Holodomor

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The **Holodomor** (Ukrainian: Голодомор, "Extermination by hunger" or "Hungerextermination";[2] derived from 'Морити голодом', "Killing by Starvation" [3][4][5]) was an orchestrated famine in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1932 and 1933 that killed about 4 million Ukrainians. [6] During the famine, which is also known as the "Terror-Famine in Ukraine" and "Famine-Genocide in Ukraine". [7][8][9] millions of citizens of the Ukrainian SSR, the majority of whom were Ukrainians, died of starvation in a peacetime catastrophe unprecedented in the history of Ukraine.^[10] Since 2006, the Holodomor has been recognized by the independent Ukraine and several other countries as a genocide of the Ukrainian people.[11]

Early estimates of the death toll by scholars and government officials varied greatly; anywhere from $1.8^{[12]}$ to 12 million^[13] ethnic Ukrainians were said to have perished as a result of the famine. Recent research has since narrowed the estimates to between $2.4^{[14]}$ and $7.5^{[15]}$ million. The exact number of deaths is hard to determine, due to a lack of records, ^{[16][17]} but the number increases significantly when the deaths inside heavily Ukrainian-populated Kuban are included. ^[18] Older

estimates are still often cited in political commentary.^[19] According to the decision of Kyiv Appellation Court, the demographic losses due to the famine amounted to 10 million, with 3.9 million famine deaths, and a 6.1 million birth deficit.^[16]

Scholars disagree on the relative importance of natural factors and bad economic policies as causes of the famine and the degree to which the destruction of the Ukrainian peasantry was premeditated on the part of Joseph Stalin. [10][20][21][22] Using *Holodomor* in reference to the famine emphasizes its man-made aspects, arguing that actions such as rejection of outside aid, confiscation of all household foodstuffs, and restriction of population movement confer intent, defining the famine as genocide; the loss of life has been compared to the Holocaust. [23] If Soviet policies and actions were conclusively documented as intending to eradicate the rise of Ukrainian nationalism, they would fall under the legal definition of genocide. [24][25][26][27][28] In the absence of absolute documentary

Holodomor Голодомор



Pedestrians walking past bodies of starved peasants on a street in Kharkiv, 1933.

Country	Soviet Union			
Location	Ukrainian SSR			
Period	1932–1933			
Total deaths	2.4 to 7.5 million			
Observations	Considered genocide by twenty five countries			
Relief	Foreign relief rejected by the State. Respectively 176,200 and 325,000 tons of grains provided by the State as food and seed aids between February and July 1933. ^[1]			

Holodomor topics

Historical background

Famines in Russia and USSR • Soviet famine of 1932–1933

Soviet government

Institutions:

All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) • Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine • Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic • Government of the Soviet Union • Secret police

Policies:

First Five-Year Plan · Collectivization in the Ukrainian SSR ·

proof of intent, scholars have also made the argument that the Holodomor was ultimately a consequence of the economic problems associated with radical economic changes implemented during the period of liquidation of private property and Soviet industrialization.

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Etymology

The word *Holodomor* literally translated from Ukrainian means "death by hunger", or "to kill by hunger, to starve to death".^[29] Sometimes the expression is translated into English as "murder by hunger or starvation".^[30] Holodomor is a compound of the Ukrainian words *holod* meaning "hunger" and *mor* meaning

Dekulakization • Law of Spikelets • Reversal of Ukrainization policies • Propaganda in the Soviet Union

Responsible parties

Soviet Union: Joseph Stalin • Vyacheslav Molotov • Lazar Kaganovich • Pavel Postyshev • Stanislav Kosior • Vlas Chubar • Communist Party • NKVD •

Investigation and comprehension

1984 International Commission •
1985 USA Commission •
Causes of the Holodomor • Denial •
Genocide question •
Holodomor in modern politics



Famine in USSR, 1933. Areas of most disastrous famine marked with black. As can be seen Eastern Ukrainians were actually the one effected the most from this famine

"plague". The expression *moryty holodom* means "to inflict death by hunger". The Ukrainian verb *moryty* (морити) means "to poison somebody, drive to exhaustion or to torment somebody". The perfective form of the verb *moryty* is *zamoryty* – "kill or drive to death by hunger, exhausting work". The word was used in print as early as 1978 by Ukrainian immigrant organisations in the United States and Canada. [31][32][33] However, in the Soviet Union – of

which Ukraine was a member – references to the famine were controlled, even after de-Stalinization in 1956. Historians could speak only of 'food difficulties', and the use of the very word *golod/holod* (hunger, famine) was forbidden.

