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The Soviet 1931–1933 Famines and the Ukrainian Holodomor: Is a New Interpretation Possible, and What Would Its Consequences Be?*

ANDREA GRAZIOSI

Sooner or later the Soviet people will put you in the dock as traitor to both socialism and revolution, main wrecker, true enemy of the people, *organizer of the famine* . . .

—F. Raskol'nikov, Soviet Ambassador to Bulgaria, to Stalin,
17 August 1939¹

Between the end of 1932 and the summer of 1933, famine in the USSR killed, in half the time, approximately seven times as many people as the Great Terror of 1937–1938. It was the peak of a series of famines that had started in 1931, and it constituted the turning point of the decade as well as Soviet prewar history's main event. With its approximately five million victims (I am not including the hundreds of thousands, possibly more than a million, who had already died in Kazakhstan and elsewhere since 1931), compared to the one to two million victims of 1921–1922 and 1946–1947, this also was the most severe famine in Soviet history and an event that left its mark for decades. Its effect was felt in countries inhabited by immigrant communities from the Russian Empire and the USSR, and its importance, political as well as historical, is still strong today. Since 1987–1988, the rediscovery and interpretation of the Famine have played a key role in Ukraine in discussions between supporters of the democratization process and those who still adhere to a procommunist ideology. *The Holodomor* (the word

* Oleg Khlevniuk and Mark Kramer commented on and much improved this text, whose conclusions and mistakes are only mine. Ukrainian, French, and Russian versions of this article have appeared in *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, no. 3 (2005), *Cahiers du monde russe* 46, no 3 (2005), and *Otechestvennye zapiski*, no. 34 (2007), respectively.

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coined to mean hunger-related mass extermination, implying intentionality) thus moved to the center of the political and cultural debate, becoming part of the process of state and nation building in Ukraine.

Yet until 1986, when Robert Conquest published his *Harvest of Sorrow*,² historians had almost completely ignored this extraordinary event. This is not to say that there was no documentation available, as I realized when reading Italian diplomats' reports to Mussolini—in fact such documents prove that it had always been possible to know. Thanks to the twentieth-century mass population movements—migrations, forced or otherwise, displacements, etc.—and the traces that they left, such as diplomatic dispatches, travel accounts, memoirs of witnesses and victims, much was there, ready to bear witness.³

In this light it is startling to recall how little we knew before Conquest's book appeared.⁴ In the best case, historians such as Naum Jasny and Alec Nove did speak of a "man-made famine" (which was still being treated as a single event) without, however, researching it fully and generally ignoring its national aspect. A few years later, Moshe Lewin analyzed the mechanisms that caused the Famine, but did not deal with the Famine as such.⁵ In the worst case, the Famine became the occasion for depressing polemics in which its very existence was questioned or minimized. In the USSR, where historians, even after 1956, could speak only of "food difficulties," the use of the very word *golod/holod* (hunger, famine) was forbidden. In Ukraine it was uttered officially for the first time in December 1987, in First Secretary Volodymyr Shcherbyts'kyi's speech celebrating the republic's seventieth anniversary.

That is why Conquest's book, the outcome of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute project, has been of crucial importance: it forced a reluctant profession to deal with a fundamental question, and it did so by stressing the connection between famine and the national question while properly differentiating the Kazakh case. It can thus be maintained that historiography on the famines and the Holodomor starts with Conquest, even though other authors, such as Sergei Maksudov or Zhores Medvedev, were by then seriously dealing with these events.⁶ The book's significance is even greater in light of the polemics that it raised. Because their level was much superior to that of previous polemics, they grew into a positive phenomenon, which may be viewed as part of the process through which historians finally became aware of these events' extraordinary human and intellectual dimensions. This process was, and still is, especially painful because it took and is taking place *after* a historical judgment had already been made and a "collective memory" had set in, all *without* the Soviet famines entering the picture. This was both a consequence of the successful Soviet attempt at concealment and a manifestation of one of the European twentieth century's key features—the logic of "taking sides" that dominated the discussion. Therefore, the famines had to, and today still have to, be brought into our representation of the past at the price of a complete restructuring of commonly held beliefs.

Then came the 1991 archival and historiographical revolution. It allowed the accumulation of new knowledge and caused a leap in the quality of polemics, which, with few exceptions, then grew into serious controversies. True scholarly spirit and a firm moral commitment, born of an awareness of the immensity of the tragedy they deal with, animate the two camps in which it is possible to group today's existing positions at the price of some simplification and much schematization. One can thus contemplate these past few years, during which Conquest's conclusions have been integrated and in part surpassed, with a sense of satisfaction and find in them some reason for optimism.

By means of yet more simplification, the positions of these two camps may be summed up in the following way (I am paraphrasing from a letter that a brilliant young Ukrainian scholar recently sent me). On one side there are what we could call "A" people. They support the genocide thesis and see in the Famine an event artificially organized in order to: (a) break the peasants and/or (b) alter (destroy) the Ukrainian nation's social fabric, which obstructed the transformation of the USSR into a despotic empire. On the other side we have "B" people, who, though fully recognizing the criminal nature of Stalin's policies, deem it necessary to study the Famine as a "complex phenomenon" in which many factors, from the geopolitical situation to the modernization effort, played a role in Moscow's intentions and decisions.

I believe that today we have most of the elements needed for a new and more satisfactory interpretive hypothesis, capable of taking into account both the general and complex Soviet picture and the undeniable relevance of the national question.⁷ This hypothesis can be put together using the excellent works of Ukrainian, Russian, and Western scholars as building blocks, thus breaking the wall that still partially separates their efforts. It is grounded in the research of outstanding scholars such as Viktor Danilov, R. W. Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, N. A. Ivnitskii, D'Ann Penner and Viktor Kondrashin, Stanislav Kul'chytskyi, James Mace, Terry Martin, France Meslé and Jacques Vallin, Iurii Shapoval and Valerii Vasyliiev, and also Oleg Khlevniuk, whose works on Stalin and his circle, though not focusing directly on the Famine, allowed us to situate it in its proper political context.⁸

In the next pages I will try to sketch the outline of such an interpretation. I hope not only to push forward the interpretation of the "Great Famine" (a collective name for the 1931–1933 famines), but also to stimulate a debate that will contribute to the breaking of the even taller and stronger wall that isolates its students from their colleagues studying the European twentieth century, a century that is simply impossible to fully understand without considering those famines.

