnoses are rare, at 1–2 percent).

Obviously, such clinical presentations are not true. At the same time, it is possible to assume that further expertise in diagnosis, notwithstanding the falsifications and registration conditions, would allow for a better assessment

of the ratio of natural mortality and mortality owing to starvation. In the given context it would be possible to explain certain regularities in identifying some euphemistic diagnoses (“heart dropsy,” “intestinal tuberculosis,” “swelling,” “dysentery”) as well as certain compound diagnoses (“pneumonia-emaciation,” “myocarditis-emaciation”). To this end, an “extreme old age” death diagnosis (for a fifty- to fifty-five-year-old person) should fall within the same category.

At a special meeting held by the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory in spring 2008, top managers of health care institutions, public health inspectors, experts in forensic medicine, pathoanatomists, and others examined the death registers and concluded unanimously that extreme starvation resulted in the intensification of all “hidden diseases” and, therefore, that starvation led to death in all registered cases without exception.

It should be noted that together with death registers, the state archives acquired from ZAGS offices include another huge collection of demo-statistical records: birth, marriage, and divorce registers (for 1932–33)—in total, about 7,000–8,000 extra record books. These still remain unprocessed.

The fate of the famine death registers and that of registration officials is equally dramatic: both were repressed. The repressions were launched even before the ink in the books had dried—in the spring of 1934, when the Kremlin became aware of the true scale of the demographic disaster. The official reason for repressions was the false charge of “criminal” birth underestimation and death overestimation. In contrast, in 1933 the Central Statistical Service in Moscow was concerned about quite different statistical deformations in Ukraine: as it was officially stated, ZAGS offices were registering fewer than 50 percent of deaths.²¹

In 2007 Odesa archivists found a remarkable document that can be considered direct documentary evidence of the large-scale actions taken by authorities in the spring of 1934 to eliminate traces of their crimes against the Ukrainian peasantry. On 13 April 1934 the Odesa Oblast Executive Committee sent a “top secret” instruction to all local councils and district executive committees of Odesa oblast (with copies to all party district committees and UNHO inspectors).²² According to the text, in March 1934 the National Economic Survey Administration carried out an inspection “of civil registry offices in village councils throughout Ukraine” and found that “this work is actually being performed by class enemies, kulaks, Petliura henchmen, special deportees, etc.” Moreover, the text also reports that “at village councils [registration] books are kept in such a way that anyone can have free access to them. It was discovered that in some village councils the [registration] books were simply stolen, possibly, for counterrevolutionary purposes.” This situation supposedly resulted in a “fraudulent inflation of death rates and underestimation of birthrates,” as well as the loss of records at civil registry office archives.

With regard to the supervision of local records, the following instruction

was issued: "Withdraw the death books from village councils: for 1933 from all village councils without exception, and for 1932 according to the list provided by the National Economic Survey Administration. Transfer the withdrawn village council registration books to the raion executive committees for safe-keeping as classified material." It goes without saying that such instructions could not have been issued without the participation of the Central Statistical Administration in Moscow. Similar top secret instructions were probably sent to other oblasts of Ukraine; at least, we are aware of two: Vinnytsia and Kharkiv oblasts.²³ The Kharkiv document contains very important and detailed data establishing the chronological point when the vital registers became dangerous: it says that "all death books for 1933 and for 1932, starting from November," should be withdrawn from village councils and transferred to secret departments of raion executive committees.²⁴

Today it is clear that this instruction was not followed completely: approximately one-third of the death registers survived, staying at local ZAGS offices. The rest of them, withdrawn and transferred to raion executive committees, were destroyed only later—most probably in the summer of 1941, before the retreat of Soviet troops.²⁵ It is safe to conclude that the destruction of death registers for 1932–33 is additional evidence of their value and authenticity.