Discussion of the Holodomor became more open as part of *Glasnost* in the late 1980s. In Ukraine, the first official use of the word was a December 1987 speech by Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, ^[34] on the occasion of the republic's seventieth anniversary. ^[35] An early public usage in the Soviet Union was in February 1988, in a speech by Oleksiy Musiyenko, Deputy Secretary for ideological matters of the party organisation of the Kiev branch of the Union of Soviet Writers in Ukraine. ^{[36][37]} The term may have first appeared in print in the Soviet Union on 18 July 1988, in his article on the topic. ^[38] "Holodomor" is now an entry in the modern, two-volume dictionary of the Ukrainian language, published in 2004. The term is described as "artificial hunger, organised on a vast scale by a criminal regime against a country's population. "^[39]

History

Scope and duration

The famine had been predicted as far back as 1930 by academics and advisers to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic government, but little to no preventive action was taken. [40] The famine affected the Ukrainian SSR as well as the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (a part of the Ukrainian SSR at the time) in the spring of 1932^[41] and from February to July 1933, [42] with the greatest number of victims recorded in the spring of 1933. Between 1926 and 1939, the Ukrainian population increased by 6.6%, whereas Russia and Belarus grew by 16.9% and 11.7%, respectively. [43][44]



Passers-by and the corpse of a starved man on a street in Kharkiv, 1932

From the 1932 harvest, Soviet authorities were able to procure only 4.3 million tons as compared with 7.2 million tons obtained from the 1931 harvest. [45] Rations in town were drastically cut back, and in the winter of 1932–33 and spring of 1933 people in many urban areas were starved. [46] The urban workers were supplied by a rationing system (and therefore could occasionally assist their starving relatives of the countryside), but rations were gradually cut; and by the spring of 1933, the urban residents also faced starvation. At the same time, workers were shown agitprop movies, where all peasants were portrayed as counterrevolutionaries hiding grain and potatoes at a time when workers, who were constructing the "bright future" of socialism, were starving. [47]

The first reports of mass malnutrition and deaths from starvation emerged from two urban areas of the city of Uman, reported in January 1933 by Vinnytsya and Kiev oblasts. By mid-January 1933, there were reports about mass "difficulties" with food in urban areas, which had been undersupplied through the rationing system, and deaths from starvation among people who were withdrawn from the rationing supply. The withdrawal was to comply with the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine Decree of December 1932. By the beginning of February 1933, according to reports from local authorities and Ukrainian GPU, the most affected area was Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, which also suffered from epidemics of typhus and malaria. Odessa and Kiev oblasts were second and third, respectively. By mid-March, most of the reports of starvation originated from Kiev Oblast.

By mid-April 1933, Kharkiv Oblast reached the top of the most affected list, while Kiev, Dnipropetrovsk, Odessa, Vinnytsya, and Donetsk oblasts, and Moldavian SSR were next on the list. Reports about mass deaths from starvation, dated mid-May through the beginning of June 1933, originated from raions in Kiev and Kharkiv oblasts.

The "less affected" list noted Chernihiv Oblast and northern parts of Kiev and Vinnytsya oblasts. The Central Committee of the CP(b) of Ukraine Decree of 8 February 1933 said no hunger cases should have remained untreated. Local authorities had to submit reports about the numbers suffering from hunger, the reasons for hunger, number of deaths from hunger, food aid provided from local sources, and centrally provided food aid required. The GPU managed parallel reporting and food assistance in the Ukrainian SSR. (Many regional reports and most of the central summary reports are available from present-day central and regional Ukrainian archives.)^[48] The *Ukrainian Weekly*, which was tracking the situation in 1933, reported the difficulties in communications and the appalling situation in Ukraine.