In order to formulate this new interpretation, we need first to define the object of our investigation. As should be clear by now, we are in fact dealing with what it would be more correct to call, on a pan-Soviet level, the *1931–1933 famines*, which had of course common causes and a common background, but

included at least two very different and special phenomena: the Kazakhstan famine-*cum*-epidemics of 1931–1933 and the Ukrainian-Kuban (the latter area, though belonging to the Russian republic's province of Northern Caucasus, being mostly inhabited by Ukrainians) Holodomor of late 1932 to early 1933.

Many past misunderstandings have been caused by the confusion between these two *national* tragedies and the general phenomenon that provided their framework. In a way, it is as if students of Nazism would confuse Nazi repression in general with quite specific and crucial cases, such as the extermination of Soviet prisoners of war, or that of Poles and Gypsies—not to mention the Holocaust, an exceptional phenomenon that cannot be explained simply as an aspect or element of Nazi killings at large, and yet certainly was also a part of them. Both Nazi repression in general and such “specific” tragedies existed, and both must be studied, as in fact they are, in and of themselves as well as in their connections.

A very clear distinction between the general phenomenon and its republic-level or regional manifestations should therefore be introduced in the Soviet case. However, most “A” supporters are in fact speaking specifically of the Holodomor, while many of the “B” proponents think on a pan-Soviet scale. If we analytically distinguish what they are doing, we end up discovering that in many, albeit not all, ways they are correct in their respective domains.

The second step toward a new interpretation consists of yet another analytical distinction. We must separate the 1931–1932 “spontaneous” famines—they too, of course, were direct, if undesired, consequences of choices made in 1928–1929—from the post-September 1932 Famine, which took on such terrible features not least because of human decision. (Events in Kazakhstan followed an altogether different pattern and I will therefore only make some passing references to them.)⁹ Finally, the third step we need to take is to gather and combine useful elements from both “A” and “B” and drop their unsatisfactory parts.

“A” people are right in drawing our attention to the national question. Anyone studying the Soviet Union should be acutely aware of its importance, as Lenin and Stalin themselves were (after all, the former decided not to call the new state Russia, and the latter, who initially opposed such a choice, never reversed the decision in later years). One should be equally aware of the Ukrainian primacy in this matter. In late 1919 Lenin started the shift towards indigenization (*korenizatsiia*),¹⁰ until that time considered to be a request of “extreme nationalists,” because of the Ukrainian Bolsheviks' defeat of 1919,¹¹ and Stalin gave a new spin to *korenizatsiia* in late 1932 because of the Ukrainian crisis. But in Ukraine, at least up to 1933, the national question was the peasant question. This is what both Lenin and Stalin thought, and rightly so. “A” people seem instead to be wrong in thinking that the “Famine” (meaning also the pan-Soviet one) was organized (“planned”) to solve the Ukrainian national, or rather peasant, problem.

“B” people give us a detailed reconstruction of the causes and wider context

of the Famine on a pan-Soviet scale, with all its complexity, and are thus able to criticize convincingly the simplistic views of the “A” camp. However, they seem unable to fully understand or accommodate the national factor; that is, to “descend” from the pan-Soviet to the republic level. “B” people also do not always seem capable of seeing that Stalin, even when he did not initiate something willfully, was always very quick to take advantage of “spontaneous” events, giving them a completely new turn. The obvious parallel here is with Kirov’s murder, which Stalin most probably did not organize, but quite certainly “creatively” used. One can thus use good “B” data for the development of the pan-Soviet crisis, stressing however that at this level, too, Stalin at a certain moment decided to *use* hunger to break the peasants’ opposition to collectivization. For a number of reasons, such opposition was stronger in non-Russian areas, where events soon started to follow their own course. By reconstructing this course we can crack the secret surrounding the 1932–1933 events from their inception—a secret which, as Raskolnikov’s letter seems to suggest, was known to the Bolshevik elite.

What can therefore be said? From 1931 to 1933 scores, perhaps hundreds, of thousands of people died of hunger throughout the USSR. In Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Northern Caucasus, and the Volga basin (Povolzh’e), however, the situation was completely different. But for Western Siberia, these were the country’s most important grain-growing regions, where the post-1927 state-village conflict over the crop was strongest. Since 1918–1919, moreover, the war between the regime and peasants and nomads there had been particularly brutal because of the intensifying role of national and religious factors, and in the Volga because of both the Russian peasant movement’s strong traditions and the presence of German colonists.

Except in Kazakhstan, the phenomenon’s causes were *similar* across these areas: the devastating human toll, as well as the toll on the capacity for production, taken by dekulakization—a de facto nationwide, state-led pogrom against the peasant elite; forced collectivization, which pushed peasants to destroy a large part of their inventories;¹² the kolkhozes’ inefficiency and misery; the repeated and extreme requisition waves originated by a crisis-ridden industrialization, an urbanization out of control, and a growing foreign debt that could be repaid only by exporting raw materials; the resistance of peasants, who would not accept the reimposition of what they called a “second serfdom” and worked less and less because of both their rejection of the new system and hunger-related debilitation; and the poor weather conditions in 1932. Famine, which had started to take hold sporadically already in 1931 (when Kazakhs were dying in mass), and had grown into solid pockets by the spring of 1932, thus appears to have been an undesired and unplanned outcome of ideology-inspired policies aimed at eliminating mercantile and private production. Based on the results of the 1920–1921 war communism policy, the Famine should not have been difficult to foresee.

Yet if one analyzes the Famine's origins and pre-autumn 1932 developments on a pan-Soviet level, it seems arduous to claim that famine was the conscious goal of those policies, as it is maintained by those who support the hypothesis that famine was willfully implemented to break the peasant resistance or to execute a Moscow- (sometimes meaning Russian-) planned Ukrainian genocide.