ARCHIVES OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND TERRITORIAL REFORM AND THE DEMOGRAPHY OF THE HOLODOMOR

Now a few words about another, little-known group of sources, which, like ZAGS records books, can clarify certain points about the dynamics of demographic trends, or perhaps even suggest changes in the final estimates. These sources are surviving fragments from the archive of the Central Administrative and Territorial Commission under the VUTsVK, which holds cartographic and related reference and statistical materials.

1. An official series of administrative maps is of special interest, as the maps reflect the implementation in stages of the 1932 administrative and territorial reform. Of particular interest are the map as of 20 March 1932,²⁶ including a handwritten list of village councils with the number of inhabitants found within the new administrative units; (0–500 persons, 501–1000 persons, etc.); the map as of 25 October 1932,²⁷ including handwritten supplements listing the number of village councils and settlements, and raion divisions within recently established oblasts; and two maps as of 1 April²⁸ and 15 December 1933,²⁹ including the list of raions and oblasts, with no population data given.
2. New statistical data can be also found in several unpublished directories

on administrative and territorial division that contain population statistics of village councils, raions, and oblasts according to data from TsATK (the Central Administrative and Territorial Commission)—namely, the incomplete *Directory on Administrative and Territorial Division of the Ukrainian SSR* as of 15 November 1933 (includes just a list of city councils as well as counts of urban and rural population);³⁰ *Directory on Population Number Dynamics in Okruhas and Raions* (prior to oblast division) as of 1 January 1930 and 1 January 1931;³¹ *Directory on Administrative and Territorial Division* (including population number statistics) as of mid-1932;³² *Directory on Village Council Divisions according to Population Numbers*, based on TsATK statistics as of 1 July 1931 and 1 January 1932;³³ and finally, the only book published by VUTsVK at the time, a directory titled *Administrative and Territorial Division of the Ukrainian SSR as of 1 December 1933* (Kharkiv, 1933; 176 pp.).

These directories were based on different initial data. For example, the mid-1932 count according to nationality, population, and number of village councils was based on current statistics—that is, “statistical data of raion executive committees as of July–December 1931”—whereas figures were corrected by current local statistical data “according to the available [in TsATK] materials as of 10 March of the current year [1932].”³⁴ The summary table from the March 1932 book gives the size of the rural population as 25.5 million persons (78.4 percent of the total population, rural and urban).

The published directory, providing the administrative division as of 1 December 1933, reflects a decrease in the rural population: 24.4 million persons (accordingly, 75.9 percent). The given statistical data is based on the 1926 census and missing the per capita registry outputs of Narkomfin of the Ukrainian SSR for 1932. In addition, “there were certain corrections made on the basis of the current registry of natural and mechanical population movement [i.e., birth, mortality, and migration rates—H.B.]”³⁵

THE DESTRUCTION OF ARCHIVES IN UKRAINE AS THE LOGICAL AND FINAL STAGE OF GENOCIDE

Trying to answer the question of the fate of Ukrainian statistical archives, we examined closely the respective prewar governmental archives—in particular, some of TsDAVO fonds with the aim of investigating the so-called fond files, in which the “biographies” of fonds are recorded. As a result, we identified a number of clear information gaps, which can hardly be accidental.

First of all, the thematic content of documents preserved at the archives of central governmental agencies in Ukraine for the years 1932–33 is virtually

useless. This testifies to the purposeful and consistent withdrawal of records related to the situation in rural areas. For example, the archives of the supreme organ of state power (VUTsVK) contains just a few files with Narkomzem (People's Commissariat for Agriculture) data on sowing campaigns, information from the Zahotzerno (Organization for Collection of Grain) All-Ukrainian Office, some bulletins of the procurement department of the People's Commissariat for State Deliveries, and dozens of files with the minutes of meetings of oblast and raion executive committees. In contrast, the most numerous files are records of complaints concerning refusals to issue passports; documents related to the closing of churches and synagogues; activities of the Institute of Red Professors; the visit of a Turkish sports delegation; and other issues.