Evidence of widespread cannibalism was documented during the Holodomor. [49]

Survival was a moral as well as a physical struggle. A woman doctor wrote to a friend in June 1933 that she had not yet become a cannibal, but was "not sure that I shall not be one by the time my letter reaches you." The good people died first. Those who refused to steal or to prostitute themselves died. Those who gave food to others died. Those who refused to eat corpses died. Those who refused to kill their fellow man died. [50]

The Soviet regime printed posters declaring: "To eat your own children is a barbarian act." [51]:225 More than 2,500 people were convicted of cannibalism during the Holodomor. [52]

Causes

The reasons for the famine are a subject of scholarly and political debate. Some scholars suggest that the man-made famine was a consequence of the economic problems associated with changes implemented during the period of Soviet industrialization. [25][26][30]

A significant contributing factor to the Soviet Union's economic problems, and hence the famine, was the "Gold Blockade". [53] The western countries refusal to accept gold as payment left the Soviet Union with little more than oil, timber and grain as trade "currency" from 1925. In April 1933, the UK proclaimed the Russian Goods (Import Prohibition) Act 1933^[54] and banned the import of timber, petroleum, butter, wheat and barley. This left the Soviet Union with little other in the way of trade "currency" other than grain until it was revoked two months later in July. By then the damage was done. Stalin assumed that collectivization would lead to increased yields from farming.

Collectivization also contributed to famine in 1932. Collectivization in the USSR, including the Ukrainian SSR, was not popular among the peasantry; and forced collectivisation led to numerous peasant revolts. The First Five-Year Plan changed the output expected from Ukrainian farms, from the familiar crop of grain to unfamiliar crops like sugar beets and cotton. In addition, the situation was exacerbated by poor administration of the plan and the lack of relevant general management. Significant amounts of grain remained unharvested, and – even when harvested – a significant percentage was lost during processing, transportation, or storage.

However, it has also been proposed by certain historians that the Soviet leadership used the man-made famine to attack Ukrainian nationalism, and thus the man-made famine may fall under the legal definition of genocide. [24][25][26][27][28] For example, special and particularly lethal policies were adopted in and largely limited to Soviet Ukraine at the end of 1932 and 1933. "[E]ach of them may seem like an anodyne administrative measure, and each of them was certainly presented as such at the time, and yet each had to kill." [55] A 2011 documentary, *Genocide Revealed*, presents evidence for the view that Stalin and the Communist regime deliberately targeted Ukrainians in the mass starvation of 1932–1933. [56]

Death toll

By the end of 1933, millions of people had starved to death or had otherwise died unnaturally in Ukraine and the other Soviet republics. The total number of population losses (famine death and birth deficit) across the entire Soviet Union is estimated as 6–7 million.^[57] The Soviet Union long denied that the famine had taken place. The NKVD (and later KGB) archives on the Holodomor period made records available very slowly. The exact number of the victims remains unknown and is probably impossible to estimate, even within a margin of error of a hundred thousand.^[58] The media have reported estimates by historians of fatalities as high as seven to ten million.^{[59][60][61][62]} Former Ukrainian president Yushchenko stated in a speech to the United States Congress that the Holodomor "took away 20 million lives of Ukrainians", ^[63] while Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a public statement giving the death toll at about 10



Photograph by Gareth Jones showing starving children during the famine

million.^{[19][64]} The use of this figure has been criticised by historians Timothy Snyder and Stephen G. Wheatcroft. Snyder wrote: "President Viktor Yushchenko does his country a grave disservice by claiming ten million deaths, thus exaggerating the number of Ukrainians killed by a factor of three; but it is true that the famine in Ukraine of 1932–1933 was a result of purposeful political decisions, and killed about three million people."^[64] In an email to Postmedia News, Wheatcroft wrote: "I find it regrettable that Stephen Harper and other leading Western politicians are continuing to use such exaggerated figures for Ukrainian famine mortality" and "There is absolutely no basis for accepting a figure of 10 million Ukrainians dying as a result of the famine of 1932–33."^{[19][65]}

Estimates vary in their coverage, with some using the 1933 Ukraine borders, some the current borders, and some counting ethnic Ukrainians. Some extrapolate on the basis of deaths in a given area, while others use archival data. Some historians question the accuracy of Soviet censuses, as they may reflect Soviet propaganda. Other estimates come from recorded discussions between world leaders like Churchill and Stalin. In an August 1942 conversation, Stalin gave Churchill his estimates of the number of "kulaks" who were repressed for resisting collectivisation as 10 million, in all of the Soviet Union, rather than only in Ukraine. When using this number, Stalin implied that it included not only those who lost their lives, but also those who were forcibly deported. [66][67] Additionally there are variations in opinion as to whether deaths in Gulag labour camps should be counted, or only those who starved to death at home. The estimate prior to the opening of the former Soviet archives varied widely but the range was narrower: for example, 2.5 million (Volodymyr Kubiyovych), [67] 4.8 million (Vasyl Hryshko) and 5 million (Robert Conquest).