However, the intensity, course, and consequences of the phenomenon, which new studies and new documents allow us to analyze, were undeniably and substantially *different* in different regions and republics. Out of the six to seven million victims (demographers now impute to 1930–1931 part of the deaths previously imputed to 1932–1933), 3.5 to 3.8 million died in Ukraine; 1.3 to 1.5 million in Kazakhstan (where deaths reached their peak in relation to the population size, exterminating 33 to 38 percent of the Kazakhs and 8 to 9 percent of the Europeans); and several hundred thousand in Northern Caucasus and, on a lesser scale, in the Volga, where the most harshly hit area coincided with the German autonomous republic.¹³

If we consider annual mortality rates per thousand inhabitants *in the countryside*, and make 1926 equal to 100, we see them jump in 1933 to 188.1 in the entire USSR, 138.2 in the Russian republic (which then still included both Kazakhstan and Northern Caucasus), and 367.7—that is, *almost triple*—in Ukraine. Here life expectancy at birth dropped from 42.9 years for men and 46.3 for women registered in 1926 to, respectively, 7.3 and 10.9 in 1933 (it would be 13.6 and 36.3 in 1941). Also, in Ukraine there were 782,000 births in 1932 and 470,000 in 1933, compared with an average of 1.153 million per year in the period from 1926 to 1929.¹⁴ The extreme figures for Ukraine are explained by the Famine's different course there, for which different Moscow policies were largely responsible.

In Ukraine, as elsewhere, in the spring of 1932 local officials, village teachers, and republican leaders noted the spreading of hunger and the beginning of a mass rural exodus.¹⁵ Stalin, urged by the Ukrainian party, which asked for a reduction in procurements, acknowledged in early June that this was indeed necessary, at least in the most hard-hit areas, also out of a “sense of justice.” Such reductions, however, had to be moderate and local, because, despite Viacheslav Molotov's report that “today we have to face, even in grain-producing areas, the specter of famine,” the Politburo concluded that “procurement plans must be respected at all cost.”¹⁶ This conclusion was dictated by the need to avoid the repetition, on a larger scale, of that spring's urban food riots and strikes and to honor the German bills due between the end of the year and the beginning of 1933.

Already in June, however, Stalin was developing what Terry Martin has called a “national interpretation” of the Famine, well before Ukrainian nationalists outside the USSR even started to think about it.¹⁷ At the beginning, he ranted in private against the republic leaders, whom he held responsible for failing to deal with the situation with the necessary firmness. Between July and August, however,

after a Ukrainian party conference had implicitly disagreed with Moscow and on the basis of OGPU reports that accused local communists of being infected with nationalism, Stalin produced a new analysis of the situation and its causes.¹⁸

What was perhaps the last recorded disagreement with Stalin in a Politburo meeting also possibly played a role. On 2 August 1932 someone, probably Hryhorii Petrovs'kyi (then the Ukrainian Central Executive Committee [VUTsVK] chairman), objected to Stalin's draft of what was to become on 7 August the draconian law on the defense of state property against peasant theft.¹⁹ A bit later, on 11 August, in spite of the recent signing of the Polish-Soviet non-aggression pact,²⁰ in a crucial letter to Lazar' Kaganovich, Stalin wrote that Ukraine was now the *main issue* (his emphasis), that the republic's party, state, and even political police organs teemed with nationalist agents and Polish spies, and that there was a real risk of "losing Ukraine," which should instead be transformed into a Bolshevik fortress.²¹

Such an interpretation, developed on the basis of the Ukrainian experience, was later extended by Stalin to the Cossacks (who had been singled out as enemies of the regime already in 1919 when they were hit by decossackization),²² the Volga Germans, and, albeit in less stark terms, Belarusians. The crisis thus spurred Stalin to apply his by then well-developed model of preventive, category-based, and therefore collective repression (which had reached its first peak with dekulakization) to a number of national and social-national groups that in his judgment posed a threat to the regime. As events were to prove, however, Ukraine and Ukrainians remained foremost in his mind.

When, as it was to be expected, procurements proved unsatisfactory throughout the grain-producing lands, Molotov, Kaganovich, and Pavel Postyshev were sent to Ukraine, Northern Caucasus, and the Volga to redress the situation. The decision to *use the famine*, thus enormously and artificially strengthening it, in order to impart a lesson to peasants who refused the new serfdom²³ was thus taken in the fall of 1932, when the crisis caused by the first five-year plan peaked and Stalin's wife committed suicide. The punishment was tragically simple: he who does not work—that is, does not accept the kolkhoz system—will not eat. Stalin hinted at such a policy in his famous 1933 correspondence with Mikhail Sholokhov. The Don's "esteemed grain-growers," on whose behalf the writer pleaded, had waged—Stalin wrote—a "secret" war against Soviet power, a war in which—he added, reversing roles—"they used hunger as a weapon," and of which they were now bearing the consequences; that is, implicitly, famine.²⁴

Most of the stricken areas were not extended any help until the spring of 1933 (Don peasants got something only in May). Moreover, while Commissar of Foreign Affairs Maxim Litvinov officially denied the Famine's existence in his answers to foreign officials' queries, the state "ferociously fought" (in Kaganovich's words) to fulfil these areas' procurement plans.

In those places where the “peasant question” was complicated—that is, strengthened and thus made more dangerous by the national one (let us remember that Stalin explicitly linked the two questions in his writings on nationalism, and that the Soviet leadership had seen this hypothesis confirmed by the Ukrainian countryside’s great social and national revolts of 1919, repeated, albeit on a lesser scale, in early 1930)²⁵—the resort to hunger was more ruthless and the lesson much harsher. According to demographic data, in Ukraine, too, mortality depended on residency, urban or rural, and not on nationality, meaning that people living in the countryside suffered independently of their ethnic background. Yet one cannot forget that, as everybody knew, in spite of the previous urbanization-*cum*-Ukrainization, villages remained overwhelmingly Ukrainian, while cities had largely preserved their “alien” (Russian, Jewish, Polish) character.²⁶ In Ukraine, therefore, the countryside was indeed targeted to break the peasants, but with the full awareness that the village represented the nation’s spine.

