

THE GREAT UKRAINIAN FAMINE OF 1932–3

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Translated from the French by David Brown.

Over the past twenty years there has been considerable progress in our understanding of the Great Famine which struck the Ukraine and Kuban, a rich agricultural region of the north Caucasus with a majority Ukrainian population even though attached administratively to the Russian Republic, in 1932–3. Today the full extent of this major catastrophe of twentieth-century European history is finally recognised as the first act in a terrible cycle of violence carried out by the two powerful totalitarian regimes of Nazism and Stalinism against civilian populations in an immense region at the heart of Europe which the historian Timothy Snyder has rightly defined as ‘the Bloodlands’.¹

It should be emphasised from the outset that the Great Ukrainian Famine of 1932–3 was not like the others in the long series of famines that struck several regions of the Russian Empire at regular intervals. It was not preceded by any meteorological disaster like drought or floods, which often create the conditions for such a catastrophe. James Mace, a pioneer in the study of this event, has rightly stated that the Ukrainian famine was a ‘man-made famine’,² the direct consequence of a policy of extreme violence – the forced collectivisation of the countryside implemented from the beginning of 1930 by the Stalinist regime. The regime had the double aim of extracting a heavy contribution in order to make the ‘first socialist accumulation’, indispensable to achieving the accelerated industrialisation of the country, and of imposing political control on the countryside which had up until then stayed largely outside the ‘value system’ of the regime. A direct if clearly unforeseen and still less ‘programmed’ consequence of a policy, the famine was, in the Ukraine and Kuban, aggravated from the autumn of 1932 by the unshakeable will of Stalin to break peasant resistance to collectivisation through the weapon of hunger and excessive levies on harvests, which was particularly onerous in these regions. Stalin also considered the Ukrainian peasantry to be the backbone of Ukrainian nationalism which was judged, in this time of serious economic and political crisis, as the principal threat to the construction of the Stalinist system and to the consolidation of the Soviet Union as a ‘new empire of nations’.

Until Gorbachev’s *perestroika*, the Ukrainian Famine, which claimed around 3.5 million victims in the Ukraine and Kuban,³ was silently passed over by the Soviet regime, including during the Khrushchev ‘thaw’ when a number of Stalin’s crimes were condemned. It was notably omitted from the famous ‘Secret Speech’ given behind closed doors on 24 February 1956 by Nikita Khrushchev during the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of

the Soviet Union (CPSU). In spite of the numerous eyewitness accounts gathered by the Ukrainian émigré community in Canada and the USA,⁴ it was not until the mid-1980s that British historian Robert Conquest wrote the first major work devoted to the famine, which was essentially based on émigré sources.⁵ The end of the USSR and the opening of Soviet archives have made it possible to access a number of long-closed sources such as the secret resolutions of the Politburo and the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party, the correspondence between Stalin and his closest aides, Molotov and Kaganovitch, the reports of the political police on the situation in the countryside and the letters of hungry peasants intercepted by the postal censors to prevent the spread of news about the famine. These sources have allowed historians to understand the causes of the famine more deeply and to analyse the political and economic mechanisms at work. In turn this has facilitated an evaluation of the responsibility of the highest-ranking Soviet leaders from the outset of the crisis. This has led to examinations of the intentional worsening of the famine in the Ukraine and Kuban from the autumn of 1932 onwards and made it possible to construct an account of the incalculable suffering endured by the famine-stricken population, deprived of all aid, subjected to an actual blockade, to a 'punishment by hunger' for having resisted the imposition of the kolkhoz (collective farm) system, which was seen by a great number of peasants as a 'second serfdom'.

Today the Great Ukrainian Famine of 1932–3 has finally become, after more than half a century of absolute silence on the tragedy, a central subject for historians but also a major focus for memory. It is time to shine a light on the greatest mass crime of Stalinism – a crime that, in its scale, is comparable only to the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis a few years later. Given the size of the subject, we have chosen, in the limited scope of this chapter, to concentrate on certain aspects of the question and to reconstruct in rough outline the stages of the catastrophe through the decision-making process which led to and exacerbated the famine. This chapter concentrates particularly on the crucial period from the summer of 1932 to the start of 1933. Certain themes will be analysed, elucidated through sources that have recently become available. What do they tell us about the reality of the famine and the views of political and policy leaders at the regional and local level? What about aid given to the starving *in extremis* and with reluctance? How did the local authorities arrange the farm work in the devastated countryside to ensure the next harvest? How did the extraordinary social repression and brutalisation which came with the famine manifest itself? In the conclusion the chapter will return to the debates and controversies which divide historians on the subject.

The making of a deadly famine: The prologue in the first half of 1932

In 1931 the Soviet organs of state collection managed – at the national level – to gather a very mediocre harvest (69 million tons of grain, 20% below the exceptional harvest of 1930).⁶ Because of bad harvests in western Siberia and Kazakhstan, the Ukraine, Kuban and regions of the Volga – the three principal cereal-growing regions of the country – were forced to contribute heavily that year. Thus in 1931 the Ukraine was charged to the level of 43% of its total harvest,⁷ an exceptional levy which further disrupted a productive cycle already hit by forced collectivisation and dekulakisation (i.e. criticism and attacks on the so-called rich peasants or kulaks). To fulfil the 1931 plan numerous kolkhoz members were forced to hand over a portion of their seeds, vital for subsequent harvests, which jeopardised their future further.⁸

In February and March 1932 the reports of the Department of Secret Police, the OGPU, sent to the principal Soviet leaders remarked on 'isolated areas of food shortages', a fact which the First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party Stanislas Kossior confirmed in a letter to Stalin dated 26 April 1932. According to Kossior these 'isolated cases' were explained by the excesses and aberrations of local officials who had rather overdone it during the last collectivisation campaign. He added, 'one must however categorically reject all suggestion concerning an alleged "famine" in the Ukraine'.⁹ Over the following weeks, which corresponded to the traditional break between two harvests, the food situation worsened considerably, to the extent that Petrovski, the President of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of the Ukraine, and Tchoubar, the Head of the Ukrainian Government, resolved to address, each in turn, long letters to Stalin and Molotov on 10 June 1932. In these they described the now-critical situation in the Ukrainian countryside. 'At least 100 districts (against 61 at the start of May) need urgent food aid,' wrote Petrovski. 'I visited numerous villages and I saw the famished everywhere . . . Women were weeping, sometimes the men also. The criticism cuts us very deeply: "Why have you artificially created famine? There has been a harvest so why did you confiscate everything? Even under the old regime no one did such a thing!"'¹⁰ Tchoubar, like Petrovski, imputed blame for the situation to the heady excesses of local officials, silently passing over the fact that they were obeying a precise order to fulfil the collectivisation plan at all costs. They indicated just what the dangers were: if the moujik (peasant) was too weak to work, the 1932 harvest would be catastrophic. Tchoubar demanded urgent aid at the very modest level of a million poods (16,000 tons) of grain. Petrovski was bold enough to ask for slightly more, 1.5 to 2 million poods (24 to 30,000 tons).¹¹