One modern calculation that uses demographic data, including those recently available from Soviet archives, narrows the losses to about 3.2 million or, allowing for the lack of precise data, 3 million to 3.5 million. [67][69][70] Soviet archives show that excess deaths in Ukraine in 1932–1933 numbered a minimum of 1.8 million (2.7 including birth losses). This source further states "Depending upon the estimations made concerning unregistered mortality and natality, these figures could be increased to a level of 2.8 million to a maximum of 4.8 million excess deaths and to 3.7 million to a maximum of 6.7 million population losses (including birth losses)". [12] In 1932–1933, there were 1.2 million cases of typhus and 500,000 cases of typhoid fever. Malnourishment increases fatality rates from many diseases, and are not counted by some



Photograph by Alexander Wienerberger, 1933

historians^[71] From 1932 to 1934, the largest rate of increase was recorded for typhus, commonly spread by lice. In conditions of harvest failure and increased poverty, lice are likely to increase. Gathering numerous refugees at railway stations, on trains and elsewhere facilitates the spread. In 1933, the number of recorded cases was 20 times the 1929 level. The number of cases per head of population recorded in Ukraine in 1933 was already considerably higher than in the USSR as a whole. By June 1933, incidence in Ukraine had increased to nearly 10 times the January level, and it was much higher than in the rest of the USSR.^[72] The number of recorded excess deaths extracted from the birth/death statistics from Soviet archives is contradictory. The data fail to add up to the differences between the results of the 1926 Census and the 1937 Census.^[67]

Kulchytsky summarised the natural population change. [67] The declassified Soviet statistics show a decrease of 538,000 people in the population of Soviet Ukraine between 1926 census (28,925,976) and 1937 census (28,388,000). The number of births and deaths (in thousands) according to the declassified records are given in the table (right).

According to the correction for officially non-accounted child mortality in 1933^[73] by 150,000 calculated by Sergei Maksudov, the number of births for 1933 should be increased from 471,000 to 621,000. Assuming the natural mortality rates in 1933 to be equal to the average annual mortality rate in 1927–1930 (524,000 per year), a natural population growth for 1933 would have been 97,000. This was five

Incidence of disease in Russian Empire and USSR

Year	Typhus	Typhoid fever	Relapsing fever	Smallpox	Malaria
1913	120	424	30	67	3600
1918–22	1300	293	639	106	2940(avg)
1929	40	170	6	8	3000
1930	60	190	5	10	2700
1931	80	260	4	30	3200
1932	220	300	12	80	4500
1933	800	210	12	38	6500
1934	410	200	10	16	9477
1935	120	140	6	4	9924
1936	100	120	3	0.5	6500

times less than the growth in the previous three years (1927–1930). The natural population growth from 1927 to 1936 should have been 4.043 million, while the census data showed a decrease of 538,000. The sum of the two numbers gives an estimated total demographic loss of 4.581 million people.

Estimates of the human losses due to famine must account for the numbers involved in migration (including forced resettlement). According to Soviet statistics, the migration balance for the population in Ukraine for 1927–1936 period was a loss of 1.343 million people. Even when the data were collected, the Soviet statistical institutions acknowledged that the precision was less than for the data of the natural population change. The total number of deaths in Ukraine due to unnatural causes for the given ten years was 3.238 million; accounting for the lack of precision, estimates of the human toll range from 2.2 million to 3.5 million deaths.

In addition to the direct losses from unnatural deaths, the indirect losses due to the decrease of the birth rate should be taken into account in consideration in estimating of the *demographic consequences* of the Famine for Ukraine. For instance, the natural population growth in 1927 was 662,000, while in 1933 it was 97,000, *[this does not fit with the table, it had to be a decline of 1.379 thousand, i.e., approx. 1.4 million]* in 1934 it was 88,000. The combination of direct and indirect losses from Holodomor gives 4.469 million, of which 3.238 million (or more realistically 3 to 3.5 million) is the number of the direct deaths according to this estimate.

