

Encumbered Memory

The Ukrainian Famine of 1932–33

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Vasyl' Ivanovich Marochko et al., eds., *Natsional'na knyha pam"iati zhertv holodomoru 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraini: Misto Kyiv* (National Book of Memory of Victims of the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine: The City of Kyiv). 584 pp., illus. Kyiv: Feniks, 2008. ISBN-13 978-9666516186.

Heorhii Kas'ianov, *Danse macabre: Holod 1932–1933 rokiv u politytsi, masovii svidomosti ta istoriohrafii (1980-ti–pochatok 2000-kh)* (Danse Macabre: The Famine of 1932–1933 in Politics, Mass Consciousness, and Historiography [1980s–Early 2000s]). 272 pp. Kyiv: Nash chas, 2010. ISBN-13 978-9661530477.

Yurij Luhovy, dir., *Genocide Revealed*. 75 min. LLM Inc., 2011. \$34.95.

Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*. ix + 163 pp. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010. ISBN-13 978-0691147840, \$26.95 (cloth); 978-0691152387, \$16.95 (paper); 978-1400836062, \$16.95 (e-Book).

The extreme violence characteristic of Europe in the first half of the 20th century has left us with many tricky problems to work through, including historiographic ones with political and ethical dimensions. Among these incidents of violence is the famine that took millions of lives in the Soviet Union in 1932–33, particularly in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Under review here are four different kinds of works about the famine

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in Ukraine—a memorial volume, an engaged scholarly monograph, a documentary film, and an extended essay—coming from four different subject positions—the memory politics apparatus in Ukraine during the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko (2005–10), critical academia in Ukraine, the Ukrainian diaspora in North America, and mainstream academia in North America. In evaluating the four works, this review seeks to identify some of the difficult and sometimes painful conceptual, political, and ethical issues that have arisen from the famine and from its contested place in social memory.

The review is organized as follows. I introduce the four works individually, followed by thematic sections that interweave material from all of them. The first of those addresses what the works tell us about the famine itself, empirically. This section is rather short, because the items inform us more about the social memory of the famine than about the actual historical event. This is followed by a discussion of the Ukrainian term “Holodomor” and of the famine in relation to the category “genocide.” I then examine the sacralization of the famine, seeking to explain why this happens and what its consequences are. Finally, I point to strong undercurrents of radical nationalism, xenophobia, and particularly antisemitism in the memory politics of the famine.

The first work under review is *Natsional'na knyha pam"iati zhertv holodomoru* (hereafter *Knyha pam"iati*), one of 19 volumes prepared by the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory and local administrations. Seventeen volumes are dedicated to individual oblasts in their current boundaries. At the time of the famine, there were far fewer oblasts—only seven. Though Kyiv was neither the capital of Ukraine during the famine (that was Kharkiv), nor an administrative unit with oblast status, it receives a volume in the series; there is also a separate volume for Kyiv oblast. It is the volume on the city that is being reviewed here. Another volume summarizes the entire memorial-book project. The books were compiled in connection with the 75th anniversary of the famine, as a major component of President Viktor Yushchenko's multifaceted policy to promote awareness of the famine in Ukraine and worldwide. Indeed, each volume contains a graphic with an image of the first famine memorial in Kyiv as well as the Yushchenko-era slogans “Ukraine Remembers—the World Recognizes!” and “The Holodomor—the Genocide of the Ukrainian People.” The entire collection of these volumes is currently available online at the website of the National Museum Memorial in Commemoration of Famines (sic) Victims in Ukraine.¹ In connection with compiling the volumes, researchers collected

¹ www.memorialgolodomors.org (accessed 29 October 2011). The plural of famines here and the plural of Holodomors in the name of the research organization immediately below indicate

210,000 testimonies about the famine and made a list of 880,000 names of famine victims (Kas'ianov, 139). The project was directed by the most important scholars in the nongovernmental Association of Research into the Holodomors in Ukraine—Vasyl' Marochko, Ol'ha Movchan, and Oleksandra Veselova (Kas'ianov, 228). Marochko makes frequent appearances as a talking head in Yuriy Luhov's documentary *Genocide Revealed*.

The volumes are all organized around the same principles. The Kyiv volume opens with a number of short monographic studies by various researchers. Marochko, for example, contributes sections on the territory and population of Kyiv and its suburban villages, the impact of collectivization on those villages, famine victims in Kyiv itself, the Torgsin stores, and (together with Movchan) the typhus epidemic in Kyiv.² These studies mainly cite archival documents. The secondary literature cited is overwhelmingly in Ukrainian, with a few references to literature in Russian, particularly to the work of Elena Osokina. A single footnote (74 n. 3), in a section by Iurii Shapoval on what foreign diplomats had to say about the famine, lists works in Western languages. Western scholars are occasionally cited in Russian or Ukrainian translation, notably Alain Besançon, Robert Conquest, and James C. Scott.³ Generally speaking, the scholarship is firmly rooted in the traditional “fatherland” (*otechestvennyi, vitchyzniani*) approach, once Soviet but now post- and, here, anti-Soviet. One of the features of this kind of historiography is that it is not integrated into global scholarship. As a result, important scholarship in Western languages is neglected.⁴

A section titled “Documents” follows, which includes the reports by German diplomats as well as dozens of documents from Ukrainian archives. Many of the documents seem to be chosen to confirm or illustrate what was already discussed in the section on scholarly studies. The documentary section concludes with photographs of all the famine monuments around Kyiv (11 at the time of publication). The next section contains testimony of famine survivors. The earliest testimonies here are those collected by James Mace

the inclusion of the famines of 1921 and 1946, which are also often interpreted as intentional famines aimed particularly at Ukrainians.

² Torgsin stores sold produce and other goods for precious metals and foreign currency. They are discussed in some detail near the end of this review.

³ Alain Besançon, *A Century of Horrors: Communism, Nazism, and the Uniqueness of the Shoah* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2007); Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press in association with the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986); James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

⁴ The most glaring omission is R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

and Leonid Heretz in the 1980s,⁵ and the latest were collected in 2008. It is a pity, and typical of the state of Ukrainian famine studies at the moment, that more effort was not expended on finding earlier testimonies and testimonies collected in a greater variety of circumstances. This uniformity has been criticized by Heorhii Kas'ianov in his book under review. He thought the massive project to collect testimonies in 2007–8 was motivated by “those social groups and power structures that had a social and political interest in the confirmation of the historical veracity of the *Holodomor* [Kas'ianov's italics].” The gathering of testimony for the *Knyhy pam"iati* was “realized as executing a political order and following a certain standard, as a result of which the uniformity of the memoirs was determined not only by the uniformity of the events which were proposed to be remembered but also by the template and uniformity of the questions.” The interviews took place when collective memory was being deliberately constructed, “and this could not but influence the content of the memoirs” (Kas'ianov, 251).

The volume makes a sharp hierarchical division, characteristic of traditional “fatherland” historiography, between “documents” and “testimonies.” The monographic studies that precede the documents and testimonies sections never cite testimonies, relying instead on the more highly valued documents; the testimonies, which occupy less than a third of the space of the documents, are clearly considered to be inferior sources. Many of the documents are not transcribed but published as photocopies, which enhances the documentariness of the documents section (but not the legibility). The overvaluation of documents, which were prepared for the most part by persons in the Soviet party and state apparatus, combined with the undervaluation of victims' testimonies, is something that Holocaust studies has been moving away from for well over a decade.⁶ Although so-called “ego documents,” such as testimonies and memoirs, have their limitations, so do documents prepared by state authorities, particularly state authorities engaged in murderous activities. While testimonies are unreliable on dates, for example, they are the only portals to enter into the past experience of historical events, particularly of traumatic historical events. Survivors caught in extreme situations may have a blurred perception of what exactly transpired

⁵ U.S. Commission on the Ukraine Famine, *Investigation of the Ukrainian Famine, 1932–33*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987–88).