The chronological gaps are even more telling. With regard to the Narkomzem Archives (TsDAVO, fond 27): Compared to 1931, the number of documents for 1932 is 1.7 times lower; for 1933, 3.4 times lower; and for 1934, 40 (!) times lower. An inventory of the archives conducted in 1960 concluded that 129 files were lost before 1939; 86 files "prior to evacuation were designated as waste paper without proper documentation"; 4 files were just empty covers, without documents inside, with important-sounding titles such as "Materials of RNK Meetings" (1933), "Reports on Sovkhoz (state farms) Checkups" (1932), "Sowing Campaign Plans and Providing Sovkhoz with Farm Workers" (1932), and "Minutes of Meetings of Narkomzem Commissions" (1932). No copies of the annual Narkomzem "Bulletin" for 1930–33 are preserved. Seventy-five personal files for the years 1932–33 were destroyed in 1941. Eventually, 77 files dated 1933–34, most of them related to "special food provision" issues, were shamefully destroyed in 1965. Among them were correspondence with regard to food provisions for Narkomzem employees through the "closed distribution establishment" (1933–34), the menu and price list of the Narkomzem cafeteria (1933), and so forth.³⁶

In the Narkomfin Archive (TsDAVO, fond 30), the number of available documents for 1932–33 is half of what is available for 1931. The archives of two key departments are entirely missing: accounts payable (*masovykh platezhiv*) and agriculture for 1931–33. The Narkomfin documents for 1934–37 are missing completely. Thus, there are no financial records in the country for this period.

While archival inventories were conducted in 1949 and 1955, some 16,000 files were destroyed because they contained "reflected" (*vidobrazheni*) and "absorbed" (*vkliucheni*) documents (using the archival appraisal guidelines of the time). This, in fact, allowed for a purging of the archive.

UNHO was a powerful body with territorial branches in all districts, responsible for current statistics and the population census. In the UNHO archives (TsDAVO, fond 318), there are just 135 files extant for 1932 and 81 files for 1933. The situation in certain structural divisions of the UNHO archives is

as follows: the UNHO Secretariat has 36 files extant for 1932, 1 file for 1933; the Agricultural Statistics Department, 60 files for 1932, 11 files for 1933; the Population and Health Care Statistics Department, 3(!) files for 1933. There are no other documents left.

The 1957 inventory identified 14 missing files, those with quarterly observation data on collective farm workers and number of dependents for 1932; according to usual explanations, they could have been lost during the war.

In 1965 an inventory assessment was followed by the decision to destroy a large group of still uncategorized statistical documents for 1932. In 1968 came the next blow to the archives of Ukrainian statistics: 102 packets of documents were destroyed.

When the People's Commissariat for Health Care archives (TsDAVO, fond 342) were transferred from Kharkiv to Kyiv in 1934, the All-Ukrainian State Archive was informed that due to lack of space it was not a suitable place for the commissariat's records. When the documents for 1920–31 were finally transferred to the archive in December 1935, 809 files (335 packets) were left in Kharkiv; the other 222 files were transferred to the Ukrainian Institute of Social Hygiene. In total some 1,000 files were not transferred to the state archive. As for the transferred records, they were systematically appraised and disposed of: in 1936, 925 archival units were destroyed without any official registration. In 1957, 29 files were identified as missing; in 1962, another 33 files.

A final purge was undertaken in 1962, and 2,500 files were destroyed in total, including the following records for 1932:

- correspondence with public health and medical institutions on organizing local medical centers, providing premises, placement of patients, reports on food quality examination in public canteens;
- correspondence with different bodies regarding measures against infections;
- correspondence with medical institutions regarding children's placement at kindergartens, financing medical and public health services, acquisition of medicines for hospitals;
- patient histories, bedroom charts of the deceased, living conditions in villages, survey cards, etc.