A 2002 study by Vallin et al. [74][75][76] utilising some similar primary sources to Kulchytsky, and performing an analysis with more sophisticated demographic tools with forward projection of expected growth from the 1926 census and backward projection from the 1939 census estimate the amount of direct deaths for 1933 as 2.582 million. This number of deaths does not reflect the total demographic loss for Ukraine from these events as the fall of the birth rate during crisis and the out-migration contribute to the latter as well. The total population shortfall

from the expected value between 1926 and 1939 estimated by Vallin amounted to 4.566 million. Of this number, 1.057 million is attributed to birth deficit, 930,000 to forced out-migration, and 2.582 million to the combination of excess mortality and voluntary out-migration. With the latter assumed to be negligible this estimate gives the number of deaths as the result of the 1933 famine about 2.2 million. According to this study the life expectancy for those born in 1933 sharply fell to 10.8 years for females and to 7.3 years for males and remained abnormally low for 1934 but, as commonly expected for the post-crisis peaked in 1935–36.^[74]

According to historian Timothy Snyder, the recorded figure of excess deaths was 2.4 million. However, Snyder claims that this figure is "substantially low" due to many deaths going unrecorded. Snyder states that demographic calculations carried out by the Ukrainian government provide a figure of 3.89 million dead, and opined that the actual figure is likely between these two figures, approximately 3.3 million deaths to starvation and disease related to the starvation in Ukraine from 1932 to 1933. Snyder also estimates that of the million people who died in Soviet Russia from famine at the same time, approximately 200,000 were ethnic Ukrainians due to Ukrainian-inhabited

Declassified Soviet statistics^[67]

Year	Births	Deaths	Natural change
1927	1184	523	661
1928	1139	496	643
1929	1081	539	542
1930	1023	536	487
1931	975	515	460
1932	782	668	114
1933	471	1850	-1379
1934	571	483	88
1935	759	342	417
1936	895	361	534

regions being particularly hard hit in Russia.^[55] As a child, Mikhail Gorbachev, born into a mixed Russian-Ukrainian family, experienced the famine in Stavropol region, Russian SFSR. He recalled in a memoir that "In that terrible year [in 1933] nearly half the population of my native village, Privolnoye, starved to death, including two sisters and one brother of my father."^[77]

According to one estimate^[73] about 81.3% of the famine victims in the Ukrainian SSR were ethnic Ukrainians, 4.5% Russians, 1.4% Jews and 1.1% were Poles. Many Belarusians, Hungarians, Volga Germans and other nationalities became victims as well. The Ukrainian rural population was the hardest hit by the Holodomor. Since the peasantry constituted a demographic backbone of the Ukrainian nation,^[78] the tragedy deeply affected the Ukrainians for many years. In an October 2013 opinion poll (in Ukraine) 38.7% of those polled stated "my families had people affected by the famine", 39.2% stated they did not have such relatives, and 22.1% did not know.^[79]

Genocide question

Robert Conquest, the author of the *Harvest of Sorrow*, has stated that the famine of 1932–33 was a deliberate act of mass murder, if not genocide committed as part of Joseph Stalin's collectivisation program in the Soviet Union. Conquest and R.W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft – believe that, had industrialisation been abandoned, the famine would have been "prevented" (Conquest),^[80] or at least significantly alleviated:

[W]e regard the policy of rapid industrialisation as an underlying cause of the agricultural troubles of the early 1930s, and we do not believe that the Chinese or NEP versions of industrialisation were viable in Soviet national and international circumstances. [81]:626



the Holodomor as an act of genocide

They see the leadership under Stalin as making significant errors in planning for the industrialisation of agriculture. Dr. Michael Ellman of the University of Amsterdam argues that, in addition to deportations, internment in the Gulag camps and shootings (See: Law of Spikelets), there is evidence that Stalin used starvation as a weapon in his