These requests never received a reply. In front of an assembly of party apparatchiks, the Head of the Soviet Government, Molotov, declared on 12 June, 'even if we are confronted today with the spectre of famine, above all in the cereal growing zones, the collectivisation plans must be accomplished at all costs'.¹² On 18 June 1932 Stalin gave Kaganovitch his assessment. According to him, the Ukrainian situation was the result of a 'mechanistic approach to the last collectivisation plan . . . The real situation in each kolkhoz has not been taken into account.'¹³ Yet it was out of the question, he explained, to reduce the plan for 1932. And this had been set very high at 29.5 million tons (which was 25% more than the previous year) for a 'programmed' harvest of 90 million tons which would, in reality, only reach 67 million.¹⁴ On 21 June Stalin and Molotov sent the Ukrainian Communist Party a very harsh telegram restating that 'no decrease in the delivery plan expected from the kolkhozes and sovkhozes (i.e. Soviet collective farms) will be tolerated and no supplementary delay accorded'.¹⁵

The second phase July–October 1932: Moscow becomes aware of the 'Ukrainian Problem'

At the Third Conference of the Ukrainian Party which met at Kharkov from 6–10 July, the great majority of speakers (secretaries of district and regional committees) judged that the harvest plan imposed by Moscow was 'unachievable'. Nevertheless, under pressure from both Molotov and Kaganovitch, who rushed to Kharkov for the occasion and who also intervened in the debates in a particularly tough manner, the Conference did not hesitate to confirm that 'any attempt to lower the plan is a fundamentally anti-Party and anti-Bolshevik act'. The delegates of the Conference finished

by ratifying the plan which had been demanded by Moscow for 1932. Ukraine thus had to deliver 5.84 million tons of grain.¹⁶ The opposition shown by Ukrainian delegates did not go unnoticed by Stalin, as shown in the recently published correspondence between the Secretary General and Kaganovitch. In the course of July 1932, the first month of the new collectivisation plan, the wheat was not gathered in. By the end of July hardly 48,000 tons had been delivered, or seven times less than in July 1931.¹⁷

The reports of the political police record an unprecedented wave of departures by kolkhoz peasants, but also a disquieting growth of troubles in the Ukrainian countryside. As rumours grew of the imminent dissolution of the kolkhozes, tens of thousands of peasants retook their cows and horses, pillaged the silos where the wheat was stored, shared around machines and tools and harvested the plots which they had been given on an individual basis.¹⁸ The Ukraine was clearly the epicentre of peasant troubles. Of the 1,630 riots and mass demonstrations recorded at the end of July by OGPU in the whole of the country since the start of 1932, 1,096 took place in the Ukraine and Kuban and principally from May onwards. This agitation, just like the opposition of a great number of Ukrainian communist apparatchiks from the start of the collectivisation plan, was a considerable concern for Stalin. On 11 August he sent a long letter, vital to the understanding of the Ukrainian famine, to Kaganovitch, in which he wrote most notably,

the most important thing now is the Ukraine. The Ukrainian issue is going really badly. This is bad for the party. It is said that in two regions of the Ukraine (Kiev and Dniepropetrovsk) around 50 district committees have expressed themselves against the collectivisation plan, having declared it unrealistic. In other district committees it is clear that things are no better. What does this all look like? It is no longer a party, it is a parliament, a caricature of a parliament . . . Instead of leading, Kossior does not stop wavering between the directives of the Central Committee of the Party and the demands of the district committees pressure him into watching his way . . . It is going badly from the Soviet side. Tchoubar is not a leader. Things are faring badly too for the GPU. Redens does not have the stature to lead a struggle against counter-revolution in a republic as large and specific as the Ukraine. If we don't immediately redress the situation there we may lose the Ukraine. Note that the spirit of Pilsudski does not sleep, his spy network in the Ukraine is much stronger than Redens and Kossior think. Note equally that in the spirit of the Ukrainian Communist Party (with its 500,000 members, ha, ha!) one can find not a little (no, not a little!) rotten elements, Petliuran nationalists whether they are aware or unaware of it and finally those who are the direct agents of Pilsudski.¹⁹ If these things worsen these elements will not delay opening up an interior front (and an exterior one of the party, against the party . . . The most serious thing is that the Ukrainian leaders fail to see these dangers.²⁰

Following this letter, Stalin suggested to Kaganovitch that he take control of the Ukrainian party, replace Redens as Head of the Ukrainian GPU in favour of Balitskii, and sack Tchoubar. Stalin's letter ends thus, 'One must, with the least of delays, transform the Ukraine into a real fortress of the USSR, a truly exemplary republic. Do not stint on the means to do this. Without these measures, reinforcing the economy and politics of the Ukraine, and most of all its frontier districts, etc., we risk losing the Ukraine.'²¹

For Stalin, Ukraine was vulnerable, but not because of the imminent famine which threatened the lives of millions of Ukrainians. It was vulnerable politically as it appeared to be the weak link of the system. Stalin had not forgotten that for several weeks two years earlier, the Soviet regime had lost control of tens of frontier districts on the border with Poland, which had been taken over by a great consecutive wave of peasant insurrection against the forced collectivisation of the countryside. He had not forgotten that the Ukraine, on its own, had been the scene of nearly half of the roughly 6,500 riots and peasant disorders recorded by OGPU in the course of the single month of March 1930. Despite the signing of a non-aggression pact with Poland in July 1932, the fear of Ukrainian agitation manipulated by the Polish secret services remained omnipresent. In reality Stalin's preoccupation with the Ukrainian question went back to well before 1930. It was present from the time Stalin assumed the role of Head of the Commissariat of the People of Nationalities in the first Bolshevik Government at the end of 1917, at a time when the question of Ukrainian independence proclaimed by the Rada was uppermost.²² It was 18 months later in the spring of 1919 that the Great Ukrainian Peasant Insurrection hampered plans for the Bolshevik reconquest of the Ukraine. It is important to understand Stalin's position regarding the 'Ukrainian Problem' of 1932-3 in order to read into it Stalin's reflections on the connection between the peasant question and the national question. For Stalin 'the peasant question is in essence a national question of the peasantry' making up the principal strength of the national movement. There could be no powerful national movement without the support of the peasantry. To break the national movement through the weapon of famine would at the same time break the only national movement capable of opposing the centralised process of constructing the USSR and, incidentally, secure a particularly unstable border which cut across the Ukrainian communities artificially separated since the 1920 Treaty of Riga.