The fact that, because of the “national interpretation,” the decision to use the Famine took on very specific traits in Ukraine and Kuban is confirmed by measures that were, at least in part, very different from those taken on a pan-Soviet scale, with the partial exception of the Don Cossack lands. On 18 November 1932, the Ukrainian Central Committee, which Molotov and Kaganovich had crushed into submission, ordered peasants to return the meager grain advances over the new crop that they had received in recompense for their work. The decision (one may imagine what its implementation meant) opened the way for the repression of local officials who had helped out starving peasant families by distributing grain to them. Hundreds of such officials were shot and thousands arrested, often on the charge of “populism.” Meanwhile, in Ukraine and Kuban the state resorted to fines in kind in order to also seize meat and potatoes from peasants, a measure which was not extended to the Volga, where—with the possible exception of the German autonomous republic—Postyshev dealt less harshly with local cadres (although less severe punishment did not prevent mass hunger-related deaths). Specific areas of Northern Caucasus and Ukraine, where the opposition to collectivization had been stronger, were punished even more cruelly: all goods, including non-agricultural, were removed from stores and all inhabitants were deported from certain localities.

Famine thus took on forms and dimensions much bigger than it would have if nature had followed its course. It was less intense, in terms of both drought and the area it affected, than the 1921–1922 Famine (the 1932 crop, though quite low, was still higher than the 1945 crop, when there were no comparable mass hunger-related deaths), yet it caused three to four times as many victims—essentially because of political decisions that aimed at saving the regime from the crisis to which its very policies had led and at assuring the victory of the “great offensive” launched four years previously.

The awareness that in Ukraine and Kuban the peasant question also was a

national question determined the need to deal with and “solve” these questions together. In order to make sure that such a “solution” was there to stay, it was complemented by the decision to get rid of the national elites and their policies, which were suspected, as we know, of abetting peasants.

On 14 and 15 December 1932, the Politburo passed two secret decrees that reversed, but *only* in the Ukrainian case, the official nationality policies decided upon in 1923. According to these decrees *korenizatsiia*, as it had been implemented in Ukraine and Kuban, had spurred nationalistic feelings rather than checking them, and produced enemies with a party membership ticket in their pocket. Peasants were not the sole culprits of the crisis, but shared responsibility with the Ukrainian political and cultural classes.

On these premises, Ukrainization programs in the Russian republic were abolished. Several million Ukrainians who, following the pro-Russian border choices of the mid-1920s, were living in the RSFSR thus lost those education, press, and self-government rights that other nationalities continued to enjoy. The 1937 census would reveal that only 3 million RSFSR citizens defined themselves as Ukrainians versus the 7.8 million of 1926 (at least part of this decline was caused by the promotion of Kazakhstan, previously a RSFSR autonomous republic, into a Soviet one).

A few days later, on 19 December 1932, similar though less harsh measures hit Belarus too, where—as in Ukraine—the peasant and the national questions largely coincided, a fact that had also caused problems during the civil war, albeit not on the Ukrainian scale. Here, too, in early March the party was accused of abetting nationalism, and party cadres and the national intelligentsiia were repressed for such crimes. The fundamental difference in Soviet nationality policies, which were much more tolerant in the east and the north of the USSR than in the west, was thus reaffirmed, although there was no reversal of “Belarusization.”²⁷

On the night of 20 December, at the urging of Kaganovich, the Ukrainian Politburo committed itself to new targets for grain requisitions. Nine days later it declared that the precondition to fulfilling the plan was the seizure of seed stock reserves.²⁸ On 22 January 1933, soon after Postyshev, Moscow’s new plenipotentiary in Ukraine, arrived with hundreds of central cadres, Stalin and Molotov ordered the OGPU to stop peasants from fleeing Ukraine and Kuban in search of food. The Central Committee and the government, they wrote, “are convinced that this exodus, like that of the previous year, has been organized by enemies of Soviet power, Socialist Revolutionaries and Polish agents, in order to agitate by ‘using peasants’ against kolkhozes and, more generally, against Soviet power in the USSR’s northern territories. Last year party, government, and police organs failed to uncover this counterrevolutionary plot . . . A repetition of such a mistake this year would be intolerable.”²⁹ In the following month, the decree led to the arrest of 220,000 people, predominantly hungry peasants in search of food; 190,000 of them were sent back to their villages to starve.

Ukrainian cities too, which were far better, albeit still miserably, supplied, were surrounded by antipeasant roadblocks, while villages were left to starve.³⁰ What the Ukrainian party secretary, Stanislav Kosior, wrote Moscow on 15 March confirms that the hunger was used to teach peasants subservience to the state. “The unsatisfactory course of sowing in many areas,” he lamented, “shows that famine hasn’t still *taught reason* to many kolkhozniks” (emphasis mine).³¹ These measures were accompanied, and followed, by a wave of anti-Ukrainian terror, which already presented some of the traits that were later to characterize the 1937–1938 “mass operations.” Thus ended the national-communist experiment born of the civil war, with the suicide in 1933 of important leaders such as Mykola Skrypnyk and writers such as Mykola Khvylovyi as well as the repression of thousands of its cadres.

The adoption of the term Holodomor seems therefore legitimate, as well as necessary, to mark a distinction between the pan-Soviet phenomenon of 1931–1933 and the Ukrainian Famine *after* the summer of 1932. In spite of their undeniable close relationship, the two are in fact profoundly different. The same applies to the famines’ consequences, which also were partially similar yet essentially different. Whereas throughout the USSR the use of hunger broke peasant resistance,³² guaranteed the victory of a dictator whom people feared in a new way and around whom a new cult, based on fear, started to develop; opened the door to the 1937–1938 terror; marked a qualitative change in the lie that had accompanied the Soviet regime since its inception; allowed, by means of the subjugation of the most important republic, the *de facto* transformation of the Soviet federal state into a despotic empire; and left a dreadful legacy of grief in a multitude of families that were prevented from dealing with it (Gorbachev too lost three paternal uncles then) because of the Famine taboo and the dogma about life having become “more joyous”—in Ukraine and in Kazakhstan famine dug even deeper.

In Kazakhstan, the traditional society’s very structures were seriously impaired. In Ukraine, both the body and the top of national society were badly damaged, slowing down and distorting nation building. I think, for instance, that only thus can we account for the much weaker presence, as compared to what happened in 1914–1922, of the Ukrainian national movement in the great crisis of 1941–1945 (Galicia, which in 1933 was not part of the USSR, was not surprisingly the rather extraordinary exception).