war against the peasantry. [82] He analyses the actions of the Soviet authorities, two of commission and one of omission: (i) exporting 1.8 million tonnes of grain during the mass starvation (enough to feed more than five million people for one year), (ii) preventing migration from famine afflicted areas (which may have cost an estimated 150,000 lives) and (iii) making no effort to secure grain assistance from abroad (which caused an estimated 1.5 million excess deaths), as well as the attitude of the Stalinist regime in 1932–33 (that many of those starving to death were "counterrevolutionaries", "idlers" or "thieves" who fully deserved their fate). Based on this analysis he concludes, however, that the actions of Stalin's authorities against Ukrainians do not meet the standards of specific intent required to prove genocide as defined by the UN convention (with the notable exception of the case of Kuban Ukrainians).^[83] Ellman further concluded that if the relaxed definition of genocide is used, the actions of Stalin's authorities do fit such a definition of genocide. [83] However, this more relaxed definition of genocide makes the latter the common historical event, according to Ellman.^[83] Regarding the aforementioned actions taken by Stalin in the early 1930s, Ellman unambiguously states that, from the standpoint of contemporary international criminal law, Stalin is "clearly guilty" of "a series of crimes against humanity" and that, from the standpoint of national criminal law, the only way to defend Stalin from a charge of mass murder is "to argue he was ignorant of the consequences of his actions". He also rebukes Davies and Wheatcroft for, among other things, their "very narrow understanding" of intent. He states:

According to them, only taking an action whose sole objective is to cause deaths among the peasantry counts as intent. Taking an action with some other goal (e.g. exporting grain to import machinery) but which the actor *certainly knows* will also cause peasants to starve does not count as intentionally starving the peasants. However, this is an interpretation of 'intent' which flies in the face of the general legal interpretation.^[83]

Genocide scholar Adam Jones stresses that many of the actions of the Soviet leadership during 1931–32 should be considered genocidal. Not only did the famine kill millions, it took place against "a backdrop of persecution, mass execution, and incarceration clearly aimed at undermining Ukrainians as a national group". [84] Norman Naimark, a historian at Stanford University who specialises in modern East European history, genocide and ethnic cleansing, argues that some of the actions of Stalin's regime, not only those during the Holodomor but also Dekulakization and targeted campaigns (with over 110,000 shot) against particular ethnic groups, can be looked at as genocidal. [85] In 2006, the Security Service of Ukraine declassified more than 5,000 pages of



Photograph by Gareth Jones, 1933

Holodomor archives.^[86] These documents suggest that the Soviet regime singled out Ukraine by not giving it the same humanitarian aid given to regions outside it.^[87]

The statistical distribution of famine's victims among the ethnicities closely reflects the ethnic distribution of the *rural population of Ukraine*^[88] Moldavian, Polish, German and Bulgarian population that mostly resided in the rural communities of Ukraine suffered in the same proportion as the rural Ukrainian population.^[88]

Author James Mace was one of the first to show that the famine constituted genocide. But British economist Stephen Wheatcroft, who studied the famine, believed that Mace's work debased the field of Russian studies. [89] However, Wheatcroft's characterisation of the famine deaths as largely excusable, negligent homicide has been challenged by economist Steven Rosefielde, who states:

Grain supplies were sufficient to sustain everyone if properly distributed. People died mostly of terror-starvation (excess grain exports, seizure of edibles from the starving, state refusal to provide emergency relief, bans on outmigration, and forced deportation to food-deficit locales), not poor harvests and routine administrative bungling.^[90]

Timothy Snyder, Professor of History at Yale University, asserts that in 1933 "Joseph Stalin was deliberately starving Ukraine" through a "heartless campaign of requisitions that began Europe's era of mass killing".^[91] He argues the Soviets themselves "made sure that the term *genocide*, contrary to Lemkin's intentions, excluded political and economic groups". Thus the Ukrainian famine can be presented as "somehow less genocidal because it targeted a class, kulaks, as well as a nation, Ukraine".^[92]

In his 1953 speech the "father of the [UN] Genocide Convention", Dr Raphael Lemkin described "the destruction of the Ukrainian nation" as the "classic example of genocide", for "...the Ukrainian is not and never has been a Russian. His culture, his temperament, his language, his religion, are all different...to eliminate (Ukrainian) nationalism...the Ukrainian peasantry



was sacrificed...a famine was necessary for the Soviet and so they got one to order...if the Soviet program succeeds completely, if the intelligentsia, the priest, and the peasant can be eliminated [then] Ukraine will be as dead as if every Ukrainian were killed, for it will have lost that part of it which has kept and developed its culture, its beliefs, its common ideas, which have guided it and given it a soul, which, in short, made it a nation...This is not simply a case of mass murder. It is a case of genocide, of the destruction, not of individuals only, but of a culture and a nation.."[93][94]:555–6

[T]he evidence of a large-scale famine was so overwhelming, was so unanimously confirmed by the peasants that the most "hard-boiled" local officials could say nothing in denial.