For the months of September and October 1932 the progress of collectivisation was catastrophic. In September only 32% of the monthly target was fulfilled in the Ukraine and only 28% in the north Caucasus. In October the pace of deliveries slowed still further. On 25 October the levels of collection for the Ukraine reached barely 22% of the obligatory deliveries fixed for the month. In the north Caucasus it only reached 18%.²³ The confidential reports by OGPU clarify the many strategies put in place by the peasants, often aided by the kolkhoz administration, to try to 'extract' a part of the harvest from the state collectivisation. Newly harvested grain was buried in hidden ditches in 'black storehouses' (clandestine warehouses, located on the outskirts of villages), grain was thrashed in 'hand mills' of artisan construction, diverted during the transfer towards the silos. At the moment of weighing, children, women and the elderly, who the peasants thought less exposed to the rigours of the law, were sent to cut some ears of cereal, often at night. These were all acts of resistance and these were the 'kulak sabotages' that the Politburo resolved to break. On 22 October they decided to send two plenipotentiary commissions to the Ukraine and to the north Caucasus, one headed by Viatcheslav Molotov and the other by Lazar Kaganovitch.

The decisive phase (Nov 1932-Jan 1933): Using hunger as a weapon to defeat sabotage

In the course of three decisive months (from the end of October 1932 to the start of February 1933) the highest officials of OGPU (and notably Genrikh Iagoda, the

chief of the Soviet political police) played a decisive role in aggravating the famine. Exceptional sources, today declassified – telegrams sent by the two ‘plenipotentiaries’ to Stalin, rapid exchanges between officials of the Ukrainian Communist Party, speeches made by Molotov and Kaganovitch in front of the local assemblies of party leaders but also in front of kolkhoz members, a travel journal by Lazar Kaganovitch – paint us a vivid picture of the political and ideological arguments put forward by Stalin’s envoys, the escalation of repressive measures, and the increasingly resolute use of the weapon of hunger to break the resistance of the Ukrainian peasantry.²⁴

On his arrival at Rostov on 1 November, Kaganovitch told regional leaders of the party that ‘it is useless to try not to give precise accounts of the reserves of grain. This step opens the way for all trickery and quite simply signifies a rejection of the collectivisation plan. The problem can only be overcome by crushing the counter-revolutionary kulak elements.’²⁵ From Krasnodor, Kaganovitch wrote on 5 November to Stalin, ‘the counter-revolutionary elements are well entrenched. The dreadful work of the local party organisation, liberalism, opportunism and carelessness leave the way open for the rise of the counter-revolution . . . Our principal task today is to break the sabotage, an organised sabotage directed from a unique centre.’²⁶ The missions of Kaganovitch and Molotov, who put forward similar arguments as soon as he arrived in Kharkov in the course of his tour of the regions of Odessa and Dniepropetrovsk, led to militant campaigns against the insurgents. Hundreds of detachments of ‘activists’ and ‘plenipotentiaries’ arrived with an unclear mandate (more than 60,000 had been mobilised since September, for the most part members of the party and komsomols; half had come from the great cities of Russia but some were also from the Ukraine, former poor peasants promoted to administrative posts or officialdom) reinforced by 10,000 agents of OGPU; these were sent into the countryside to ‘take hold of the cereals’.

Among the first measures taken by Molotov and Kaganovitch (but ratified as ‘resolutions of the Politburo of the Ukrainian Communist Party’) appears the obligation for the administration of the kolkhoz members – having failed in their collectivisation plan – to hand over to their administrators the natural advances (*naturfondy*) received over previous weeks. This measure was clearly very difficult if not impossible to apply, whether through punitive expeditions or systematic digging up of all the resources. It encouraged the growth of violence as some of the confiscated produce was being redistributed to those who had participated in the requisitions. The other repressive measure taken by Molotov and Kaganovitch was the halting of any provisioning of manufactured products to the districts which had not fulfilled the plan. Towns, villages and kolkhozes which had not fulfilled the collectivisation plan in the ‘foreseen manner’ (*zlostno*) were put on the black table. The label of being on ‘the black table’ led to the loss of all products, whether food or manufactures, from the stores, the total halting of trade, the immediate reimbursement of active credits both individual and collective, and above all the imposition of an exceptional fine equivalent to 15 times the normal tax on meat and potatoes. This measure meant in concrete terms the confiscation of kolkhoz cattle (if any remained) and the seizure of the last food reserves. All witness accounts from survivors underline the extraordinary violence of the confiscations undertaken most often by local ‘activists’ who understood that their participation on the side of the authorities would save their own lives from death by starvation. Everything edible was confiscated: chickens, rabbits but also the last reserves of flour, beans, buckwheat, even cabbage.²⁷ The objective of this punitive measure was clearly not primarily economic but political. It acted to break the solidarity of the villages,

to show to peasants that there was no means of escape. They could well sabotage the work of the collective farms, pinch the ears of grain, try to return to small individual lots, cultivate their gardens: they would not be safe anywhere. Someone could come and confiscate even their plates of buckwheat if they did not fulfil their obligations to the state.