The number of victims makes the Soviet 1931–1933 famines into a set of phenomena that in the framework of European history can be compared only to later Nazi crimes. The course of events in Ukraine and Northern Caucasus, and the link this course had to both Stalin’s interpretation of the crisis and the policies that originated from this interpretation, reintroduce, in a new way, the question of its nature. *Was there also a Ukrainian genocide?*

The answer seems to be *no* if one thinks of a famine conceived by the regime, or—this being even more untenable—by Russia, to destroy the Ukrainian people.

It is equally *no* if one adopts a restrictive definition of genocide as the planned will to exterminate *all* the members of a religious or ethnic group, in which case only the Holocaust would qualify.

In 1948, however, even the rather strict UN definition of genocide listed among possible genocidal acts, side by side with “killing members of the group, and causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group,” “*deliberately inflicting on members of the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part*” (emphasis mine). Not long before, Raphael Lemkin, the inventor of the term, had noted that “generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation . . . It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups.”³³

Based on Lemkin’s definition—if one thinks of the substantial difference in mortality rates in different republics; adds to the millions of Ukrainian victims, including the ones from Kuban, the millions of Ukrainians forcibly Russified after December 1932, as well as the scores of thousands of peasants who met a similar fate after evading the police roadblocks and taking refuge in the Russian republic; keeps in mind that one is therefore dealing with the loss of approximately 20 to 30 percent of the Ukrainian ethnic population; remembers that such a loss was caused by the decision, unquestionably a subjective act, to use the Famine in an anti-Ukrainian sense on the basis of the “national interpretation” Stalin developed in the second half of 1932; reckons that without such a decision the death count would have been at the most in the hundreds of thousands (that is, less than in 1921–1922); and finally, if one adds to all of the above the destruction of a large part of the republic’s Ukrainian political and cultural elite, from village teachers to national leaders—I believe that the answer to our question, “Was the Holodomor a genocide?” cannot but be positive.

Between the end of 1932 and the summer of 1933:

1. Stalin and the regime he controlled and coerced (but certainly not Russia or the Russians, who suffered from famine too, even though on a lesser scale) consciously executed, as part of a drive directed at breaking the peasantry, an anti-Ukrainian policy aimed at mass extermination and causing a genocide in the above-mentioned interpretation of the term, a genocide whose physical and psychological scars are still visible today.³⁴
2. This genocide was the product of a famine that was not willfully caused with such aim in mind, but was willfully maneuvered towards this end once it came about as the unanticipated result of the regime policies (it seems that the even more terrible Kazakh tragedy was “only” the undesired, if foreseeable, outcome of denomadization and colonial indifference towards the natives’ fate).³⁵
3. It took place within a context that saw Stalin punishing with hunger, and

applying terror to, a number of national and ethnosocial groups he felt to be actually or potentially dangerous.³⁶ As all the quantitative data indicate, however, the scale of both punishment and terror reached extreme dimensions in Ukraine for the reasons I listed, thus growing into a qualitatively different phenomenon.

4. From this perspective, the relationship between the Holodomor and the other tragic punishments by repression of 1932–1933 do in a way recall the already-mentioned relationship between Nazi repressions and the Holocaust. The Holodomor, however, was much different from the Holocaust. It did not aim at exterminating the *whole* nation, it did not kill people *directly*, and it was motivated and constructed theoretically and *politically*—might one say “rationally”?—rather than ethnically or racially. This different motivation at least partially accounts for the first two differences.³⁷
5. From this perspective, the Holocaust is exceptional because it represents the purest, and therefore qualitatively different, genocide imaginable. It thus belongs in another category. Yet at the same time it represents the apex of a multilayered pyramid, whose steps are represented by other tragedies, and to whose top the Holodomor is close.

Were it true, as I believe it to be, this affirmative answer has great moral and intellectual consequences upon our image and interpretation of the European twentieth century. In an essay published in this very journal, after discussing the problems related to the “Great Famine’s” medium- and long-term impact on Soviet history, I tried to address some of these consequences and would now like to recall three of them.³⁸

How does the awareness of the Famines’ modalities, entity, and responsibilities affect the judgment we are called upon to pass, as human beings first but also as historians, on the Soviet system and its first generation of leaders, a group that must be extended to cover the functionaries who executed their decisions, without of course forgetting the many who bravely refused to participate in or boycotted the state’s policies and were punished for it? In the light of 1932–1933, doesn’t that system much more resemble, for at least a stage in its history, a violent and primitive state headed by a wicked despot than a modernizing “totalitarianism,” ideologically aimed at conquering and recasting the consciousness of its subjects?

Is it possible to maintain that if at the root of the Soviet system, as recast by Stalin, there was such a crime, then its collapse is somehow related to this original sin, a sin covered for decades by lies because it could not be acknowledged? From this angle, the “Great Famine” assumes the features of a formidable obstacle to the survival by renewal of a system that could not speak the truth about its past and was thus swept away by the surfacing of this truth, often by virtue of

people who wanted to reform it and make it more humane, and started to do so by settling accounts with the past, only to discover that such accounts could not be settled.³⁹

We thus enter the extremely interesting question of the evolution of “totalitarianism,” a category I do not like in part because it makes it difficult to account for such evolution, which in the Soviet case is nonetheless undeniable. Jacob Burckhardt wrote, “even a state founded at the beginning only upon the curses of the oppressed is forced with time to evolve some kind of law and civil life, because rightful and civil people slowly gain control over it.”⁴⁰ Can it be that if peace prevails for a long enough period, at least the progress, if not the final triumph, of such evolution is indeed possible, even when that state’s history is marked by genocide? Were it so, Soviet history would be not just the astonishing moral parable that indeed it is, but also the harbinger of hope in much more general terms.

NOTES

1. Raskoľnikov, a famous civil war commander, served in Sofia from 1934 to 1938. His “open letter” to Stalin was published in *Novaia Rossiia* (Paris) on 1 October 1939, three weeks after his death in Nice. For the letter, with much new material, see A. Artizov et al., eds., *Reabilitatsiia—kak eto bylo: Dokumenty Prezidiuma TsK KPSS i drugie materialy*, vol. 2, *Fevral' 1956—nachalo 80-kh godov* (Moscow, 2003), 420–53. Emphasis mine. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

2. Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York, 1986).