⁶ A key statement on the tremendous importance of using victim testimony is the chapter “New Approach to Sources,” in Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 91–94. See also Omer Bartov, “Wartime Lies and Other Testimonies: Jewish–Christian Relations in Buczacz, 1939–1944,” *East European Politics and Societies* 25, 3 (2011): 486–511.

at a particular moment, but they usually have no confusion about whether or not they lost a parent or spouse and whether or not they suffered physical injury themselves.

The next section of *Knyha pam"iati* is a chronicle. It eschews a direct narrative style, although it fits the metanarrative of the memorial-book project and Yushchenko's memory politics more generally. Attached to various dates are notices and reports on the reduction of food rations in institutions, failures to meet the food production plans, the incidence of typhus, declines in the number and health of horses, abuses in collective-farm administration, and the length of bread lines; as the chronicle proceeds, individual death notices proliferate, as do reports on homeless children. The chronicle is followed by a "martyrology"—that is, a list of victims as established in documentary evidence. The exact number is not provided, but it looks like about 7,000 names of Kyivans are listed. The compilation is not overly careful. I came across several cases where a victim is named in the chronicle section but does not appear in the martyrology section. For instance, the chronicle lists the death of Abram Musiiiovych Shatan from exhaustion at the age of 38; his death was registered on 6 August 1932 (329). But this individual does not figure in the martyrology. (I should note, in light of some aspects of this publication that will be discussed below, that the martyrology does not exclude Jewish-sounding names.)

Kas'ianov's monograph is very much a reaction to and critique of the kind of memory politics embodied in the *Knyhy pam"iati*. A scholar with a sharp, wry wit, Kas'ianov pretends that his book is objective and nonpolitical. The short annotation at the front states: "For scholars, lecturers, students. Attention! Not for political use!" (2). In a preface titled "To Whom It May Concern," Kas'ianov writes in bold letters that the "reflections, conclusions, and generalizations contained herein are intended exclusively for academic discussion." They are "not suitable for use in the sphere of historical politics, civic education, propaganda" (4). But the supposedly apolitical, objective nature of Kas'ianov's monograph is belied by its strong language. Discussing how a particular construction of the famine ("the *Holodomor*") has become a civil religion, for example, Kas'ianov laments that an atmosphere has been created "in which it has become extraordinarily difficult to remain in the framework of a genuine, sincere respect for the memory of the perished and to honor it without social hysterics and public scenes in the style of the theater of the absurd" (39). Kas'ianov, of the Institute of History of Ukraine at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, is well known as an interpreter of nationalism as well as a historian of 20th- and 21st-century

Ukraine. Widely read in global scholarship, he has criticized the memory politics around the famine and more generally dissented from the traditional “fatherland” history that dominates the Ukrainian historical establishment.⁷ His thought-provoking critique of famine politics in Ukraine, which I draw on more below, would have been enhanced by at least some discussion of how the famine has also become politicized in Russia. Putin’s government has opposed recognizing the famine in Ukraine as genocide, and this view also dominates Russian historiography.⁸

The third item under review, Yuriy Luhovy’s documentary film *Genocide Revealed*, which premiered in Montreal on 20 May 2011, is a typical example of what I have identified elsewhere as “victim cinema.”⁹ The dominant theme of Ukrainian victimization is emphasized by a heavy-handed score from Roman Luhovy. There is also a less obvious reinforcement of the sense of victimization encoded in the choice of Mohawk actor Graham Greene as narrator. Yuriy Luhovy had been the editor of the Canadian National Film Board film *Kahnesatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (dir. Alanis Obomsawin, 1993) about the Oka crisis, a conflict between Mohawks and the town of Oka in Quebec. (Luhovy is based in Quebec.) When introducing *Genocide Revealed* at its premiere in Edmonton, which I attended, Luhovy identified with the narrative of the victimization of Mohawks and other native peoples in Canada and suggested that their plight bore similarities to the victimization of Ukrainians.

The film was made in the course of a year. It cannot be compared in quality to, say, Olha Onyshko and Sarah Farhat’s captivating and nuanced treatment of wartime western Ukrainian history, *Three Stories of Galicia* (2010). *Genocide Revealed* uses the very simple formula of talking heads + survivor testimony + documentary footage typical of other low-budget examples of victim cinema. In that regard, it resembles Luhovy’s previous effort, co-directed with Slavko Nowytski, *Harvest of Despair* (1984) and Edvins Snores’s *The Soviet Story*

⁷ Georgii Kas’ianov, “Razrytaia mogila: Golod 1932–1933 godov v ukrainskoi istoriografii, politike i massovom soznanii,” *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (2004): 1–31; Georgiy Kasianov, “Revisiting the Great Famine of 1932–1933: Politics of Memory and Public Consciousness (Ukraine after 1991),” in *Past in the Making: Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989*, ed. Michal Kopeček (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), 197–219; Kasianov and Philipp Ther, eds., *A Laboratory of Transnational History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009).

⁸ Many of the issues are discussed in Stanislav Kulchytsky, “What Is the Crux of Ukraine–Russia Dispute?” *The Day*, 3, 10, 17, and 24 February 2009, www.day.kiev.ua/263850, www.day.kiev.ua/264239, www.day.kiev.ua/264647, www.day.kiev.ua/265044 (accessed 13 December 2011).

⁹ John-Paul Himka, “Victim Cinema: *Between Hitler and Stalin. Ukraine in World War II—The Untold Story*,” in *A Laboratory of Transnational History*, 211–24.

(2008). A positive feature of *Genocide Revealed* is the documentary footage that Luhovy invested a good deal of time in restoring. Typically, though, as in *Harvest of Despair* and *The Soviet Story*, some of the documentary stills in *Genocide Revealed* came from the 1921 famine and some of the film footage was taken from Oleksandr Dovzhenko's film *Arsenal* (1929), where the incorporated scenes were meant to be an indictment of the tsarist, not the Soviet, regime. Although the survivors' testimonies are both very moving and enlightening, the one-sided presentation of the talking heads and the narration are disappointing. The gravity of the famine of 1932–33 and the great number of its victims warrant, in my view, a more sophisticated cinematic treatment than this quickly made, formulaic production,

Norman M. Naimark's *Stalin's Genocides* concerns much more than the Ukrainian famine, although that will be the main focus of this review. A professor of Russian and East European history at Stanford, Naimark should be well known to the readers of *Kritika* for his work on comparative genocide/ethnic cleansing.¹⁰ This new book is an extended essay, emerging most directly from a lecture at the liberal German publishing house Suhrkamp in Berlin. The Stalinist crimes covered in the book, aside from the famine, are dekulakization, the deportation of nations, and the Great Terror. It is a work of synthesis, a product of reflection rather than of new research in the primary sources, and it attempts to cover much ground in few words, limning the argument clearly to avoid a bog of details. Although this works well enough on the empirical level, the brevity of the book seems to me to hinder adequate treatment of many theoretical issues, as we will see in the examination of his take on genocide below. An impression of superficiality is compounded by the amount of background information included for nonspecialist readers. The advantage of Naimark's compositional choices, however, is that the main thesis comes through very clearly: we should think of the crimes of Stalinism with the same horror with which we think of other genocides, and that they too should be considered genocides.