If in November 1932 the number of villages and kolkhozes on the 'black table' remained relatively low (a few hundred, although only 1,400 of the 23,000 kolkhozes in the Ukraine had fulfilled the plan), it grew considerably in the following two months. More than 9,000 kolkhozes and villages were on the black table by the end of January 1933. In parallel another form of repression was unleashed: in the course of November 1932 alone nearly 50,000 sentences (of which 700 were for the death penalty, and most of the rest for heavy terms of imprisonment) were handed out by exceptional itinerant courts against the saboteurs of the 'collectivisation plan' and the 'thieves of social property': 72,000 for these two charges in December.²⁸ In the course of these requisitions/arrests led by 'collectivisation groups', thousands of grain-filled ditches were discovered. Yet looked at clearly, and as even Vsevolod Balitskii, the new head of the GPU in the Ukraine confessed, these 'hunting trophies' were derisory: barely 25,000 tons of cereal – or 0.5% of the collectivisation plan – had been discovered in the course of three months of requisitions!²⁹ It appears clear that the countryside had been emptied of its last resources. At the same time however a press campaign developed the theme of an 'immense underground city filled with hidden grain' (*podzemnyi pchenicnyi gorod*) that the activists had to find at all costs and the discovery of which would ensure the prosperity of the Ukraine, 'finally rid of kulaks, saboteurs and monopolists'.³⁰

Another step in the escalating repression was the mass deportation of all the inhabitants of 'rebel' villages, who were 'mounting a war against Soviet power' as Kaganovitch declared on 6 November 1932, in front of villagers at Medvedovskaia. A few weeks later, because they had failed to fulfil the unrealistic collectivisation plan that had been imposed on them, all the inhabitants of three large *stanitsy* of the Kuban (Medvedovskaia, Oumanskaia, Poltavskaia) amounting to over 45,000 people were deported en masse to Siberia, the Urals and Kazakhstan.³¹

These coercive measures also aimed to break the last resistance offered by a certain number of Ukrainian Communist leaders and forced them to fulfil the collectivisation plan at whatever cost.³² In three months almost 30% of presidents of kolkhozes were dismissed from their posts; half of those sacked were also arrested. While delegating operations on the ground to Kaganovitch and Molotov, Stalin followed the situation closely. On 27 November 1932 at the plenary of the Central Committee he made a particularly hard-hitting speech in which he condemned not only the 'sabotage' of the 'kulaks and enemies of the kolkhoz system' but also the 'naivety' of communists who thought that the kolkhoz members, because they had joined collective farms, would become *ipso facto* 'faithful elements'. One could be kolkhoz member, explained Stalin, and at the same time lead acts of sabotage at the heart of the kolkhoz. It was necessary to respond to this 'war of attrition' led by kolkhoz members with a 'crushing blow' (*sokruchitel'nyi udar*).

Shortly after this plenary, from mid-December 1932 onwards, fatal measures were taken which condemned millions of Ukrainian peasants to starvation. They were to pay an unprecedented price for 'Ukrainian nationalism'. This marked a watershed in the policy regarding nationalities and notably in the policy of the 'indigenising

of cadres'. On 14 December 1932 under a motion from Stalin, the Politburo condemned the policy of Ukrainianisation which had been followed since 1923 with the goal of promoting the language, culture and above all the training of cadres for the Ukrainian Communists, on the grounds that this favoured the emergence of a 'Ukrainian nationalism'. The teaching of the Ukrainian language in all Ukrainian-speaking regions outside the Soviet republic of the Ukraine, such as the Kuban, in particular, was immediately stopped.³³

On 19 December the Politburo demanded a 'radical break in the cycle of collectivisation'. Lazar Kaganovitch, supported by a dozen high-ranking officials of the Party and the OGPU, emerged as a 'plenipotentiary' of the Ukraine with the mission 'to occupy the strategic regions and all necessary measures to achieve the collection plan before 15 January 1933'.³⁴ A few days later in a letter sent to Stalin from Odessa, Kaganovitch suggested annulling a resolution from the Ukrainian Communist Party which stipulated that only the Regional Executive Committee of the Soviets could authorise, as an exceptional sanction, the confiscation of the seed banks of the kolkhoz members and their inclusion in the obligatory deliveries of the state.³⁵ Having received the enthusiastic agreement of Stalin, Kaganovitch imposed this measure on the Ukrainian Communist Party on 29 December. Those kolkhozes which had failed to fulfil the collection plan would be obliged to hand over their so-called 'seed banks' (*tak nazываемые семенные фонды*) within five days. These were the final reserves ensuring the next harvest or, at the very least, offering a last-ditch support to hungry kolkhoz members.³⁶ Three days later, on 1 January 1933, Stalin sent a telegram to the Ukrainian Communist Party demanding a speeding up in the pace of searches and a harsher crackdown against peasants whose homes had been used to hide food. Any peasant whose dwelling had been found to contain such products was to be treated as a thief of social property and judged with all the harshness of the law of 7 August 1932. This meant ten years in prison camp or, in aggravated circumstances, the death penalty. This order opened the way for an intensification of violence towards peasants, and requisitions for 'theft' and total confiscation of the last food reserves under the guise of 'fines' for 'deliberate sabotage' of state collectivisation. In a few weeks the number of villages and kolkhozes put on the 'black table' soared. The Ukrainian historian Stanislas Kulcytsky believes a decisive stage was reached at the moment when it was no longer simply a case of confiscating cereals under the label 'collectivisation campaign' but when cattle were seized on the pretext of 'fining'. This meant the loss of the last safeguard of a peasant family's survival and the last of its food reserves. For Kulcytsky these extreme measures mark the transition from 'dying of hunger' (*smert golodom*) to 'killing by hunger' (*ubiistvo golodom*). The genocidal process was underway.

How did the peasants react to this new escalation of violence? By a massive 'every man for himself' flight to the towns. Vsevolod Balitskii, the new head of the GPU in the Ukraine, reports for example on 21 January 1933 to Stalin that 16,500 'long distance' train tickets had been sold over the two previous weeks in the little station of Lozovaia (in the Kharkov region), 15,000 in the small station of Soumy (in the same region). For him there is no doubt that these 'massive departures are knowingly organised by counter-revolutionary groups... In a single week our forces have arrested 500 hardened instigators who push the peasants into leaving.'³⁷ The next day, 22 January 1933, Stalin wrote a secret directive ordering an immediate end to the massive exodus of peasants fleeing the Ukraine and the Kuban 'on the pretext of looking for bread'. According to Stalin,

the Central Committee and the Council of Commissions of the People have evidence that this exodus coming from the Ukraine, just like last year's exodus is organised by enemies of the Soviet, the revolutionary socialists and Polish agents with a propaganda aim, through the means of peasants fleeing to the regions of the USSR from the north of the Ukraine, the kolkhoz system in particular and the Soviet system in general.³⁸