3. Andrea Graziosi, “‘Lettres de Kharkov’: La famine en Ukraine et dans le Caucase du Nord à travers les rapports des diplomates italiens, 1932–1934,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 30, no. 1–2 (1989): 2–106; Graziosi, ed., *Lettere da Kharkov: La carestia in Ucraina e nel Caucaso del Nord nei rapporti dei diplomatici italiani, 1932–33* (Turin, 1991); United States Congress Commission on the Ukraine Famine, *Investigation of the Ukrainian Famine, 1932–1933: Report to Congress* (Washington, D.C., 1988), see esp. appendixes; Marco Carynyk, Lubomyr Y. Luciuk, and Bohdan S. Kordan, eds., *The Foreign Office and the Famine: British Documents on Ukraine and the Great Famine of 1932–1933* (Kingston, Ont., 1988); D. Zlepko, *Der ukrainische Hunger-Holocaust* (Sonnenbühl, 1988) [a poor edition]; Victor Kravchenko, *I Chose Freedom: The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official* (New York, 1946); S. O. Pidhainy, ed., *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*, vol. 2, *The Great Famine in Ukraine in 1932–1933* (Detroit, 1955); Miron Dolot, *Execution by Hunger: The Hidden Holocaust* (New York, 1985), and others. In the mid-1960s Dana G. Dalrymple reviewed the available sources in “The Soviet Famine of 1932–1934,” *Soviet Studies* 15, no. 3 (1964): 250–84; *Soviet Studies* 16, no. 4 (1965): 471–74. There are now several online bibliographies on the Famine. See, for instance, the official site of the State Committee on Archives of Ukraine: “Genotsyd ukrains'koho narodu: Holodomor 1932–1933 rr.,” <http://www.archives.gov.ua/Sections/Famine>.

4. This attitude was not limited to the 1932–1933 Famine. The profession was still dominated, and not without reason, by the authority of E. H. Carr, who in his multivolume opus on 1917–1929 devoted only a few pages—in which neither the peasants’ behaviors and fate, nor the national implications of the disaster were analyzed—to the 1921–1922 Famine, which was central to the early Soviet experience and later developments. We also knew very little about the 1946–1947 Famine, in spite of the central role Khrushchev assigned it in his 1970 memoirs (see his *Vospominaniia—vremia, liudi, vlast'*, 4 vols. [Moscow, 1999]). See also V. F. Zima, *Golod v SSSR 1946–1947 godov: Proiskhozhdenie i posledstviia* (Moscow, 1996); O. M. Veselova, V. I. Marochko, and O. M. Movchan, *Holodomory v Ukraini 1921–1923, 1932–1933, 1946–1947: Zlochyny proty narodu* (Kyiv, 2000). Recently Karel C. Berkhoff has also investigated the German-organized starvation of Kyiv in 1941–1942 in his *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004).

5. Naum Jasny, *The Socialized Agriculture of the USSR* (Stanford, 1949); Alec Nove,

An Economic History of the USSR (London, 1969; 3rd ed., London, 1992). See also Moshe Lewin's 1974 article "'Taking Grain': Soviet Policies of Agricultural Procurements before the War," reprinted in Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia*, 142–77 (New York, 1985).

6. James E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Ukraine, 1918–1933* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983); Sergei Maksudov [Alexander Babyonyshev], *Poteri naseleniia SSSR* (Benson, Vt., 1989). Zhores A. Medvedev, in his book *Soviet Agriculture* (New York, 1987), devoted an excellent chapter to the Famine, where he correctly addressed its pan-Soviet features but overlooked its national aspects. See also Bohdan Krawchenko, *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Ukraine* (New York, 1985).
7. In 1996, in *The Great Soviet Peasant War: Bolsheviks and Peasants, 1918–1933* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), I tried to look for such a solution, but did it in a way that I now deem inadequate and partially incorrect.
8. V. Danilov, R. Manning, and L. Viola, eds., *Tragediia sovetskoï derevni: Kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie*, vol. 3, *Konets 1930–1933* (Moscow, 2001); R. W. Davies, Oleg V. Khlevniuk, and E. A. Rees, eds., *The Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence, 1931–36* (New Haven, 2003; Russian ed., Moscow, 2001); R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (New York, 2004); N. A. Ivniiskii, *Kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie* (Moscow, 1996); Ivniiskii, *Repressivnaia politika sovetskoï vlasti v derevne (1928–1933 gg.)* (Moscow, 2000); V. V. Kondrashin and Diana [D'Ann] Penner, *Golod: 1932–1933 gody v sovetskoï derevne (na materiale Povolzh'ia, Dona i Kubani)* (Samara, 2002); S. V. Kul'chyts'kyi, ed., *Holodomor 1932–1933 rr. v Ukraïni: Prychyny i naslidky* (Kyiv, 1995); Kul'chyts'kyi, ed., *Kolektivizatsiia i holod na Ukraïni, 1929–1933* (Kyiv, 1992); Kul'chyts'kyi, *Ukraïna mizh dvoma viinamy (1921–1939 rr.)* (Kyiv, 1999); Ruslan Pyrih et al., comps., *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv na Ukraïni: Ochyma istoriï, movoiu dokumentiv* (Kyiv, 1990); V. M. Lytvyn, ed., *Holod 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni: Prychyny ta naslidky* (Kyiv, 2003); Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2001); France Meslé and Jacques Vallin, *Mortalité et causes de décès en Ukraine au XXe siècle* (Paris, 2003); Iurii Shapoval and Valerii Vasyliiev, *Komandyry velykoho holodu: Poïzdky V. Molotova i L. Kahanovycha v Ukraïnu ta na Pivnichnyi Kavkaz, 1932–1933 rr.* (Kyiv, 2001). Timothy Snyder's work in progress on Polish-Ukrainian-Soviet relations is also very useful. See, for example, "A National Question Crosses a Systemic Border: The Polish-Soviet Context for Ukraine, 1926–1935" (paper presented at the congress of the Società Italiana per lo Studio della Storia Contemporanea, Bolzano-Bozen, September, 2004).
9. See M. K. Kozybaev et al., *Nasil'stvennaia kollektivizatsiia i golod v Kazakhstane v 1931–33 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Almaty, 1998); Isabelle Ohayon, *La sédentarisation des Kazakhs dans l'URSS de Staline: Collectivisation et changement social (1928–1945)* (Paris, 2006); Niccolò Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe: The Collectivization of Agriculture and the Kazak Herdsmen, 1928–1934," *Cahiers du monde russe* 45, no. 1–2 (2004): 137–92.