There can be no question that the famine of 1932–33 was one of the most horrific events of a horrific century. But few of the works under review do much to advance our understanding of it. Naimark's account is perforce not sufficiently detailed to convey this effectively, and Luhovy's film follows a well-worn pattern that cannot tell us anything new. Kas'ianov's book focuses on

¹⁰ Naimark's publications include *Terrorists and Social Democrats: The Russian Revolutionary Movement under Alexander III* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1995); and *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

memory politics, and we only approach the horror of the famine itself through his strong opposition to its instrumentalization. By contrast, *Knyha pam "iati*, in spite of its scholarly deficits and origins in a political memory campaign, actually provides valuable material for understanding the famine. The dedication of a separate volume to the city of Kyiv is a confusing anachronism that in fact results in an oblique microstudy of the famine, which is perhaps more valuable than a focus on the entire oblast or on the former capital, Kharkiv. Kyiv, like many other big cities, had a number of suburban villages around it. These villages specialized in providing fresh produce for the markets of this city of half a million. They thrived; and Kyiv ate healthy, fresh food. Villagers also engaged in crafts sold to the urban population. This mutually beneficial relationship was utterly destroyed, of course, by collectivization. Prosperous market-producing farmers naturally resisted collectivization and paid the price, along with the rest of the Ukrainian countryside—fierce repression, then starvation. The situation of the suburban villagers was made worse by the lack of industry in Kyiv—there were few factory jobs to flee to (13–28). “In the fields of the collective farms, there worked swollen and terribly exhausted peasants who died right out in the fields” (32).

In the city itself, the famine manifested itself in several ways. One was long bread lines that formed hours before the stores opened. Another was overcrowding in orphanage facilities. Many starving parents abandoned their children in the city, hoping that they would survive in state institutions and putting tremendous pressure on these institutions, since the influx of children was not planned for. Mortality in the orphanages rose due to malnutrition and unsanitary conditions (146, 157–59). In some state homes the children received only a quarter of the established norms for bread and meat; only 40 percent of the children could be clothed (33). In one children’s quarantine on Naberezhna street at the end of 1932, 120 children occupied a space intended for 45. The children lived, ate, slept, and attended lessons in five rooms. They had shoes but no socks. Since they lacked overcoats, they were not let out into the fresh air. Seventy-seven percent were the children of collective farm workers, the rest the children of workers. Half were under school age, many under four (182). A document from the City Control Commission of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection of 3 September 1932 contains the following passage:

The state of the rooms of the children’s quarantines both on Kyrylivs’ka Street and in the Institute of the Okhmatdyt is inadmissibly insanitary.¹¹ Flies, filth, and so on. In the mortuary of the Institute of the Okhmatdyt an inadmissible phenomenon is observed, namely, the administration

¹¹ Okhmatdyt stands for Okhorona maternstva ta dytynstva (Protection of Motherhood and Childhood)—an association of an institute, hospital, and various children’s institutions in Kyiv.

of this institute issued an order not to bury children individually but to collect them in a large quantity so as to bury them together. This creates a frightful impression on visitors to the mortuary and gives grounds for all kinds of anti-Soviet expressions. (157)

There were also food shortages in hospitals. The chief doctor of Kyiv wrote to the head of the Health Section of the city executive committee on 16 January 1932, about a year before the worst effects of the famine were to be felt: “In the second hospital the provision of food is a critical issue; it even has a threatening character. This is because the requisite norms are very much reduced. Thus in December instead of 48 kg of butter, the hospital was only given 18 kg; only 40 percent of the grains were received; instead of 120 liters, they give on average only 10 or 12; no flour at all was given; the hospital has a three-day supply of potatoes; nor is meat given—on average there are 50 grams per patient, part of which is bone” (117). Overcrowding and malnutrition in the hospitals only exacerbated the epidemic of typhus that accompanied the famine. The health situation in Kyiv during the famine was dire (37–41). This examination of the urban effects of the famine is a departure from the standard focus on the countryside and underscores how all-encompassing was the devastation wrought by Stalinist agricultural policy.



The tremendous explosion of death in 1932–33 has left a difficult legacy of memory. There is, to begin with, the difficulty of what to call it. Some, such as activists in the Ukrainian diaspora, find the simple term “famine” too weak.¹² In both the diaspora and Ukraine use has been made of the label “the Ukrainian Holocaust.”¹³ But Ukrainians are increasingly coming to realize that the Holocaust refers to a specific complex of events and cannot simply be appropriated for their own purposes, and that it is incorrect to elide the differences between the targeted destruction of the entire Jewish population and a manmade famine that killed a significant portion of the population of Ukraine.¹⁴ The Ukrainian term Holodomor is finding more and more application. It is the term preferred by the Yushchenko memory

¹² Peter Borisow, “A Subversion of Holodomor,” *Ukrainian Weekly*, 2 March 2008.

¹³ An early usage was Vasyl’ I. Hryshko, *Ukrains’kyi “Holokost,” 1933* (New York: DOBRUS-SUZHERO, 1983). Iurii Mytsyk, a professor of history at the National University Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, has been issuing a multivolume collection of survivors’ testimonies under the title *Ukrains’kyi holokost 1932–1933: Svidchennia tykh, khto vyzhyv*.

¹⁴ Liudmyla Hrynevych, of the Institute of the History of Ukraine at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and one of the more productive famine researchers, has criticized the application of the term “Ukrainian Holocaust.” See Lyudmyla Grynevych, “The Present

project, and as such it is used in the title of *Knyha pam "iati*; Kas'ianov also employs it as the label for that particular construct of the famine, which he critiques. Norman Naimark uses "The Holodomor" as a chapter title, though he often also refers to it as the "Ukrainian killer famine," which is actually an approximate translation of *holodomor* (from *holod*, famine, and *moryty*, kill). Not all scholars have used the term, however. Timothy Snyder, for example, refrained from using Holodomor "for Stalin's deliberate starvation of Soviet Ukraine" in his bestselling *Bloodlands*, "simply because it is unfamiliar to most readers of English."¹⁵

The origins of the term "Holodomor" are obscure. As I reported in *Kritika* some years ago, it was supposedly coined by the Ukrainian writer Ivan Drach and first appeared in print in 1988 in a piece by another writer, Oleksa Musiienko.¹⁶ The term did indeed begin to gain its present currency in 1988, but in fact the word is older than that. Kas'ianov categorizes the term as "a literary metaphor invented in the diaspora" (222). Drawing on information from another historian, Maksym Bystryts'kyi, Kas'ianov provides the word with a somewhat longer pedigree. It is attested already in 1963 in Vasyl' Barka's foreword to the New York edition of his novel about the famine, *Zhovtyi kniaz'* (The Yellow Prince). It also appeared in an etymological dictionary edited by the Ukrainian Canadian linguist Jaroslaw Rozumnyj in the mid-1960s (220 n. 59). But I have found evidence to suggest that it is older still. In a KGB interrogation of 1967, the former Ukrainian nationalist Petro Snaha mentioned that another nationalist, Volodymyr Oliinyk, had entered a nationalist security unit in the spring of 1944 using the nom de guerre Holodomor.¹⁷ Oliinyk was born in a Galician village now in Poland, and his security unit was active in Lviv oblast, so the word may be of western Ukrainian origin, which fits well with its subsequent migration to the diaspora. If it is indeed of Galician origin, I surmise that the word "Holodomor" arose under the influence of a satirical name for the old Austrian crownland, known in German as Galizien und Lodomerien; wags renamed it Golicja i Głodomeria, which in Polish signifies a place where people go naked and die

State of Ukrainian Historiography on the Holodomor and Prospects for Its Development," *Harriman Review* 16, 2 (1 November 2008): 16.