The very same day Genrikh Iagoda sent regional leaders of OGPU a circular which ordered the placing, notably at the stations and on the roadways, of special patrols charged with intercepting all those fleeing from the Ukraine and north Caucasus. After filtering from the arrested 'the kulak and counter-revolutionary elements . . . the individuals propagating counter-revolutionary rumours of alleged food shortages', those who refused to return home would be deported to 'special villages of the people' (or, for the most hardened amongst them, sent to camps). The other people fleeing would be returned home, a measure which condemned them to certain death in villages ravaged by famine and left them entirely to their lot without the slightest food aid.³⁹ From 23 January the order seeking to stop all flight of the famished (and all spreading of news of a famine denied by the authorities) was completed by the directives suspending the sale of train tickets to the peasants.⁴⁰ In the last week of January 1933 some 25,000 of those fleeing were arrested. Two months after the start of the operation more than 225,000 people had been apprehended, of whom 85% were sent home.⁴¹ The weekly records of OGPU 'on the measures taken to end the massive exodus of the peasants' which were addressed directly to Stalin and Molotov, clearly remained silent on the physical state of the apprehended people. However local reports, like those of the patrols of the Transport Department of the GPU of Berditchev railway station are much franker – 'most of the hungry apprehended' one reads, 'are in such a state that they are no longer in a condition to move and die like flies around the station. There is no point in apprehending them nor in sending them back from wherever they came.'⁴²

For the historian Stanislas Kulcytsky the blockade of hungry villages organised following Stalin's directive of 22 January 1933 is, with the confiscations of the last reserves of peasant food, the second element constituting the crime of genocide perpetrated by the Stalinist regime against the Ukrainian peasantry.⁴³

The height of the famine (January–July 1933): The effect of new sources on certain key questions

Although it is possible to reconstruct the political mechanisms of late 1932 to early 1933 and their links to the famine with some precision, relatively little is known about what happened in the Ukrainian villages subject to 'punishment by hunger'. Accounts from surviving witnesses are a vital source and a great deal of work has been done in recent years to add to the pioneer collection of accounts undertaken at the end of the 1980s by Volodymyr Maniak and Lidia Kovalenko.⁴⁴ Other sources from political officials or police in the regions and districts struck by the famine have recently been recovered by Ukrainian historians. Thankfully these are less rare than they would have been if the instructions given by Vsevolod Balitskii to his subordinates on 22 March 1933 had been strictly applied:

On questions relating to alimentary difficulties only inform the First Secretary of regional committees of the party and this only orally, after scrupulous verification of the reported facts. This is to prevent any handwritten notes on the subject finding their way into the machinery, thus becoming a source for various rumours and murmurings. Do not write specific reports for the GPU of the Ukraine. It is sufficient that I am informed myself in personal letters from the leaders addressed to me directly.⁴⁵

The numerous reports and secret correspondence between officials and leaders of the party and the GPU rediscovered in the archives reflect the police vision of the reality behind the 'food shortages' (the term 'famine' is never used). This is blamed on 'sabotage carried out on Ukrainian agriculture by kulak and counter-revolutionary elements who are trying to exploit passing food shortages for their real counter-revolutionary aims, spreading rumours of a supposed famine, purposefully refusing to bury the dead'.⁴⁶ Particularly revealing of this mentality are, for example, the autopsies ordered by the head of the political police of Dnepropetrovsk to determine the exact causes of death of those who had succumbed to starvation. (Had these individuals really died of hunger? Was it not a case of enemy provocation?⁴⁷) Police reports written on cases of cannibalism and eating of the dead were related with the detachment of a white colonialist describing the savage customs of a primitive people. 'One notices', wrote Rozanov, the head of the political police of Kiev, 'that cannibalism is becoming commonplace. Those individuals suspected of cannibalism last year, reoffend and kill children and people they know, even strangers in the street. In the villages affected by cannibalism, each passing day strengthens these people in the notion that it is perfectly acceptable to eat human flesh.'⁴⁸ Not one word in this report addresses what has suddenly transformed these peasants into cannibals.

Through the correspondence between party leaders and the GPU one can see the 'learning' function of the famine – as perceived by political officials and Stalin's police. The function was perfectly summarised in this short extract of a letter dated 15 March 1933 from Stanislas Kossior, the head of the Ukrainian Communist Party, to Stalin:

the comrades who have gone into the fields in the villages of the Kiev region notice that the peasants no longer say, 'the bread has been confiscated', they recognise that they themselves have worked badly . . . Yet the insufficient preparation in the countryside for the current sowing shows that the famine has not yielded results and does not seem to have made the majority of kolkhoz members take the good route of honest work.⁴⁹

This letter of 12 March 1933, from Alexandre Odintsov, the People's Commissar of Agriculture of the Socialist Soviet Republic of the Ukraine, makes this point:

I notice – and this is a source of satisfaction for us – that the kolkhoz members, including the hungry, are now convinced that the sole issue is to work conscientiously in sowing the land well. They have understood the true power of the State. An idea has been implanted thanks to the famine: only those who work honestly as regards the State can get by.⁵⁰

Numerous survivors, if we are to believe a document written at this time, seem to have 'learnt the lesson' and duly taken on the Leninist principle: 'Those who don't work

don't eat.' In the majority of villages the 'moltchanka'⁵¹ was now broken. People began to talk in the meetings again, a lot more in fact, 'just asking for bread whilst promising that if they are given food, they will work more conscientiously in the future'.⁵² For all this the spectre of an uprising of hungry peasants still worried the authorities.⁵³ There are systematic reports of anti-Soviet feelings amongst the hungry, as well as their alleged 'provocations', the most frequent being 'delaying the burial of the dead'.⁵⁴ At the worst point of the famine, massive waves of arrest continued, tens of thousands of peasants were deported to Siberia, and tens of thousands of those locked up in prisons in the Ukraine and Kuban were transferred to the gulag camps through fear of trouble.⁵⁵ The exceptional judicial powers of the political police were reinforced still further.⁵⁶

The reports also show how risky it is to try to count the precise number of famine victims, to the extent that officials of the rural Soviets, themselves also decimated, no longer kept civil registers of population. More generally, as recognised by one district's officials,

great numbers of lesser cadres have so internalized the threats coming from above and know that it is forbidden not only to write but even to talk of cases of famine, that they become hardened. They have become so indifferent and so closed to all this that they have finally put the running of the district in a very awkward position by depriving them of all information about what is happening in the villages.⁵⁷

One of the questions raised by the new bureaucratic sources is that of food aid allocated *in extremis* to the hungry. The question is at the heart of a debate between Russian historians, who see it as evidence that Stalin's regime did not specifically target the Ukraine and that it was ready to send aid to the famished, and Ukrainian historians for whom this derisory aid, given under precise conditions and socio-political criteria, was merely a particularly cynical way of giving food to all those in submission (*podkorm s ruk*, to use S. Kulcytsky's expression). What was the level of food aid unblocked by Moscow for the Ukraine? From 7 February 1933 (the day after the collection campaign was officially declared completed) to the beginning of July 1933, in the course of which the famine reached its greatest intensity and extent, the Politburo adopted 35 aid resolutions to the regions touched by 'food difficulties'. The aid effectively unblocked around 320,000 tons which, for the 30 million people hit by the famine, only represented some 10 kilos of cereal per person, or barely 3% of the average annual consumption of a peasant! In 1933 the USSR exported 1,830,000 tons of wheat. In addition the state reserves at the height of the famine in June-July 1933 amounted to a million tons – enough to save the lives of millions of people.⁵⁸