10. In 1923, after the USSR had been organized as a Federation of Republics based on titular nationalities, the party formally adopted a set of measures to promote the development of “backward” nationalities by granting them a number of privileges and rights. *Korenizatsiia* was the collective name of these measures. See Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*.
11. In Richard Pipes, ed., *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* (New Haven, 1996), 76–77, one can read the previously secret draft theses that Lenin wrote in November 1919, “Policy in the Ukraine.” Among other things, he demanded “greatest caution regarding nationalist traditions, strictest observance of equality of the Ukrainian language and culture,” as well as to “treat Jews and urban inhabitants [that is, largely non-Ukrainians] in the Ukraine with an iron rod.”
12. Interestingly enough, an OGPU report on grain procurements of May 1929 already mentions peasant protests ignited by the authorities’ withdrawal of bread and other necessities from villages that had not fulfilled the plan. As in the civil war, hunger was thus used by the regime in order to punish and tame peasants from the very beginning of the collectivization drive. See Nicolas Werth and Gaël Moullec, *Rapports secrets soviétiques* (Paris, 1994), 112.
13. The uncertainty in both the Ukrainian and especially the Kazakh figures is caused by the difficulty of accounting for the net result of the exodus the Famine caused. Many refugees died around railroad stations or along the way; others were able to take refuge in the Russian republic, Transcaucasia, or China.
14. Maksudov, *Poteri naseleniia SSSR; Kul’chyts’kyi, Holodomor 1932–1933 rr. v Ukraïni*; Davies and Wheatcroft, *Years of Hunger*; Meslé and Vallin, *Mortalité et causes de décès en Ukraine*; E. M. Andreev, L. E. Darskii, and T. L. Khar’kova, *Demograficheskaia istoriia Rossii, 1927–1959* (Moscow, 1998); Iu. A. Poliakov, ed., *Naselenie Rossii v XX veke: Istoricheskie ocherki*, vol. 1, 1900–1939 gg. (Moscow, 2000).
15. The 1920–1922 tragedy also started with local famines in the spring of 1920. See A. Graziosi, “State and Peasants in the Reports of the Political Police, 1918–1922,” in *A New, Peculiar State: Explorations in Soviet History, 1917–1937*, 95–107 (Westport, Conn., 2000) (in which, however, I mistakenly quote the old, excessive estimates on that Famine’s mortality); Bertrand M. Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921* (Stanford, 2002).
16. Quoted in N. A. Ivnitskii, “Golod 1932–1933 godov: Kto vinovat,” in *Golod 1932–1933 godov*, ed. Iu. N. Afanas’ev and N. A. Ivnitskii (Moscow, 1995), 59.
17. The best reconstruction of the origin of Stalin’s “national interpretation” is in Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*. Mace too, however, came to the conclusion that something crucial for subsequent developments happened in July 1932.
18. On 5 August, for instance, the OGPU reported that fractions within Ukrainian communism and national communists within Ukraine “carry out the orders of the

Second Department of the Polish General Staff." See Danilov, Manning, and Viola, *Tragediia sovetskoï derevni*, 3:420–22, 443.

19. Kaganovich speaks of such opposition, without directly mentioning Petrovskiy, in a letter to Stalin that he perhaps didn't mail: "Только что собрались специально для беседы по вопросу о проекте декрета. В проекте декрета объединены три раздела в духе Ваших указаний. Против третьего раздела вчера возражал..., сегодня его не было, он уехал. Сомнения и даже возражения по 2-му и 3-му имелись также и у..., но в конце концов мы остановились на этом тексте в основном." The second point of the decree sentenced those responsible for stealing kolkhoz property (meaning grain) to death, or to five to ten years of forced labor if mitigating circumstances were present. The third punished those inciting peasants to leave the kolkhozy with five to ten years of forced labor. See O. V. Khlevniuk et al., eds., *Stalin i Kaganovich: Perepiska 1931–1936 gg.* (Moscow, 2001), 134, 256.
20. The pact was signed on 25 July 1932. In his "A National Question Crosses a Systemic Border" (see note 8), Snyder convincingly maintains that even if Moscow, after Piłsudski's 1926 coup, perceived itself as open to attack, after 1930 Warsaw grew more and more willing to officially reconfirm the status quo. And it is indeed probable that—as Snyder suggests—Stalin, having resolved the Polish threat to his own satisfaction by the summer of 1932, felt free to exploit its remnants in order to remove potential internal foes and solidify his own position.
21. Khlevniuk et al., *Stalin i Kaganovich*, 273–74.
22. Peter Holquist, "'Conduct Merciless Mass Terror': Decossackization in the Don, 1919," *Cahiers du monde russe* 38, no. 1–2 (1997): 127–62.
23. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York, 1994); M. A. Beznin and T. M. Dimoni, "Povinnosti rossiiskikh kolkhoznikov v 1930–1960-e gody," *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 2 (2002): 96–111.
24. For the correspondence, revealed by Khrushchev in 1963, see Iurii Murin, comp., *Pisatel' i vozhd': Perepiska M. A. Sholokhova s I. V. Stalinym: Sbornik dokumentov iz lichnogo arkhiva I. V. Stalina* (Moscow, 1997), 59–69.
25. Andrea Graziosi, *Bol'sheviki i krest'iane na Ukraine, 1918–1919 gody* (Moscow, 1997); Graziosi, "Collectivisation, révoltes paysannes et politiques gouvernementales à travers les rapports du GPU d'Ukraine de février–mars 1930," *Cahiers du monde russe* 35, no. 3 (1994): 437–632; Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York, 1996); A. Berelowitch and V. Danilov, eds., *Sovetskaia derevnia glazami VChK-OGPU-NKVD*, vol. 3, 1930–1934, bk. 1, 1930–1931 (Moscow, 2003).
26. Stalin never worried about "splinters flying when wood is cut" (a favorite expression). And he was perhaps the foremost practitioner of the "statistical" school of repression, which destroyed entire categories to make sure specific, and even