¹⁵ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 412—reviewed in *Kritika* 14, 1 (2013): 197–206.

¹⁶ John-Paul Himka, "Review of Johan Dietsch, *Making Sense of Suffering: Holocaust and Holodomor in Ukrainian Historical Culture* and Stanislav Kul'chys'kyi, *Holod 1932–1933 rr. v Ukraini iak henotsyd*," *Kritika* 8, 3 (2007): 684.

¹⁷ Interrogation of Petro Andriiovych Smaha, 20 June 1967, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG 31.018 M, reel 99; Haluzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv Sluzhby bezpeky Ukrainy f. 30853, vol. 2, folio 60.

of hunger. *Knyha pam'iaty*, however, includes a testimony taken in 2007 from a woman who claimed to have heard the word first from her father, who had said at the time of the events themselves that this was not a famine but some kind of contrived *holodomor* (260). I should note, however, that this kind of information in testimonies is not very reliable, especially considering that the term was everywhere in 2007 and associated with the idea that the famine was the result of a deliberate policy to kill Ukrainians.

Whatever its origins, the term “Holodomor” now has very definite connotations. The point of giving the Ukrainian famine its own name is to emphasize its distinctiveness. The term is used primarily by those who consider the famine of 1932–33 in Ukraine to be genocide. Of the works under review, three endorse the genocide argument, with Kas'ianov's book rejecting it. Kas'ianov's own interpretation of the famine is that it was caused by collectivization and that it affected Ukraine more than elsewhere in the Soviet Union because Ukraine was so reliant on grain production.¹⁸ At the same time, he accepts that there was also a national aspect to the famine, a conflict between the “ruling class of the center and the social-cultural elite of the republic,” which was a “very important variant from the all-union famine” (259–67). He feels that the term genocide entered scholarly literature in Ukraine “without any critical analysis,” that it appeared “as an ideological cliché and not as a category of scholarly analysis and cognition” (235). The issue is unsurprisingly simplified in Luhovy's film *Genocide Revealed*, which claims that “the evidence for genocide is irrefutable.”

Knyha pam'iaty offers no substantive discussion of genocide either and is instead content to print documents and testimonies that indicate that the famine was indeed genocidal. A report of the German Consulate in Kyiv from 15 January 1934 said, “the Soviet government fosters the spread of famine in order to bring the Ukrainians to their knees” (91). Survivor eyewitnesses, as I have argued elsewhere and in another context, are often not very knowledgeable about perpetrators and their inner motivations, but they do offer opinions.¹⁹ A man interviewed by Mace and Heretz in the

¹⁸ Kas'ianov focuses on the famine of 1932–33 in Ukraine and thus leaves aside the earlier and very different situation in Kazakhstan, where famine erupted in the context of sedentarization of a nomadic and seminomadic society. According to Naimark (75–76), the number of deaths attributable to the famine there “was 1.45 million, some 38 percent of the total Kazakh population, the highest percentage death toll of any nationality in the Soviet Union.”

¹⁹ John-Paul Himka, “Dostovirnist' svidchennia: Reliatsiia Ruzi Vagner pro l'vivs'kyi pohrom vlitku 1941 r.,” *Holokost i suchasnist'* 2, 4 (2008): 63–65. The same point has been made independently by other Holocaust researchers: Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), xviii; Martin Dean, *Collaboration during the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia*

1980s said: “My mother always told me that this famine is artificial, that the authorities made it in order to destroy the Ukrainian people” (287). A woman from the same interview project stated that the famine “was intentionally made in order to destroy Ukrainian people” (293). A man interviewed as part of the Yushchenko project stated that “as an eyewitness I can boldly confirm that it [the famine] was planned and organized from the center” (304). *Knyha pam’iati* also corrects eyewitnesses who mention a bad harvest or drought, as if there were natural causes to the famine as well as genocidal intent. For example, before citing the testimony of a certain Sofia Aronivna, the compiler of the testimonies writes: “Another inhabitant of the city of Kyiv absorbed well the Soviet postulates about these years, which blamed the ‘food difficulties’ on a bad harvest and on kulaks hiding grain” (260) After Nina Fedorivna Mandzherak declared that the causes of the famine were a “bad harvest and drought,” the compiler added in parentheses: “Although it is well known that the Hidromettsentr of Moscow confirmed that in 1932 precipitation on the territory of Ukraine fell within the norm” (262).

Of the four works, the most reflective on the genocide issue is, of course, Naimark. He summarizes his views on the Ukrainian famine as genocide in the conclusions to his book:

The Ukrainian killer famine should be considered an act of genocide. There is enough evidence—if not overwhelming evidence—to indicate that Stalin and his lieutenants knew that widespread famine in the USSR in 1932–33 hit Ukraine particularly hard, and that they were ready to see millions of Ukrainian peasants die as a result. They made no efforts to provide relief; they prevented the peasants from seeking food themselves in the cities or elsewhere in the USSR; and they refused to relax restrictions on grain deliveries until it was too late. Stalin’s hostility to the Ukrainians and their attempts to maintain their form of “home rule” as well as his anger that Ukrainian peasants resisted collectivization fueled the killer famine. (134–35)

Naimark works, however, with an expanded definition of genocide, and he seems not entirely certain if the Ukrainian famine fits only his expanded definition or the 1948 United Nations definition as well. The latter definition refers to the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group.” Naimark finds Stalin’s motivations “frustratingly elusive” (70), which makes it difficult to pronounce on the issues of “intent” and targeted group. But he is certain that it was genocide:

If Stalin and his ruling circle created these circumstances because they distrusted peasants and were indifferent to their suffering and dying during collectivization and dekulakization, then, in a strict sense, the 1948 definition of genocide does not apply to the case. If the victims were allowed to perish because they were Ukrainians, then the indictment of genocide under the 1948 definition makes perfect sense. Of course, Stalin did not want to kill all the Ukrainians or deport them all. . . . But he did want to destroy them as the enemy nation he perceived them to be and to transform them into a Soviet nation that would be completely reliable, trustworthy, and denationalized in all but superficial ways. . . . [Stalin and his closest associates] were convinced that the Ukrainian peasants as a group were “enemies of the people” who deserved to die. That . . . should be enough to conclude that the Ukrainian famine was genocide. (78–79)

Basically, Naimark argues (3–5, 23–29) that the 1948 definition of genocide is too narrow and that a definition of genocide should include social and political targets as well as national, ethnic, racial, and religious groups. The correction needs to be made because the Soviets derailed the original, more inclusive ideas of Raphael Lemkin, the man who invented the concept of genocide, to protect themselves from accusations of genocide. Naimark approves of the new definitions of genocide legislated by the Baltic states that include as genocide the massive deportations of their populations in 1940–41, 1944–45, and 1948–49. In effect, Naimark throws the doors wide open for genocide: Mao’s reckless and murderous experimentation on his own population, Pol Pot’s crimes in Cambodia, dekulakization, and Katyn (“one of the most unambiguous cases of genocide in the history of the twentieth century” [92]). Other scholars, also dissatisfied with the 1948 definition of genocide, have preferred to narrow it, redefine it, and/or adopt new terms, rather than expanding it. Jacques Semelin, for example, uses the overarching term “massacre” for the premeditated mass killing of civilians; he redefines genocide as “that particular process of civilian destruction that is directed at the total eradication of a group, the criteria by which it is identified being determined by the perpetrator.” Semelin’s definition expands the 1948 definition by including all manner of targeting, while simultaneously limiting it to “eradication,” which he defines quite specifically. His definition is meant to be a purely social science category divorced from any legal definition.²⁰ For a variety of reasons, Snyder in *Bloodlands* decided to abandon the term “genocide” altogether and to use “mass killing” instead.²¹

²⁰ Jacques Semelin, *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide*, trans. Cynthia Schoch (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 313–48, 340.