In terms of the 1933–41 records, there is documentary proof of their destruction by commissariat officials just before the German occupation of Kyiv in September 1941. At the time 12,679 files were destroyed, equal to half of the pre-war commissariat holdings. The losses were later routinely officially explained as "actions of fascist invaders."

The archival records of VUTsVK, the supreme organ of state power of Ukraine (TsDAVO, fond 1), were transferred in parts to the All-Ukrainian

State Archive in 1928–34. The first purge of the archives took place in 1937–38: incoming and outgoing correspondence registers (as key archival search tools) were destroyed without official registration. During the subsequent inventory in 1940, 4,270 archival units (1920–33) were destroyed, including 113 files for 1932. In 1945, after the archives' reevacuation from Zlatoust to Kyiv, another 1,500 files were said to disappear. In 1957 more than 1,000 files were removed as waste paper.

In 1965, in the course of an inventory, the archivists found evidence of the previous purposeful destruction of documents; namely, appeals of people in Vinnytsia oblast to the head of VUTsVK. There existed a control card index of destroyed appeals. Considering that the texts of the appeals were missing, a decision was made to destroy the card index as well.

The "fond file" often includes notes such as: "Acquired materials for 1933 are incomplete" (as in case of the archive of the head of the VUTsVK office).

As a result of all these changes, the number of VUTsVK documents for 1932 decreased by 4.6 times compared to 1931; for 1933, by 8.8 times.

Finally, a close study of the the Radnarkom archives (TsDAVO, fond 2) leads to some striking conclusions. First and foremost, it is one of the few archival fonds where no inventory was undertaken during the postwar period and, consequently, where documents were not destroyed at that time. The reason is quite simple: there was nothing more to be destroyed. Chronologically, for the years of 1925–26 about 1,500 files survive annually in contrast with 1936–37, when there are just 2 (!) units annually. For 1928–35 there are no documents at all.

Notably, after the government's move to Kyiv during 1934–38, the Radnarkom documents for 1919–26 were transferred to the state archive. The rest of the documents remained within the government and were preserved by the Radnarkom's administrative office. The fate of both archives was dramatic: the first postwar (following reevacuation) archival inventory in 1949 found that almost 40 percent of the prewar archival fond was missing.

With regard to the records preserved within the government, I would like to present a unique document that I recently uncovered. This is a "Note on the Destruction of Radnarkom Archive," including 1921–40 documents, dated 3 July 1941.³⁷ On the eleventh day of the German-Soviet War 22,109 files and the incoming correspondence card register (about 2,500 cards) were destroyed, a volume of material generally equal to two full truckloads.

The destruction of the archives was carried out on the orders of S. Sulyma, head of the Radnarkom Secretariat. Without a doubt, this decision had to be taken at the top state level, most probably not in Kyiv. The exact date of the preparations for the destruction of such a large mass of documents still remains unknown. Probably the preparations began before the German invasion, or at least shortly after 22 June. In comparison, the state archive launched its

urgent preparations for evacuation much later, in August 1941. No traces of the detailed inventory of the destroyed documents mentioned in the “Note” have been found.

Records from 1932–33 form 10–15 percent—about 2,500 files, or 100,000 documents—of the destroyed government archives. This is equivalent to the entire documentary record on the Holodomor that has been registered to date by all state archives of Ukraine. Thus, it is possible to assume that Stalin’s regime left just half of the aggregate archives on the Holodomor created at all levels of government. Overall, Ukraine lost its entire government archival legacy for the 1930s. In contrast, the archives of the central government bodies in Moscow escaped total destruction.

In the mid-1980s, when Kyiv archivists undertook an effort to partially reconstruct the Radnarkom archives on the basis of its outgoing documents that were received by other state bodies and institutions and kept in their archives, the outcome was discouraging—only about 1,000 such documents were identified for the years of 1932–33.