– William Henry Chamberlin, *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 May 1934^[95]

Chamberlin was a Moscow correspondent of the Christian Science Monitor for 10 years. In 1934, he was reassigned to the Far East. After he left the Soviet Union he wrote his account of the situation in Ukraine and North Caucasus (Poltava, Bila Tserkva, and Kropotkin). Chamberlin later published a couple of books: *Russia's Iron Age* and *The Ukraine: A Submerged Nation*. [96][97]

Soviet and Western denial

Holodomor denial is the assertions that the 1932–1933 genocide in Soviet Ukraine either did not occur or did occur but was not a premeditated act. [98][99] Denying the existence of the famine was the Soviet state's position and reflected in both Soviet propaganda and the work of some Western journalists and intellectuals including Walter Duranty and Louis Fischer. [98][100][101][102][103] In the Soviet Union, authorities all but banned discussion of the famine, but according to Ukrainian historian Stanislav Kulchytsky, he was ordered by the Soviet government to falsify his findings on the event, and depict the famine as an unavoidable, natural disaster; the goal of which was to absolve the Communist Party of blame and uphold the legacy of Stalin. [104]

In modern politics

The famine remains a politically charged topic; hence, heated debates are likely to continue for a long time. Until around 1990, the debates were largely between the so-called "denial camp" who refused to recognise the very existence of the famine or stated that it was caused by natural reasons (such as a poor harvest), scholars who accepted reports of famine but saw it as a policy blunder^[107] followed by the botched relief effort, and scholars who alleged that it was intentional and specifically anti-Ukrainian or even an act of genocide against the Ukrainians as a nation.

Nowadays, scholars agree that the famine affected millions. While it is also accepted that the famine affected other nationalities in addition to Ukrainians, the debate is still ongoing as to whether the Holodomor qualifies as an act of genocide. As far as the possible effect of the natural causes, the debate is restricted to whether the poor harvest^[108] or post-traumatic stress played any role at all and to what degree the Soviet actions were caused by the country's economic and military needs as viewed by the Soviet leadership.

In 2007, President Viktor Yushchenko declared he wants "a new law criminalising Holodomor denial", while Communist Party head Petro Symonenko said he "does not believe there was any deliberate starvation at all", and accused Yushchenko of "using the famine to stir up hatred". [60] Few in Ukraine share Symonenko's interpretation of history and the number of Ukrainians who deny the famine or view it as caused by natural reasons is steadily falling. [109]

On 10 November 2003 at the United Nations, 25 countries including Russia, Ukraine and United States signed a joint statement on the seventieth anniversary of the Holodomor with the following preamble:

In the former Soviet Union millions of men, women and children fell victims to the cruel actions and policies of the totalitarian regime. The Great Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine (Holodomor), took from 7 million to 10 million innocent lives and became a national tragedy for the Ukrainian people. In this regard we note activities in observance of the seventieth anniversary of this Famine, in particular organized by the Government of Ukraine.



American communists attacking a demonstration of Ukrainians against Holodomor, Depression-era Chicago, December 1933



One of the interpretations of *The Running Man* painting by Kazimir Malevich, also known as *Peasant Between a Cross and a Sword*, is the artist's indictment of the Great Famine.^[105] "Kasimir Malevich's haunting 'The Running Man' (1933–34), showing a peasant fleeing across a deserted landscape, is eloquent testimony to the disaster."^[106]

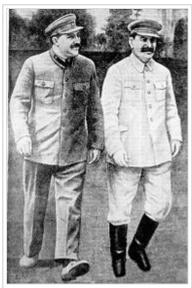
Honouring the seventieth anniversary of the Ukrainian tragedy, we also commemorate the memory of millions of Russians, Kazakhs and representatives of other nationalities who died of starvation in the Volga River region, Northern Caucasus, Kazakhstan and in other parts of the former Soviet Union, as a result of civil war and forced collectivisation, leaving deep scars in the consciousness of future generations.^[110]

Nationwide, the political repression of 1937 (The Great Purge) under the guidance of Nikolay Yezhov were known for their ferocity and ruthlessness, but Lev Kopelev wrote, "In Ukraine 1937 began in 1933", referring to the comparatively early beginning of the Soviet crackdown in Ukraine.^[111]

While the famine was well documented at the time by journalist Gareth Jones, its reality has been disputed for ideological reasons.

