

Was the ukrainian famine genocide? - essay



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Ukrainian Holodomor (death by starvation) was a famine of 1932-1933 in the Ukrainian SSR during which millions of people starved to death as a result of the economic and trade policies instituted by the government of Joseph Stalin, the uncontested leader of Communist Party. The famine was a part of wider Soviet famine of 1932-1933. There were no natural causes for starvation and in fact, Ukraine-unlike other Soviet Republics-enjoyed a bumper wheat crop in 1932. The Holodomor is considered one of the greatest calamities to affect the Ukrainian nation in modern history. Millions of inhabitants of Ukraine died of starvation in an unprecedented peacetime catastrophe. Estimates on the total number of casualties within Soviet Ukraine range mostly from 2.6 million to 10 million. The root cause of the Holodomor is a subject of scholarly debate. Some scholars have argued that the Soviet policies that caused the famine may have been designed as an attack on the rise of Ukrainian nationalism, and therefore fall under the legal definition of genocide. Based on my recent research, I can surely agree with the last.

Over seven million Ukrainians died in that artificially created famine. If the statement seems far-fetched, you need only look into "The Small Soviet Encyclopedia" of 1940 and under the heading Ukrainian SSR note this fact: in the 1927 census Ukraine had a population of 32 million; in 1939 (12 years later), only 28 million. Where did the 4 million disappear and where was the natural increase in population, which should have numbered another 4 or 5 million people? What became of those 8 or 9 million Ukrainians? The only answer is: The famine of 1933.

However, officially, there was no famine. Stalin very graciously refused all offers of aid from foreign countries, assuring them that no famine existed in the Soviet Ukraine: the whole USSR lived in the utmost contentment and abundance. Communist papers abroad, ever-willing slaves of Moscow outdid each other in spreading this convincing reply throughout the world. The Soviet Union continued to deny claims that Ukraine was experiencing a famine and refused international offers of assistance. (Conquest, pg. 328). The Soviet government has offered many other excuses that there was no famine in Ukrainian SSR. For example, it was suggested that the weather caused a 1933 crop failure. However, the 1933 weather records actually reveal no adverse weather conditions. In fact, the crop in 1933 was larger than 1931 or 1934 years when there was no famine. In 1941, when the Germans entered Ukraine, they found in the Academy of Science in Kiev the true statistics of the crops harvested in 1932. These figures proved, statistically, that the yield was sufficient to feed the Ukrainian population for 2 years and 4 months. There was no natural cause of this famine; it was purposely created by Soviet government. In 1933 the Soviet Union exported 1.7 million tons of grain to the West while Ukrainians starved. Late in 1933 it was discovered that some of the confiscated Ukrainian grain was stored in storage facilities under armed guard - right in Ukraine. The most of the grain of 1932 was loaded into special trains as soon as it was threshed, and it was immediately appropriated by the government. The carloads rolled northward to feed the bureaucrats of Moscow, or to be exported to finance plans for communist revolution in China and other countries, while leaving Ukrainians without any food.

When Soviet Census officials in 1937 submitted the USSR Census Report to the Government it revealed that the population was millions lower than it should have been. As a result, Stalin's government suppressed the 1937 census of the USSR and shot many of the census officials. A new 1939 census "corrected" the population to a higher level in order to conceal the famine. Therefore, it proves once more that Joseph Stalin has had intentions to shorten the Ukrainian nation.

In 1929, Josef Stalin began instituting policies to transform the Soviet Union into an "industrialized state" in the shortest possible time and regardless of the cost in human and material resources. To provide grain needed to finance the industrialization, Stalin collectivized the agricultural system by forcing peasants to give up their small land holdings and join collective farms, ordering the liquidation of 'kulaks'(individual peasants). (Conquest, p. 75). The Ukrainian peasantry, in whose national and social psyche the principles of private property and individual endeavor were deeply embedded, resisted these efforts. As a result, the most productive peasants were either executed, deported, or sent to labor camps in Siberia. Remaining peasants were forced into collective farms, whose harvests belonged to the state. In 1932, Stalin ordered the grain quota for Ukraine to be raised by 44% and decreed that "stealing Socialist property" (taking even a handful of grain from a collective farm) was an offense punishable by death. (Subtelny, p. 414). As it became apparent that the grain quota could not be met, party leaders were given the legal right to seize whatever grain or food could be found. (Addendum to the minutes of Politburo [meeting] No. 93; 6 December 1932.) The Soviet government imposing crippling grain quotas on peasant

farmers sent thousands of Communist agents to terrorize the countryside and confiscate grain from the homes of villagers, leaving them with little or no food.

As early as the fall of 1931, the first shadows of famine fell upon Ukrainian villages and cities. People began to die of hunger by the thousands, with the greatest losses occurring in 1932 and 1933. Withholding or stealing grain, considered property of the Soviet Union, became a crime punishable by death. Peasants who attempted to hide grain or other foodstuffs in their homes were deported or executed. Heavily guarded grain silos, filled to capacity, lay just within reach of the starving peasants, yet were inaccessible to them. Instead, the grain was dumped on Western markets and the proceeds used to finance Stalin's industrialization plans for the Soviet Union.

Ukraine suffered tremendously during this time:

- At the height of the Famine-Genocide, Ukrainian villagers were dying out at a rate of 25, 000 per day, or 1, 000 per hour, or 17 per minute.
- The Soviet regime dumped 1. 7 million tons of grain on Western markets during the height of the famine - nearly 1/4 of a ton of grain for every Ukrainian who perished.
- Nearly a quarter of the rural population of Ukraine starved to death during this time.

For Ukrainians the famine has assumed mythic proportions. It is the defining moment of their recent history. The famine symbolizes the horror of the Soviet experience, the curse of Russian domination, and the necessity of Ukrainian liberation. Some revisionist Western scholars claim that Ukrainians

are wrong to insist that the famine was intentional; other scholars support the Ukrainian position. But the scholarly debate is beside the point for most Ukrainians, who perceived the famine as the culmination of centuries of Russian oppression. Such deeply rooted, almost mythical, convictions transform a symbol into a fact that is equally oblivious of empirical corroboration and refutation.