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In conclusion, the Ukrainian demo-statistical base of the 1920s–1930s as a component of government archives has undergone systematic destruction and deformation. Unprecedented actions with regard to the destruction of key documentary groups (specifically, demographic sources) have been consistently and firmly implemented by the regime for decades.

Accordingly, the study of the demographic consequences of the Holodomor must be based primarily on the aggregate demo-statistical data preserved by the Russian State Archive of the Economy in Moscow. Demographic sources of this type are not available in Ukrainian state archives.

Despite all of the repressions in Ukraine’s demo-statistical archives in the 1930s, some undamaged and still unused fragments survive; in particular, the basic statistical sources: death registers for 1932–33, remnants of archives of the Central Administrative and Territorial Commission, and current statistics. These materials can help paint a clearer picture of Ukraine’s demographic disaster.

Following the repression of the Ukrainian peasantry and national elites, the destruction of archives became the third, final, and absolutely logical action of what should be called genocide. The long-term consequences of this destruction and falsification are evident: our studies are still based on massively distorted archives built up and shaped by Stalin’s regime especially for us. As such, the purged archives served as a political tool to be used to construct a “correct” history with “correct” accounts and conclusions. Everyone delving into the Ukrainian archives of the 1930s meets Stalin’s ominous smile.

Even in the 1960s, archivists by tradition continued to destroy government records of the 1930s, referring to their lack of “scholarly value and practical significance.” Further destruction was unnecessary; at that time the remaining documents did not pose any threat. Most likely, the motive for destruction was psychological rather than pragmatic—namely, fear of the 1930s period as a whole. This is another long-term consequence of the famine.

The inventory procedure (which formally has to be performed prior to any destruction of documents in the archives) is dependent on the prevailing conception of history. Our historiography is still undergoing the process of “correctness appraisal.” But the role of the expert in this case is being played by the totalitarian regime, which allows access only to those archives it shaped especially for us.

On the other hand, the contents of the National Archival Fond reflect an image of the state, the nation’s self-knowledge and self-consciousness. In this sense, in addition to being “a prominent linguist,” Comrade Stalin can also be considered “a genius archivist.” His way of forming the content of Ukraine’s state archives excluded any possibility for an adequate representation and evaluation of the past.

NOTES

1. S. Kul’chyts’kyi and H. Iefimenko, *Demohrafichni naslidky holodomoru 1933 r. v Ukraïni; Vsesoiuznyi perepys naseleñnia 1937 r. v Ukraïni: Dokumenty ta materialy* (Kyiv, 2003).
2. Ella Libanova et al., *Demohrafichna katastrofa v Ukraïni vnaslidok Holodomoru 1932–1933 rokiv: skladovi, mashtaby, naslidky. Naukovo-ananliychna dopovid* (Kyiv, 2008).
3. *Ibid.*, 84.
4. See *ibid.*, 8.
5. *Vsesoiuznaia perepis’ naseleniia 1937 g.: kratkie itogi* (Moscow, 1991); *Vsesoiuznaia perepis’ naseleniia 1937 g.: osnovnye itogi. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Moscow, 2007).
6. *Vsesoiuznaia perepis naseleniia 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi* (Moscow, 1992).
7. *Pidsumky obliku miskoi liudnosti USRR 1931 roku* (Kharkiv, 1933).
8. Kul’chyts’kyi and Iefimenko, *Demohrafichni naslidky holodomoru 1933 r. v Ukraïni*, 76–77; online: <http://www.history.org.ua/kul/contents.htm>, accessed on 11 November 2008.
9. See Illia Shul’ha, “Holod 1932–1933 rr. na Podilli,” in *Holodomor 1932–1933 rr. v Ukraïni: Prychyny i naslidky; Mizhnarodna naukova konferentsiia; Kyiv, 9–10 veresnia 1993 r.; Materialy*, ed. S. Kul’chyts’kyi (Kyiv, 1995), 141; Kul’chyts’kyi and Iefimenko, *Demohrafichni naslidky holodomoru 1933 r. v Ukraïni*, 189n73); N. A.