²¹ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 412–13.

Naimark admits that the term is problematic. Some scholars refuse to introduce a legal term into historical study. He responds that scholars cannot “sequester themselves from the international conversation about genocide, whether about the past or about the present,” since “history and international judicial norms are inextricably intertwined.” Moreover, “the principled abstention from using the term genocide can serve politicized purposes as much as its application to specific historical circumstances” (124). He does not, however, offer any response to other objections that he acknowledges: “Others decide not to use the term because of the proliferation of claims to genocide by a variety of peoples and groups that seek to strengthen the legitimacy of their historical sufferings, thus debasing and invalidating genocide’s original meaning. There are also scholars who object that the term has become excessively politicized, used to condemn some states and political systems, while justifying military intervention” (124).

Other objections are not even mentioned. What if a genocide claim is part of the arsenal of xenophobic and aggressive nationalism? (A memorandum of a committee of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in the mid-1980s claimed that Serbs were undergoing “genocide” by Albanians in Kosovo.²² The Serbian political leadership, as it mobilized to launch a war against Bosnian Muslims and Croats, publicized in the media the nation’s suffering at the Croatian concentration camp Jasenovac during World War II.) Does not the legal definition of genocide, even if amended, reflect an overly simplified and essentialized view of social realities (of class, race, and nation in particular)? Is not the criterion of intent also a symptom of an overly simplified view of social action? (There is a dynamic between intention and opportunity, as debates over the origin of the Holocaust, for example, demonstrate.)

Like the Holocaust, the Holodomor drew into its machinery many facilitators from the targeted group itself. Of course, the Ukrainian republican leadership had to go along with the grain requisitions or face deadly purging (*Knyha pam’iati*, 48–49). Although they had to be prodded to enforce a policy that was producing starvation in the mass of the Ukrainian population, there were also carrots on offer. Drawing almost exclusively on Osokina’s research, *Knyha pam’iati* illuminates how privileged the Ukrainian party elite was during the famine. The party elite at this time had developed a mania for private railway coaches, and these were luxuriously supplied with butter,

²² The full text of the memorandum is available on many Internet sites, e.g., www.trepca.net/english/2006/serbian_memorandum_1986/serbia_memorandum_1986.html (accessed 13 December 2011).

Swiss cheese, sausage, game, other meat, fresh and canned fish, herring, red caviar, sugar, chocolate, candies, fruit, and export-quality cigarettes (56).

Of course, there were also small fry drawn into the production of famine. They were much more numerous, and they did not eat as well. The same father who supposedly used the word “Holodomor” and told his daughter that it was deliberately created was also a member of the militia in 1933, and he traveled around the villages fighting against “robbery and murders” (i.e., “stealing” of grain and cannibalism). He starved anyway, although not to death (*Knyha pam’iati*, 260). *Knyha pam’iati* has numerous references to local activists, sometimes rip-roaring drunk, who took cows from farmers, searched houses for hidden grain and other food, and beat people up (24–25, 133–34, 141–42, 148, 257, 269). As Kas’ianov points out, “millions of people died in their own houses; alongside them were millions of those who survived. Some of them were passive witnesses; some were organizers of and participants in the crime” (256). He also points out that the latter have hardly been researched at all. The omission of local implementers naturally offers a very one-sided picture of what transpired in the villages, but it fits very well with the memory politics of genocide (“they” did that to “us”). Campaigns for the recognition of a certain event as genocide are generally more interested in legitimizing victimization narratives than in understanding the complexities of history.

A difference between the Holodomor and the Holocaust is that, for the former, there are few if any documents urging the murder of the target population. Certainly none is included in *Knyha pam’iati ... misto Kyiv*. Instead, most of the documents in the memorial book actually show efforts to alleviate the situation: for example, the previously mentioned letter of the chief doctor in Kyiv, which documents the catastrophic food shortages in a hospital but was written to call attention to a problem that needed to be resolved. The same is true with regard to the typhus epidemic. The documentation flows from efforts to stop, not facilitate, the spread of the epidemic. Inadequate relief efforts in 1933, on the eve of spring sowing, are mentioned in *Knyha pam’iati* (51, 358). There are also documents indicating efforts to fix the economic problems behind the famine (193–94, 197–98). These oddities of the documentary source base do not disprove that the Ukrainians were deliberately starved in 1932–33, but they do indicate that the situation requires from scholars a sensitivity to the complexity of the historical situation. Here I do not think that simplifying and classifying terms like “genocide” are particularly helpful.

A further problem with genocide is that it can become competitive. “Victimhood theft” is a common phenomenon in victim cinema, and an

instance of it also appears in *Genocide Revealed*. Luhovy's documentary states that the famine in Russia proper targeted almost exclusively Ukrainians. While many Ukrainians did indeed suffer disproportionately in the Kuban region of Russia, the Don Cossacks also suffered tremendously during the famine. Did they too experience genocide? Naimark would, I am sure, say yes. I am not so sure, however, about what answer Luhovy or *Knyha pam'iaty*'s editor Marochko would give. There is an envy in the politics of genocide recognition that requires more reflection.

Such maneuvers are complemented by the genocide numbers game. Naimark is relatively careful about this, estimating three to five million famine deaths in Ukraine and the Kuban (70; see also 147 n. 2). Luhovy's *Genocide Revealed* states that "specialists estimate" five to twelve million victims. These could not be specialists in demography, however, since all recent studies based on a careful analysis of census data come up with numbers in the range of 2.6 to 3.9 million.²³ Inflating the number of victims is problematic for one additional reason that Timothy Snyder has drawn attention to: "By repeating exaggerated numbers, Europeans release into their culture millions of ghosts of people who never lived. What begins as competitive martyrology can end with martyrological imperialism."²⁴

A final deficiency of the genocide category, at least as it plays out with reference to the Ukrainian famine, is that it is over-politicized and under-intellectualized. Critical of the "unison voices and uniformity" as well as the "intellectual poverty of the *Holodomor* discourse," Kas'ianov writes: "The simplicity of the *Holodomor* discourse considerably strengthens its social-cultural functionality. The rather small set of ordinary and handy publicistic formulas, which do not require difficult mental labor and particular intellectual effort and at the same time contain a powerful emotional appeal, is good consumer material for that part of society which has become accustomed to feed on slogans, schemata, and ready-made formulas" (213–14).

He identifies the roots of this preference for simple, emotionally charged rhetoric in two rhetorically similar ideologies: "communism in its Soviet variant and nationalism in its diaspora [variant]" (214). Furthermore, the

²³ Jacques Vallin, France Meslé, Serguei Adamets, and Serhii Pirozhkov, "A New Estimate of Ukrainian Population Losses during the Crises of the 1930s and 1940s," *Population Studies* 56, 3 (2002): 249–64; this study arrives at the figure of 2.6 million. The figure of 3.9 million represents the most recent findings of the Institute of Demography and Social Sciences of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, which were presented at the convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, 14–16 April 2011: Oleh Wolowyna and Nataliia Levchuk, "Holodomor Losses in Ukraine within the Context of the 1932–1933 Famine in the Soviet Union."