Stalin himself agreed to the aid asked for by the regional officials – albeit begrudgingly. He delayed his reply by more than two months, magnanimously authorising the local authorities of the town of Kharkov to 'sell 5 pounds of flour for the working family, exceptionally and at State authorised prices'.⁵⁹ In reality, an important part of the aid grudgingly accorded was destined for the towns, themselves also hit by food shortages. The great industrial centres of the Donbas were particularly targeted as the regime feared troubles amongst workers.⁶⁰ As for the meagre aid distributed to the peasants, a secret resolution of the regional Communist Party of Dniepropetrovsk (20 February 1933) specified that it must be exclusively aimed at a sole goal, namely to

reinforce the kolkhozes and for better preparation of the countryside for the spring sowing. The aid had to be 'accorded on the basis of class . . . to those who merit it, that is to say, in priority and by order, to tractor drivers, to the kolkhoz members who, in the previous years did the most days' work, to families with a son in the Red Army, to individual peasants who have undertaken to join the kolkhozes'.⁶¹ The numerous secret instructions sent to the kolkhoz administrations and to the political departments of the machine and tractor stations (new organisations under the control of the political police, put in place to watch over and purge collective farms), instil draconian rules for the distribution of food, in terms of the work undertaken by each person calculated every five days. To struggle against all 'levelling' which could favour the 'laziest', it was specified that there would be no group distribution on the basis of work brigades as was habitual from the outset of the kolkhoz system.⁶² Given their feeble state, a great number of kolkhoz members who survived the famine failed to regain the strength to work, as the editors of the reports somewhat cynically noted: 'The rare ones who are still working are incapable of reaching the demanded norms. As a consequence they don't receive sufficient bread and start to drop.'⁶³ Whilst millions of peasants were dying of hunger, the party and GPU officials benefited from an absolutely correct provisioning distributed in the 'closed network' of stores at reserved cooperatives.⁶⁴ A major preoccupation comes through strongly in the police and political reports in the spring of 1933; how to ensure in the regions devastated by hunger that the farm work would be done for the future harvest. In November 1932 Khataievitch, the Second Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, had warned Molotov in these terms: 'for agricultural production to continue to grow and satisfy the need of the Proletarian State, we must consider the minimum needs of the kolkhozes and kolkhoz members, without which there will soon be no one to sow or reap'.⁶⁵ A few months later, with the population decimated by famine, the question was asked effectively in these terms. To remedy the dramatic lack of labour the authorities for the first time sent a part of the urban population to work in the fields.⁶⁶ There followed vast transfers of populations from other regions of the USSR – more than 200,000 peasants were thus displaced in 1933–4 towards the regions devastated by famine, most of them straight after their military service. The last point clarified by the reports is the extraordinary regression and brutalisation which accompanied the famine. It resulted notably in the rise of banditry and, more generally, in the growth of extraordinary social violence, in a world traumatised, shaken and permanently scarred by hunger. Thieves including hungry children caught whilst stealing a few vegetables were lynched, and summary judgements (*samosudy*) were administered by the peasants themselves. Brutality, revenge attacks, child abandonment, cannibalism and the eating of the dead have all been recorded.⁶⁷

The extreme violence enacted by the regime and its officials against the population traumatised the survivors of the famine. Trauma linked to the famine persisted for years. This is evidenced by rumours which spread, long after the spectre of famine had gone, in the devastated countryside. Thus in the spring of 1937 a rumour persisted which NKVD documents called 'the tale of the wheat bag, the pail of blood and the old man'. The kolkhoz members were convinced of an imminent order that would free them from the kolkhoz system. It was said that the peasants had discovered in several places a bag of wheat so heavy that no man could lift it. Besides this bag there was a pail filled with blood and in the background an old man who decoded the enigma. There would soon be a war and after the war the peasants would be free again and could take the bag of wheat, the fruit of their labour.⁶⁸

Since the start of the 1990s the 'rediscovery' of the famine has played a crucial role in political debate in the newly independent Ukraine, in the confrontation between those who favoured a rupture with Russia and those who wished to maintain close links with the 'big Russian brother'. The 'Holodomor' – a new term created in the Ukraine to define the mass extermination of Ukrainians by famine and its intentional character (it comes from the fusion of the words 'golod', hunger, and 'mor' (root of the verb *moryty* which means exhaust, leave suffering unaided, kill by deprivation) – has not only been central to the political and cultural debate, it has been integral to the reconstruction of a national state and its identity in the post-Soviet Ukraine. In November 2006 the Parliament of the Ukrainian Republic, at a time dominated by those who wished to break links with Russia, officially recognised the 1932-3 famine as a genocide perpetrated by Stalin's regime against the Ukrainian people. This designation, which has not been fully recognised by the United Nations, is still debated by historians, notably Ukrainian historians who mostly adhere to the theory of genocide and Russian historians who all reject it, regarding the Ukrainian famine as a regional variant of the 'tragedy of the Soviet countryside', wracked by a series of famines which also touched Kazakhstan, the regions of the Volga and certain areas of western Siberia.