Ivnitskii, *Repressivnaia politika sovetskoi vlasti v derevne (1928–1933 gg.)* (Moscow, 2000), 293; Ivnitskii, “Il ruolo di Stalin nella carestia degli anni 1932–33 in Ucraina (dai materiali documentari dell’archivio del Cremlino del Comitato centrale del Partito comunista dell’Unione Sovietica e dell’OGPU,” in *La morte della terra: La grande “carestia” in Ucraina nel 1932–33; Atti del Convegno Vicenza, 16–18 ottobre 2003*, ed. Gabriele De Rosa and Francesca Lomastro (Rome, 2004), 90.

Some historians continue to repeat the same conclusion even in recent publications (2008): “Today death registration books are not found in any archives or at any village council.” Olesia Stasiuk, *Henotsyd ukraïntsv: deformatsiia narodnoi kul’tury* (Kyiv, 2008), 110.

10. Counted by the author.
11. See: State Archive of Odesa Oblast, fond R-8085, list 1, file 1143. Publ.: Bilousova et al., comps., *Holodomory v Ukraïni: Odes’ka oblast’ (1921–1923, 1932–1933, 1946–1947): Doslidzhennia, spohady, dokumenty* (Odesa, 2007), 244–45.
12. *Demohrafichna katastrofa v Ukraïni vnaslidok Holodomoru 1932–1933 rokiv*, 9.
13. TsDAVO, fond 1, list 8, file 27, fols. 93–98. The special VUTSVK order was not found.
14. See, for example, State Archive of Sumy Oblast, fond R-8996, list 1, file 45, fol. 232 (June 1933).
15. The original death register has been held at the Archive of the Shevchenko Scientific Society in New York since the early 1950s. Published in: M. Mukhina, comp., *Upokorennia holodom* (Kyiv, 1993), also as an online exhibition: <http://shevchenko.org/holodomor>, accessed on 5 November 2008.
16. S. Kul’chyts’kyi, “Trahichna statystyka holodu,” in *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: Ochyma istorykiv, movoiu dokumentiv* (Kyiv, 1990), 78; Kul’chyts’kyi and Iefimenko, *Demohrafichni naslidky holodomoru 1933 r. v Ukraïni*, 65.
17. *Ibid.*, 77.
18. “Proekt ratsionalizatsii protsesu reiestratsii smertei liudnosti,” State Archive of Kyiv City, fond R-3, list 1, file 105, fol. 10; a facsimile is published in *Natsional’na knyha pamiaty zhertv Holodomoru 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni: Misto Kyiv* (Kyiv, 2008), 208; annotation, 362.
19. See Hennadii Boriak, “Sources and Resources on the Famine in Ukraine’s State Archival System,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 27, no. 1–4 (2004–2005): 129; reprinted in *Hunger by Design: The Great Ukrainian Famine and Its Soviet Context*, ed. Halyna Hryn (Cambridge, Mass., 2008).
20. See, for example, death records from the book for Antonivka village, Stavyshe raion, Kyiv oblast, June 1932: State Archive of Kyiv Oblast, fond 5634, list 1, file 969, fol. 86; facsimile published in Boriak, “Sources and Resources on the Famine in Ukraine’s State Archival System,” 130.
21. See n. 16.
22. State Archive of Odesa Oblast, fond R-2009, list 1, file 4, fols. 91–92; first published in L. H. Bilousova et al., comps., *Holodomory v Ukraïni: Odes’ka oblast’*, 242–43;

facsimile with transcription and translation in English are in Boriak, "Sources and Resources on the Famine in Ukraine's State Archival System," 136–41; online publication, <http://www.archives.gov.ua/Sections/Famine/Citates.php#cite01>, accessed June 2009.