²⁴ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 406.

politicization of the famine leads to a “kind of trivialization and primitivization of a complex and tragic theme, the debasement of its spiritual, ethical component” (78). This is especially true, in Kas’ianov’s opinion, because of the low moral level of politics in contemporary Ukraine.

As mentioned earlier, Kas’ianov sees Holodomor discourse as having developed into a civil religion. The aesthetics of its commemorative practices exhibit “cultic” features closely connected with Christian ritual. An example is the campaign, initiated in Ukraine in 2006, to light a candle on the day of commemoration of the Holodomor every November. President Yushchenko himself appealed to the public to take part in this effort. The central structure of the new memorial complex in Kyiv commemorating the Holodomor is a building designed to look like a huge candle. An “ever-lighting candle” journeyed from Australia to Ukraine, traveling through 33 countries. Its arrival in every country was marked by processions, commemorative church services, and requiems. Bishops and priests have become involved in all official commemorations of the victims of the Holodomor. Hierarchs also issue public statements on the famine. The vast majority of the 4,500 or so monuments commemorating the famine make use of crosses as symbols of the Christian burial ritual and of martyrdom. Among the most popular metaphors employed in the discourse are “Golgotha” and “Way of the Cross.” Present in the discourse also are motifs of conflict with the forces of evil and darkness. Hence the expression of different views on the famine and its origins or consequences is treated as a form of civil heresy (207–8).

Kas’ianov is right, of course, to point out that the sacralization of the Holodomor makes it a very difficult subject of study, since it consequently becomes surrounded with so many myths and taboos. The same problem of sacralization has been signaled by scholars in Holocaust studies.²⁵ Sacralization polarizes, dichotomizes, tramples nuance, paralyzes questioning. Yet the death, burial, and commemoration of the dead are primordial elements of the sacred, and religion is one of the languages we have in which to express ourselves with reference to large tragedies, whether personal or social. In this particular case, in which a large number of deaths resulted from a violation of the moral order, the impulse to place them within a system of ultimate meaning is unquestionably strong. I suppose the correct course is to maintain a dignified form of sacrality, or perhaps respectfulness, around the memory of the many victims of the Ukrainian famine while at the same time preserving a rational, pluralistic discourse about the famine as an event in history.

²⁵ Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 95; Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 11, 199–201.

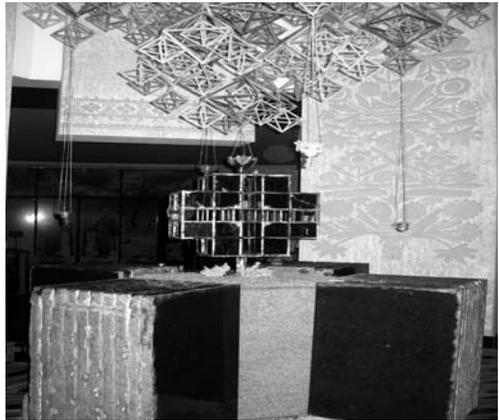
How natural it is to sacralize the Holodomor narrative comes out clearly in one of the testimonies in *Knyha pam"iati*. Once again we return to that starving perpetrator father who told his daughter about the Holodomor. As the father grew weaker and weaker from starvation (women bear hunger better than men), his wife and daughter went to the Kyiv Caves Monastery to pray for him. They prayed with one of the nuns, Mother Serafyma, and gave her a piece of precious bread. When they came home, the father was no longer lying listlessly on the sofa. He had gone into the kitchen and was fixing a step when he found underneath it a few gold coins. "God in a miraculous fashion saved our family." The family was able to exchange the coins for flour and grain at the Torgsin store. They shared their miraculously obtained food with some neighboring families (260).

The National Museum Memorial in Commemoration of Famines Victims in Ukraine is a profoundly sacralized space. It is situated in the Pechers'k district of Kyiv, not far from the most sacred spot in Ukraine, the Kyiv Caves Monastery. The entrance to the memorial museum complex is flanked by two angels, keepers of the souls. It seems that the main building, the candle-like structure already mentioned, was first conceived literally as a chapel, and many architectural features of that original idea have been retained.²⁶ The building has a large cross in front of it. Inside is a symbolic altar. Everyone has the opportunity to light a candle in memory of the victims. In this sanctuary of the Holodomor, the *Knyhy pam"iati*, with their testimonies and martyrologies, play their part. They are placed on lecterns around the inner sanctum, like prayer books, a holy scripture.

The negative effect of sacralization—the tendency to replace rational inquiry with a dominating myth—is compounded by nationalization. One of the features of genocide, at least in its non-Naimarkian conceptualization—that is, one that is focused exclusively on "national, ethnical, racial, or religious" groups—is that it reifies the very categories that determine the targets. Thus the interpretation of the famine as a genocide directed against the Ukrainian nation instantiates the nation itself in addition to feeding the nation-project's self-narrative of shared historical experience and victimization. Since genocide is a crime, moreover, it has perpetrators; and these can be identified with the inimical "others" against whom the nation is constructed.

Those who promote awareness of the Holodomor are often the same people who promote the glorification of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and who downplay the Holocaust and/or Ukrainian and

²⁶ Information from Tatyana Zhurzhenko, 22 October 2011.



The National Museum Memorial in Commemoration of
Famines Victims in Ukraine
Author's Photographs

Ukrainian nationalist participation in it.²⁷ This was largely true of President Yushchenko and his entourage—at the same time as Yushchenko was trying to solidify the place of the Holodomor in Ukrainian and global public memory, he was also making posthumous heroes of OUN leaders Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych. The Security Service of Ukraine under his control expended considerable effort attempting to clear OUN of complicity in the Holocaust, even to the point of publishing a falsification.²⁸ Also under Yushchenko, the commemorative practices at the Babi Yar ravine outside Kyiv shifted emphasis from the tens of thousands of Jews murdered there by Germans and their collaborators to the hundreds of members of OUN who were also buried there.²⁹ A similar concatenation is even more pronounced in the Ukrainian diaspora in North America.

This was evident at the Edmonton premiere of *Genocide Revealed* on 20 September 2011. The film was screened at the Ukrainian Youth Unity Complex, associated with the Bandera faction of OUN; the complex has a statue of OUN leader Shukhevych outside and busts and portraits of other nationalist leaders, including Bandera, inside.³⁰ Director Luhovy singled out and thanked two individuals in the Edmonton Ukrainian community who were major donors to his film: William Zuzak and Marco Levytsky. Zuzak has been active in the Holodomor cause but also in the defense of Ukrainian Canadians accused of war crimes, including one of the perpetrators at the

²⁷ On OUN's involvement in the Holocaust, see Marco Carynnyk, "Foes of Our Rebirth: Ukrainian Nationalist Discussions about Jews, 1929–1947," *Nationalities Papers* 39, 3 (2011): 315–52; Wendy Lower, "Pogroms, Mob Violence, and Genocide in Western Ukraine, Summer 1941: Varied Histories, Explanations, and Comparisons," *Journal of Genocide Research* 13, 3 (2011): 217–46; John-Paul Himka, "The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53, 2–4 (2011): 209–43; Gabriel N. Finder and Alexander V. Prusin, "Collaboration in Eastern Galicia: The Ukrainian Police and the Holocaust," *East European Jewish Affairs* 34, 2 (2004): 95–118; and Per A. Rudling, "The OUN, the UPA, and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths," *Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 2107 (Pittsburgh: Center for Russian and East European Studies, University Center for International Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 2011).