For most Ukrainian specialists on the famine⁶⁹ three major elements constitute the crime of genocide: the confiscation of all food reserves of the peasants during certain key months (end of 1932 to start of 1933), the blockade of the famine-hit countryside, and the proof of intention shown by documents handwritten by Stalin, notably the instructions of 1 January 1933 calling for an intensifying of confiscation and repression against the peasants and 22 January 1933 introducing the blockade of villages. These historians also emphasise the fact that Raphael Lemkin, the 'father of the concept of genocide', considered the famine and the destruction of the Ukrainian elite to be a 'typical example of Soviet genocide, its most complete expression in terms of Russification – the destruction of the Ukrainian nation'.⁷⁰

If the famine of 1932-3 is today not only politicised in the Ukraine but also raised to the level of 'genocide of the Ukrainian people', a central element in the new Ukrainian national myth, by contrast there is silence on the subject in Russia. There is silence on the famine which struck Kazakhstan in 1931 following a deliberate policy of settling Kazakh nomads and the brutal collectivisation of livestock causing 1.4 million deaths (out of a Kazakh population of 4 million). There is silence too on the 1932-3 famines which struck the Volga region leading to 800,000 deaths and on the southern Urals and western Siberia where there were hundreds of thousands of deaths. A few rare historians like Nikolai Ivnitskii or Viktor Kondrachin maintain the great tradition of the Soviet school of 'agrarian historians' of which the late Ilia Zelenin and Viktor Danilov were notable figures. These historians vigorously deny the particularity of the Ukrainian famine and its 'national dimension'. For them the Great Famine was a catastrophe for the whole Soviet peasantry which was sacrificed at the altar of the accelerated industrialisation of the country. They emphasise that the mortality rates were just as high in the Russian villages of the Volga as in the Ukrainian villages, that a blockade of the countryside was also enforced there, certainly some weeks later than in the Ukraine and with less police enforcement; that the 'collective brigades' also acted there with just as much brutality and that Ukrainian leaders like Kossior and the grassroots 'activists', most of whom were also Ukrainian, were themselves largely responsible for the situation in the Ukraine. Above all they affirm that 'no document has been found in the Presidential Archives of the Russian Federation targeting the

Ukrainians on the grounds of them being Ukrainians'.⁷¹ And therein lies the rub; while all the archives are open to the whole community of historians in the Ukraine, many 'secret dossiers' from Stalin's side concerning the famine conserved in the Presidential Archives of the Russian Federation are closed to historians. In these conditions, in spite of undeniable progress achieved in recent years regarding our understanding of the famines in the early 1930s in the USSR, the debate can hardly progress on one of the greatest tragedies – and one of the greatest mass crimes – whether one describes it as 'genocide' or as a 'crime against humanity' or whatever other description could be applied to mass deaths in twentieth-century European history.

Notes

- 1 Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).
- 2 James Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918–1933* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- 3 This figure is today the most commonly accepted by the scientific community as a whole. Note that in the Ukraine under President Iouschenko, i.e., up until the end of 2009, the figure commonly put forward in the media and in political circles close to the President was of the order of 7 to 10 (even 12) million victims of the 1932–3 famine. For a critical assessment of the number of victims of different Soviet famines from the start of the 1930s see Robert Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
- 4 See for example *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin. A White Book, Vol. 2: The Great Famine in Ukraine in 1932–3*, Detroit, 1955.
- 5 Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow* (University of Alberta Press, 1986).
- 6 Recalling that in the years of the NEP (1923–7) and in the frame of a market economy regulated by the state, for an average harvest of around 70–75 million tons per year, the peasants contributed in the different commercial circuits less than 10 million tons per year, the rest being consumed themselves.
- 7 Making 8.6 million tons for a total harvest of 20.4 million (see Report of V. Osinskii to Stalin and Molotov, 29 May 1932 in V.P. Danilov, R. Manning and L. Viola (eds), *Tragedia sovjetskoj derevni*, Vol. III (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001), pp. 375–8).
- 8 See for example the report of a journalist for *Za pisceviuju industriju* of 16 June 1932 on the confiscation of all the seeds to fulfil the plan in a certain number of kolkhozes in the district of Ouman (region of Vinnitsa), which resulted in the worsening of the famine from the spring of 1932, in Danilov et al., *Tragedia*, pp. 388–90.
- 9 S.V. Kulycykyi, *Holod 1932–3 rokiv na Ukraini: Ocyma istorykiv: Movoju dokumentiv* (Kiev, 1990), pp. 147–8.
- 10 The letters of Tchoubar and Petrovski feature in the collection of J. Šapovalov, V. Vassiliev, *Komandyry velikogo golodu* (Kiev: Geneza, 2001), pp. 206–15. The passage cited here is from p. 213.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Cited in N.A. Ivnickii, 'Golod 1932–1933 godov: kto vinovat?' (The famine of 1932–3: who was responsible?) in I.A. Fanassiev (dir), *Sud'by Rossijskogo krestianstva* (The destiny of the Russian Peasantry) (Moscow: Rossiia XX vek, 1996), p. 351.
- 13 *Stalin–Kaganovič Perepiska* (Correspondence between Stalin and Kaganovič), introduction, notes and commentaries of Oleg Khlevniouk (Moskva: Rosspen, 2001), pp. 179–80.
- 14 See Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, pp. 130–37.
- 15 Šapovalov and Vassiliev, *Komandyry*, p. 93.
- 16 On the Third Conference of the Ukrainian Communist Party see the article devoted to this 'prologue to the tragedy of the famine', Šapovalov and Vassiliev, *Komandyry*, pp. 152–78.
- 17 Šapovalov and Vassiliev, *Komandyry*, p. 98.
- 18 Danilov et al., *Tragedia*, p. 441.
- 19 Józef Piłsudski (1867–1935) was a Polish politician and nationalist, Head of State in independent Poland at the time this letter was written. Symon Petliura (1879–1926) briefly headed a Ukrainian independent formation during the Civil War and was a Ukrainian nationalist.