23. The Vinnytsia instruction was first mentioned by Shul'ha already in 1993, see: Illia Shul'ha, "Holod 1932–1933 rr. na Podilli," in *Holodomor 1932–1933 rr. v Ukraïni: Prychyny i naslidky; Mizhnarodna naukova konferentsiia; Kyiv, 9–10 veresnia 1993 r.* (Kyiv, 1995), 141. So far the author has not identified this document because of an incorrect reference.

The Kharkiv instruction issued on 20 April 1934 by the Kharkiv Oblast Executive Committee (State Archive of Kharkiv Oblast, fond R-3683, list 3, file 2, fol. 52) has the same content and almost the same wording, which testifies to the existence of a common prototype—a general instruction that came from the "top" and was immediately re-sent in slightly edited form from all oblast centers to raion institutions. The Kharkiv document was published online: <http://www.golodomor.kharkov.ua/docs.php?page=18&doc=772>.

24. It is worth noting that the same date—November 1932—was designated as a starting point for the set of party documents on state grain procurements destroyed in Bilopillia raion party committee (Kharkiv oblast) in July 1933. See "Note on Destruction," State Archive of Sumy Oblast, fond R-3683, list 2, file 2, fol. 52; published in L. Pokydychenko, comp., *Holodomor 1933–1933 rokiv na Sumshchyni* (Sumy, 2006), 169–70, <http://www.archives.gov.ua/Sections/Famine/Publicat/Fam-Sumy-1932-33.php#nom-144>. The false justification for this destruction, as indicated in the "Note," was "the expired terms of use," which is not proper for the documents dated November 1932 and April 1933 (note that the date of destruction was July 1933).
25. A few unique oral testimonies of former village officers (heads and secretaries of village councils) were collected and published by Lidiia Kovalenko and Volodymyr Maniak in 1991. Witnesses recalled different cases related to the withdrawal and/or destruction of death registers under the orders of the GPU. One witness was forced to falsify diagnoses while registering deaths; registration was terminated after March 1933 in his village in Proskuriv (now Khmelnytskyi) raion; another had to rewrite the entire death register in order to enter "proper" diagnoses when the original books were thrown into the fire (Illintsi raion, now in Vinnytsia oblast). One respondent from Troianiv raion (now in Zhytomyr oblast) testified that already during the famine he had to turn over "improper" death books to raion GPU offices (together with birth and marriage books, which were returned to him as "safe" and "proper"). When he asked the GPU officials: "What should I say when asked about the confiscated death books?" he was told: "This is a directive. Nobody except us will ask you." The note with the order to appear at the GPU office with the books he received in hand was also taken back, so that the case would leave no paper trail. Also, there was testimony that the official police reports

to the top contained encoded data on the number of “cattle” purchased (which meant number of deaths registered) or about “cases of anthropophagy” in Kharkiv oblast. See Lidiia Kovalenko and Volodymyr Maniak, comps., *33-i: Holod: Narodna knyha-memorial* (Kyiv, 1991), 49–50, 89, 110–11, 313, 580.

26. TsDAVO, fond 1, list 8, file 211, fol. 2; copy without notes: fol. 3.
27. *Ibid.*, fol. 1.
28. *Ibid.*, fond 1, list 9, file 103, fol. 1.
29. *Ibid.*, fol. 2.
30. *Ibid.*, fond 1, list 9, file 101, fols. 1–9.
31. *Ibid.*, fols. 19–29.
32. *Ibid.*, fond 1, list 8, file 26, fols. 13–66.
33. *Ibid.*, fols. 36–75.
34. *Ibid.*, fond 1, list 8, file 26, fol. 13.
35. *Administratyvno-terytorial'nyi podil USRR: Za stanom na 1 hrudnia 1933 roku* (Kharkiv, 1933), 3.
36. All of the author's estimates and conclusions in this article are based on the data of fond files (*spravy fondiv*) kept at TsDAVO.
37. TsDAVO, fond 2, list 7, file 406, fols. 1–5.