²⁸ John-Paul Himka, "Be Wary of Faulty Nachtigall Lessons," *Kyiv Post*, 27 March 2008; Dmitrii Rybakov, "Marko Tsarynnyk: Istorychna napivpravda hirsha za odvertu brekhniu," *LB.ua*, 5 November 2009, http://lb.ua/news/2009/11/05/13147_marko_tsarinnik_istorichna.html (accessed 6 May 2011).

²⁹ Aleksandr Burakovskiy, "Holocaust Remembrance in Ukraine: Memorialization of the Jewish Tragedy at Babi Yar," *Nationalities Papers* 39, 3 (2011): 371–89.

³⁰ On the complex, and particularly on the Shukhevych memorial, see Per Anders Rudling, "Multiculturalism, Memory, and Ritualization: Ukrainian Nationalist Monuments in Edmonton, Alberta," *Nationalities Papers* 39, 5 (2011): 743–46.

Khatyn massacre in Belarus (Volodymyr Katriuk).³¹ Furthermore, he is a Holocaust negationist; although he believes that Jews were ghettoized, he doubts that “an official extermination policy called Operation Reinhard actually existed.”³² Marco Levytsky is the editor of *Ukrainian News*, printed in Edmonton. He and his paper both work to keep the memory of the Holodomor alive. But Levytsky is also deeply engaged in defending OUN from accusations of complicity in the Holocaust,³³ an activity that Michael Shafir has criticized as “deflective negationism.”³⁴ And in his defense of OUN, Levytsky does not refrain from referring to the overrepresentation of Jews in Soviet security organizations. Of course, this is the same “Judeo-Bolshevism” argument that OUN itself used to incite and justify violence against the Jewish population of western Ukraine. I am not proposing here that all those who are involved in the cause of Holodomor memory are also engaged in efforts to distort the facts of the Holocaust. Instead, I point to a troubling link: Holocaust distorters in the Ukrainian diaspora have been particularly active in Holodomor promotion. Luhovy’s documentary does not engage the Holocaust at all, and there is nothing antisemitic in the film. Yet it is disturbing that one of the talking heads in the film is Levko Luk’ianenko, a prominent dissident under the Soviets and ambassador to Canada from independent Ukraine, who believes that Jews were responsible for unleashing the Holodomor on Ukrainians.³⁵

³¹ On their activity, see the Holodomor section of Zuzak’s website, www.telusplanet.net/public/mozuz/holodomor/holodomor.html (accessed 7 November 2011). On the defense of Ukrainian citizens, see the denaturalization and deportation section of Zuzak’s website, www.telusplanet.net/public/mozuz/d-d.html (accessed 7 November 2011).

³² Will Zuzak, “Realities of World War II,” www.telusplanet.net/public/mozuz/wllzzk/zuzak19990201.html (accessed 7 November 2011). The website contains more in the same vein. “Operation Reinhard” refers to the project of killing the Jews of Poland in the death camps at Bełżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka; it claimed about a million and a half victims.

³³ Marco Levytsky, “Ukrainian Nationalists Played No Part in Massacre of 4,000 Jews,” *The Ukraine List (UKL)*, no. 441, 16 February 2010, item no. 3, www.ukrainianstudies.uottawa.ca/pdf/UKL441.pdf (accessed 26 November 2011); Marco Levytsky, “UPA Detractors Fan the Flames of Ethnic Discord,” *The Ukraine List (UKL)*, no. 442, 15 March 2010, item no. 2, www.ukrainianstudies.uottawa.ca/pdf/UKL442.pdf (accessed 26 November 2011); Marco Levytsky, “Open Letter Villifies Freedom Fighters, Minimizes Holodomor,” *Kyiv Post*, 6 May 2011, www.kyivpost.com/news/opinion/op_ed/detail/103827 (accessed 19 November 2011).

³⁴ “Rather than negating the Holocaust, deflective negation transfers the guilt for the perpetration of crimes onto members of other nations, or it minimizes own-nation participation in their perpetration to insignificant ‘aberrations’” (Michael Shafir, *Between Denial and “Comparative Trivialization”: Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe*, Analysis of Current Trends in Antisemitism 19 [Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, 2002], 10).

³⁵ Per Anders Rudling, “Organized Anti-Semitism in Contemporary Ukraine: Structure, Influence, and Ideology,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 48, 1–2 (2006): 90–92.

Kas'ianov draws attention to the xenophobia, particularly Russophobia and antisemitism, that has marred the Holodomor discourse in Ukraine (195, 210). One xenophobic incident was the release by Yushchenko's Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) in July 2008 of a list of "Holodomor-Genocide" perpetrators.³⁶ The list had only 19 names. It included Stalin (no. 1 on the list) as well as Genrikh Iagoda of the State Political Administration (GPU) and his counterpart in Ukraine, Vsevolod Balyts'kyi. Given that these three perpetrators were "long known not only to specialists but to the general public," the list struck Kas'ianov as the "symbolic apotheosis of the bureaucratic formalism of this campaign" as well as a "genuine parody" (72). In addition, according to Kas'ianov, the list underscored the responsibility "of the ethnic *Other*" (his emphasis) for the famine by listing the birth names of the perpetrators (203); this constituted an "indirect but powerful emphasis on their ethnic origin" (196). Thus Genrikh Grigorovich Iagoda was also listed as Enokh Gershenovich, and Lev Mironov's true last name was revealed as Kagan. Moreover, although Kas'ianov does not mention it specifically, the list was so drawn up that about 40 percent of the perpetrators were Jews and a significant percentage of the remainder were Latvians. At the same time, the Ukrainian republican leaders whom *Knyha pam'iaty* identified as at least partially responsible for the famine—Stanislav Kosior, Vlas Chubar, and Hryhorii Petrovs'kyi—were absent from the list (*Knyha pam'iaty*, 48–49).

Given this context, one has to wonder about certain features of *Knyha pam'iaty* that seem also to invite a xenophobic, and in particular antisemitic, interpretation. The annual report of the German Consulate written on 5 January 1933 and included in *Knyha pam'iaty*'s documentary section claimed that antisemitic attitudes were on the rise during the famine: "The antagonism that exists between the Jews and the other part of the population has grown significantly deeper during the reporting period. This is connected with the fact that the Jews are able, either by receiving money from abroad or by finding other sources, to dress and eat considerably better than their Russian milieu. As far as is known, there have not been antisemitic incidents of a serious character" (87). The testimonies in *Knyha pam'iaty* are for the most part taken from ethnic Ukrainians, and from time to time they comment on ethnic Jews. A few testimonies mention Jewish rescuers. An account published in a newspaper in 1995 stated that the Os'mushko family was saved from death by starvation by "our acquaintances, the Jewish Rovins'kyi

³⁶ "Spysok partiinykh i radians'kykh kerivnykiv..." *Sluzhba bezpeky Ukrainy*, 18 July 2008, www.sbu.gov.ua/sbu/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=80407&cat_id=80404 (accessed 19 November 2011).

family,” who gave them foreign-currency coupons that allowed them to buy food in the Torgsin stores (274–75). During the terror of 1937, the “good, happy Abramok Stol’berh,” who worked in the organs of repression, “warned many people, [and thus] saved [them]” (260). Hard-hearted Jews also appear. A woman interviewed in the Mace–Heretz project remembered that peasants were often excluded from bread lines in the city. Ukrainians, but “especially Jews,” shouted at them that they were too lazy to work on the collective farms and instead came to Kyiv to stand in line for bread (289). In a medley of testimonies put together for *Knyha pam’iati* by Valentyna Borysenko, the dominant theme is, of course, how hard the times were and how little there was to eat. But then the ethnic Ukrainian names of the survivors are interrupted by a Klara Iosypivna Fenkel’shtein, whose father worked in the administration of Kievpoligraf. “In the evening,” she said, “we had bread and milk; sometimes Father would treat me to candies.... I did not feel the sensation of hunger” (263–64).