- foreseeable, problems were “solved.” See A. Graziosi, O. Khlevniuk, and T. Martin, “Il grande terrore,” *Storica* 6, no.18 (2000): 7–62.
27. See Politburo decrees *O sel'sko-khoziaistvennykh zagotovkakh v Belorussii* (Russian State Archive of Sociopolitical History [hereafter RGASPI], fond 17, opis' 3, delo 912, listy 8, 42–43, Pb [politburo meeting] of 16 December 1932, protocol no. 126, p. 1); and *Ob izvrashchenii natsional'noi politiki VKP(b) v Belorussii* (RGASPI, fond 17, opis' 3, delo 917, list 7). I am grateful to Oleg Khlevniuk for reminding me of them.
 28. Danilov, Manning, and Viola, *Tragediia sovetskoï derevni*, 3:603, 611.
 29. See “Direktiva TsK VKP(b) i SNK SSSR o predotvrashchenii massovogo vyezda golodaiushchikh krest'ian,” in *ibid.*, 3:635.
 30. Italian and Polish consuls in Kyiv wrote of cases of death by starvation on the streets and in the courtyards counted not in tens, but in hundreds daily. Most, however, were peasants who had somehow been able to reach the city. Their bodies were quickly removed.
 31. These are the original words: “То, что голодание не научило еще очень многих колхозников уму-разуму, показывает неудовлетворительная подготовка к севу как раз в наиболее неблагополучных районах,” from a report note [*dopovidna zapyska*] from Kosior to Stalin and the VKP(b) Central Committee, 15 March 1933. See Ruslan Pyrih, ed., *Holodomor 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraïni: Dokumenty i materialy* (Kyiv, 2007), 771.
 32. Already on 17 May 1933, after visiting the Don region, a VTsIK (All-Russian Central Executive Committee) instructor reported a slight increase in the number of kolkhozniks reporting for work, a fact he explained by their desire to receive the food that local authorities distributed on the basis of days actually worked. In most villages, he added, the “conspiracy of silence” had been broken: peasants who up to a few weeks before refused even to talk to the authorities had started to speak at meetings, mainly to ask for bread in exchange for the promise to work properly. In the same way and even more than in 1921–1922, therefore, the Famine served government policy by breaking the peasants' backs (see Werth and Moullec, *Rapports secrets soviétiques*, 155). On 11 July an Italian diplomat argued precisely the same point on the basis of the opinions of some German agricultural specialists returning from Ukraine and Kuban (see Graziosi, *Lettere da Kharkov*, 152ff.).
 33. *Yearbook of the United Nations* (New York, 1948–1949), 959; Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (Washington, D.C., 1944), 82. See J. Otto Pohl, “Stalin's Genocide against the ‘Repressed Peoples,’” *Journal of Genocide Research* 2, no. 2 (2000): 267–93.
 34. N. Valentinov [Vol'skii], “Tout est permis,” *Le contrat social* 10 (1966): 19–28 and 77–84. As the author noted in this short but insightful article, Stalin and Hitler belonged to the very small group of a peculiar and terrible kind of twentieth-century European revolutionary, those for whom “everything is permitted.”

35. The case for genocide has been argued, for instance by Stanislav Kul'chyts'kyi, from yet another point of view, that is, by presenting the Famine both at the pan-Soviet and the Ukrainian level as an ideologically motivated genocide, in view of its being the outcome of choices inspired in 1929 by what was the then current understanding of communist ideology and tenets among the Soviet leadership. The fact that there were communist ideals, however primitively conceived, behind Stalin's revolution from above and thus behind the policies that provoked the 1931–1932 crisis is difficult to contest. But it is certainly difficult to maintain that Stalin was ignorant of what such policies could provoke. The experience of 1921–1922 had already shown this, and before 1927 Stalin himself had told Trotsky more than once that to abandon NEP in favor of accelerated industrialization and collectivization would cause a crisis in the relations with peasants and result in famine (a word he did use). A hypothesis such as Kul'chyts'kyi's thus contains at least a kernel of truth, but I believe that Stalin, though knowing that the 1929 offensive would cause a crisis, did not anticipate its seriousness, and in fact at the end of 1930 believed he had won the battle with the countryside. Therefore, this argument, though in part correct and rightly pointing to the role of communist ideology and erroneous economic beliefs, ends up in my opinion rather weak.
36. In a letter to the author, Oleg Khlevniuk rightly points to the fact that many of Stalin's policies had what could be called "genocidal" features. He writes, "No matter what problem arose in the country, it was solved through the application of violence directed at specific and well-defined sociocultural or national groups of the population." These groups and the treatment inflicted on them, from preventive measures to liquidation, varied over time according to the internal and international situation and the despot's own beliefs. They included Cossacks, peasants, the old and the various national intelligentsias, religious figures, and "enemy nations"—from Poles and Germans to Jews and Chechens, etc. The Holodomor must be understood against this background.
37. Some may maintain that a racially or plot-theory motivated genocide, based on the conviction that a nation's or a "race's" future requires the extermination of another people is just as "rational." After all, the decision to exterminate originates from what might pass for logical reasoning. Yet I believe that an important difference lies in the kind of rationality involved. Stalin's was fairly sophisticated, implying as it did the use of a refined theory of the process of nation and state building, peasant behavior, the possibility of influencing them, and so on.
38. A. Graziosi, "The Great Famine of 1932–1933: Consequences and Implications," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 25, no. 3–4 (2001): 157–65.
39. Needless to say, I am not claiming this was the reason for the Soviet collapse. However, the unredeemable nature of its past certainly complicated the life of a system that was slowly strangled by its economic, demographic, and national contradictions and that was finally killed by the attempts to reform it.
40. Jacob Burckhardt, *Meditazioni sulla storia universale*, 2nd ed. (Florence, 1985), 35ff.