- 20 *Stalin–Kaganovic Perepiska*, pp. 273–4.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 The Rada was the name of the Ukrainian Nationalist Council during the Civil War from 17 March 1917 until 29 April 1918.
- 23 Šapovalov and Vassiliev, *Komandyry*, p. 104.
- 24 *Ibid.*, pp. 250–70.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 253.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 267.
- 27 See the selection of witness statements collected by Volodymyr Maniak and Lidia Kovalenko, translated into French and published by Georges Sokoloff, *1933 L'Année Noire*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2000.
- 28 Šapovalov and Vassiliev, *Komandyry*, p. 125 (concerning the arrests linked to 'sabotage of the collections'). The number of arrests for 'theft of social property' is calculated after the report of A.N. Vinokurov, President of the Supreme Court of the USSR on the number of sentences carried out under the law of 7 August 1932 (GARF, 1235/141/1005/67-91).
- 29 Intervention of S. Kulcytsky at a meeting of Russian and Ukrainian historians on the Holodomor, 12 December 2009 (unpublished). I would like to thank S. Kulcytsky for sending me the text of these contributions to this colloquium.
- 30 See in particular the editorial of *Pravda* of 1 December 1932.
- 31 E. Oskolkov, 'Golod, 1932–3 v zernovykh raionax Severo-Kavkazskogo kraja' (The famine of 1932–3 in the cereal growing regions of the north Caucasus) in *Holodomor 1932–3 rr v Ukraini: prychny i naslydsky, Mijdnarodnaia konferentsia* (The 1932–3 Famine in the Ukraine: causes and consequences. Acts of the International Colloquium), Kiev, 1995, pp. 120–21.
- 32 The most publicised is that of G. Kotov, Party secretary of a large town in the Kuban condemned to death (see Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, pp. 177–8).
- 33 Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire. Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca & London: Cornell UP, 2001), pp. 302–3.
- 34 Šapovalov and Vassiliev, *Komandyry*, p. 125.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 127
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 128
- 37 Ruslan Pyrikh (ed.), *Golodomor 1932–1933 rokiv v Ukraini Dokumenty i materialy* (Kiev, 2007), document no. 442, pp. 615–16.
- 38 37. RGASPI, 558/11/45/109.
- 39 Circular of OGPU no50 031 of 22 January 1933 in V.P. Danilov and A. Berelowitch (eds), *Sovetskaia derevnia glazami VCK-OGPU-NKVD*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Moscow: Rosspen, 2005), pp. 262–3.
- 40 Danilov et al., *Tragedia*, pp. 635–6.
- 41 V.P. Danilov and A. Berelowitch (eds), *Sovetskaia*, p. 354.
- 42 Vinnitsa Party Archives, P-136, op3, d41, 1.8.
- 43 S. Kulcytsky, *Tainy sovetskogo goloda, Otcet s Moskovskogo kolloquiuma*, Den', 14.1.2010.
- 44 See endnote 27.
- 45 Danilov and Berelowitch, *Sovetskaia*, p. 351.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 376.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 305.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 332.
- 49 Complete text of the letter from Kossior to Stalin of 15 March 1933 in Pyrikh, *Golodomor 1932–1933*, pp. 770–72.
- 50 Among the numerous other letters written by high officials developing this theme, see the memorandum of Feigin, Secretary of the Communist Party of the region of Dniepropetrovsk, to Stalin and Molotov (12 April 1933): 'the attitude of the kolkhoz members is incomparably better this year . . . They have understood that to work badly in the kolkhoz leads to death by hunger' (GARF, 5446/82/19/66).
- 51 Neologism that can be translated as the 'plot of silence'. To protest against their situation the kolkhoz members, hungry and too weak to protest, found a final form of protest: no longer speaking to members of the administration.
- 52 Report of N. Brouk, instructor of the Central Executive Committee, on the preparation of the sowing campaign in the region of the Don, 17 March 1933 (GARF, 1235/2/1522/62–66).
- 53 Danilov and Berelowitch, *Sovetskaia*, pp. 293–301.

- 54 The expression comes from V. Balitskii in the circular of 19 March 1933, in Danilov and Berelowitch, *Sovetskaia*, p. 351. A recurrent theme in a great number of reports, including the report of the information group of the CC of the Ukrainian Communist Party, is the situation in the province of Kiev, 28 February 1933, in Pyrikh, *Golodomor 1932–1933*, pp. 700–704.
- 55 See Resolution of the Politburo on the transfer of detainees imprisoned in prisons of the Ukraine and north Caucasus, 8 March 1933, in Pyrikh, *Golodomor 1932–1933*, pp. 737–41.
- 56 Protocol of the Politburo reunion of 12 March 1933 in the course of which it was decided to reinforce the prerogatives of the GPU of the Ukraine in matters concerning the ‘struggle against insurrections’ and ‘the application of the supreme measure of social defence’ (the death penalty) RGASPI 17/162/14/89-96.
- 57 Report of N. Bannik, secretary of the district committee of Pavlograd to Khataievitch, 30 March 1933 in Pyrikh, *Golodomor 1932–1933*, pp. 798–800.
- 58 V.P. Danilov and I.E. Zelenin, *Organizovannyi golod, K 70-letiju obscekrestianskoi tragedii* (The organised famine, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the tragedy of all the peasantry), *Otcestvennaia Istoriia* 2004, No. 5, p. 108.
- 59 Pyrikh, *Golodomor 1932–1933*, p. 812.
- 60 Unrest broke out in 1932, notably in the industrial region of Ivanovo. On the priority accorded to resupplying the Donbas see the resolution of the CC of the Ukrainian Communist Party on 17 February 1933, in Pyrikh, *Golodomor 1932–1933*, pp. 689–90.
- 61 Secret resolution of the office of the regional committee of the Communist Party of Dnicpropetrovsky, 20 February 1933, in Pyrikh, *Golodomor 1932–1933*, pp. 695–6. See also the circular of V. Balitskii, 19 March 1933 in Danilov and Berelowitch, *Sovetskaia*, pp. 350–51.
- 62 For an example of these instructions see Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, pp. 222–3.
- 63 Danilov and Berelowitch, *Sovetskaia*, pp. 385–7.
- 64 On this ‘spetsznabjenie’ (‘special provisioning’) see Pyrikh, *Golodomor 1932–1933*, pp. 361–4.
- 65 Danilov, *Tragedia*, pp. 555–6.
- 66 This is what the Italian consul in Kharkov wrote on the subject (20 July 1933), ‘the mobilisation of citizen forces has taken on huge proportions . . . This week, 20,000 persons were sent to the countryside . . . the requisition of men is like the slave trade . . . The day before yesterday one spotted the strange sight of all the able-bodied folk, men, women and adolescent boys and girls, being led to the railway station by the GPU and sent into the fields’ (Andres Graziosi, ‘Letters from Kharkov: the famine in the Ukraine and north Caucasus through the reports of Italian diplomats, 1932–34’, *Notebooks on the Russian and Soviet World*, Vol. XXX (1–2), January–June 1989, p. 77)
- 67 On the very numerous cases of cannibalism, see T. Snyder, *Bloodlands*, pp. 50–51.
- 68 See Elena Ossokina, *Za fasadom ‘Stalinskogo izobilija’* (Behind the façade of ‘Stalinist abundance’) (Moscow: Rosspen, 1988), pp. 205–6.
- 69 Stanislas Kulcytsky, Valerii Vassiliev, Iouri Shapoval and Ruslan Pyrikh, to cite just the principal figures.
- 70 This text from an unpublished conference dating to 1950 was recently discovered in the archives of Raphael Lemkin, and has been published by Roman Serbyn, ‘Lemkin on Genocide of Nations’, *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, No. 7, 2009, pp. 123–30.
- 71 Cf the short-hand account on the meeting between Russian and Ukrainian historians in Moscow on 12 December 2009. I would like to thank Prof. Kulcytsky for kindly sending me this account.