Considerable space in *Knyha pam’iati* is dedicated to a corruption scheme in which a network of criminals in the planning administration and in various branches of the economy removed some deficit goods from the plan and sold them instead at market prices, either to enterprises or to black marketeers (69–73, 93–114). The goods included soap and clothes but also and particularly food products, mainly sugar and sugar derivatives. The network was based in Kyiv but spread along the railroad lines to elsewhere in Ukraine and even to Leningrad. The United State Political Administration (OGPU) prepared an indictment against those involved, but the matter never came to trial. According to the author of the monographic study on this incident, Vasył’ Danylenko, the “facts gathered by them [the OGPU operatives] on the criminal activity of a number of functionaries in Kyiv can today be rightfully considered proof of the active role of the party-state leadership in the organization of genocide in Ukraine” (73). The logic of this statement is difficult to comprehend, but it is not difficult to ascertain the ethnicity of many of the criminals. A list of the culprits (93–114) reveals that many of them had names such as Arnol’d, Avraam, and Solomon; patronymics such as Isaakovich, Moiseevich, and Veniaminovich; and surnames such as Hol’dshstein, Katsoyich, and Zil’berman. Many persons of Jewish ethnic origin *were* involved in commercial and exchange functions, but the question in my mind is: was so much space devoted to this incident of corruption because of the enormity of the crime or the ethnicity of the criminals?

Parallels emerge in the way *Knyha pam’iati* treats the Torgsin stores, which provided food and other deficit products in exchange for gold and foreign

currency. Persons of Jewish nationality were prominent in this sector. As Julie Hessler wrote in *Kritika*: “Torgsin went through four directors in its short existence. Party membership was an obvious prerequisite. The other unifying characteristic of these men was their Jewish backgrounds, undoubtedly a reflection of the predominance of Jews in prerevolutionary and NEP-era trade.”³⁷ Jewish involvement in Torgsin is something that scholar-activists in the Yushchenko project were also well aware of. Anatolii Hai, who headed up the editorial team responsible for preparing the memorial book for Kyiv oblast, shared the results of his team’s research with the *Ukrainian Weekly* correspondent Zenon Zawada:

The research also revealed that Jews played a significant role in the Torgsin (Torhovi Syndykat) association, launched in 1931, that acquired gold, jewelry, and precious metals surrendered by starving Ukrainians, “and now we know from where the Jews have such large resources,” Mr. Hai said.

“We should tell this hard truth,” he said. “The Jewish people won’t be offended, because this is true and this truth needs to be told, not to argue, but to know history and to find common points in order to build Ukraine together.”³⁸

The editors of the Kyiv city *Knyha pam’iati* do not say anything themselves about Jews in Torgsin, but two testimonies collected in 2008 and published in the volume do. One woman said that the Torgsin stores were “opened by Jews and Georgians. There were not many Georgians.... The Jews bought food from abroad and became loaded with money [*ozolachivalis*]” (303). Another woman said: “For rings and earrings, expensive paintings and coins, the Jews in the Torgsins sold flour and semolina; they did not take [other] items [in exchange]” (305). There is another possible, but veiled, reference in a woman’s testimony from 1995: “I also remember the Torgsin stores that were open in Kyiv and other cities and pumped gold and silver from the people [and] issued special receipts for which it was possible to buy food products. I remember and I know who fleeced Ukraine, drove its people to the grave with the most terrible of tortures” (278).

Although the editors refrain from making their own identification of the Torgsin stores with Jewish people, they take a decidedly negative view of the stores. Chief editor Marochko, in his study of “Torgsins of Kyiv: Bread for Gold,” had this to say: “The gold fever organized by the Soviet state in

³⁷ Julie Hessler, “Review of Elena Osokina, *Zoloto dlia industrializatsii: TORGSIN*,” *Kritika* 12, 2 (2011): 520.

³⁸ Zenon Zawada, “The Holodomor 75 Years Later: The Kyiv Oblast,” *Ukrainian Weekly*, 5 October 2008.

1932–33 is to some degree reminiscent of fascist executions of the peaceful population of the occupied cities of Ukraine,³⁹ when Sonderkommandos plucked out gold crowns, cut off fingers with rings, [thus] filling the ‘coffers’ of the Reich” (65). (*Genocide Revealed* more modestly termed the Torgsin system “the basest of schemes.”)

A negative attitude toward the Torgsin stores comes out in a number of the testimonies (male testimonies: 270, 274, 286; female testimonies: 278, 303, 305). Others are more neutral (female testimonies: 279, 280, 293). Still others are relatively positive, emphasizing that the stores saved their lives (female testimonies: 259, 260, 283). By contrast, a relatively positive attitude toward the stores reflected in women’s testimonies was confirmed by the research of Ukraine’s foremost historian of women, Oksana Kis’. Kis’ read thousands of testimonies to investigate the specifically female experience of the Holodomor and came to this conclusion about women’s attitude toward Torgsin: “It is remarkable that, while repeatedly stressing the high quality of clothing and jewelry, the survivors never express any regret for the valuables their families were forced to give away for extortionist rates. On the contrary, in every recollection of food acquired in exchange for women’s belongings, survivors emphasize that those valuables ensured their survival, so the real price of the exchange was right—as it saved human lives.”⁴⁰ Her reading of the testimonies is at odds with what we find in *Knyha pam’iati* and suggests that the editors may have been selective in their choice of stories about Torgsin.



Snyder’s *Bloodlands* reminds us that more or less in the same time period and more or less in the same place there were mass killings (or genocides or massacres) undertaken by both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Memories of these killings have complicated Ukrainian mental life, both in Ukraine itself and in the diaspora. The four works under review reveal much more about this encumbered memory than about the famine itself. The campaign to have the famine, or Holodomor, recognized as a genocide is waged under the shadow of the Holocaust. It is evident that some

³⁹ In Soviet times, “peaceful Soviet population” was the expression used to refer to Holocaust victims in order not to single out the particular suffering of the Jewish people under German occupation. This euphemism as well as the expression “fascists” for the German occupiers continue to survive in “fatherland” historical terminology.

⁴⁰ Oksana Kis, “Agency vs. Victimhood: Women’s Experience of the Holodomor, 1932–1933,” paper presented at the Seventh Annual Danyliw Research Seminar on Contemporary Ukraine, Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Ottawa, 20–22 October 2011, 9. Cited with the author’s permission.

Ukrainians, in Ukraine as well as in the North American diaspora, seek to instrumentalize the Holodomor and to downplay that other mass murder, and thus to downplay the role of Ukrainian nationalist participation in the latter. Indeed, there is a strong undercurrent of xenophobia and particularly antisemitism in Holodomor discourse. For the Holodomor to be given proper consideration it has to be disentangled from such unpalatable agendas. This is more important than labeling it or not labeling it a genocide. The Ukrainian famine has to become the object of multifaceted scholarly analysis, following the best practices of historical and social scientific inquiry. It awaits also a proper cinematic treatment. But again, these things are not possible if the discourse surrounding it remains restricted not only by sacralization but also by nationalist and antisemitic ideologies. This is an issue of great concern to Kas'ianov, working within the Ukrainian scholarly establishment, and it is something that should also be factored into Naimark's considerations on Stalin's genocides and their reception in North American public and scholarly spheres.

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