An example of a late-era Holodomor objector is Canadian trade union activist and journalist Douglas Tottle, author of *Fraud, Famine and Fascism: The Ukrainian Genocide Myth from Hitler to Harvard*^[112] (published by Moscowbased Communist publisher Progress Publishers in 1987). Tottle claims that while there were severe economic hardships in Ukraine, the idea of the Holodomor was fabricated as propaganda by Nazi Germany and William Randolph Hearst to justify a German invasion.

On 26 April 2010, newly elected Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych told Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe members that Holodomor was a common tragedy that struck Ukrainians and other Soviet peoples, and that it would be wrong to recognise the Holodomor as an act of genocide against one nation. He stated that "The Holodomor was in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. It was the result of Stalin's totalitarian regime. But it would be wrong and unfair to recognize the Holodomor as an act of genocide against one nation."[113] He has, however, referred to it as a *crime*, a *tragedy*, and an Armageddon, while maintaining use of the word "Holodomor" to describe the event. [114] In response to Yanukovych's statements, the Our Ukraine Party alleged that Yanukovych directly violated Ukrainian law which defines the Holodomor as genocide against the Ukrainian people and makes public denial of the Holodomor unlawful. Our Ukraine Party also asserted that Yanukovych "ignored a ruling of 13 January 2010 by Kiev's Court of Appeal, which recognized the leaders of the totalitarian Bolshevik regime as those guilty of 'genocide against the Ukrainian national group in 1932–33 through the artificial creation of living conditions intended for its partial physical destruction." [115] In 2012, Yanukovych referred to the Holodomor as a crime which caused fear and obedience. [114]



Lazar Kaganovich (left)
played a role in enforcing
Stalin's policies that led to the
Holodomor.

Statements by governments

As of March 2008, a number of countries ^[116] have said the actions of the Soviet government are an act of genocide. The joint statement at the United Nations in 2003 has defined the famine as the result of actions and policies of the totalitarian regime that caused the deaths of millions of Ukrainians, Russians, Kazakhs and other nationalities in the USSR.^[110] On 28 November 2006, the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) passed a law defining the Holodomor as a deliberate act of genocide and made public denial illegal.^{[117][118]} Even though in April 2010 newly elected president Yanukovych reversed Yushchenko's position on the Holodomor famine,^[119] the law has not been repealed and remains in force.^[115] On 23 October 2008, the European Parliament adopted a resolution^[120] that recognised the Holodomor as a crime against humanity.^[121]

On 12 January 2010, the court of appeals in Kyiv opened hearings into the "fact of genocide-famine Holodomor in Ukraine in 1932–33". In May 2009, the Security Service of Ukraine started a criminal case "in relation to the genocide in Ukraine in 1932–33". [122] In a ruling on 13 January 2010, the court found Joseph Stalin and other Bolshevik leaders guilty of genocide against the Ukrainians. The court dropped criminal proceedings against the leaders: Stalin, Vyacheslav Molotov, Lazar Kaganovich, Stanislav Kosior, Pavel Postyshev, Vlas Chubar and others, who all had died years before. [123] This decision became effective on 21 January 2010. [124]

On 27 April 2010, a draft Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe resolution declared the famine was caused by the "cruel and deliberate actions and policies of the Soviet regime" and was responsible for the deaths of "millions of innocent people" in Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Russia. [119] Even though PACE found Stalin guilty of causing the famine, it rejected several amendments to the resolution, which proposed the Holodomor be recognized as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people. [125]

Remembrance

To honour those who perished in the Holodomor, monuments have been dedicated and public events held annually in Ukraine and worldwide.

Ukraine

Since 2006, Ukraine officially marks a Holodomor memorial day on the fourth Saturday of November. [79][126]

In 2006, the Holodomor Remembrance Day took place on 25 November. Ukraine President Viktor Yushchenko directed, in decree No. 868/2006, that a minute of silence should be observed at 4 o'clock in the afternoon on that Saturday. The document specified that flags in Ukraine should fly at half-staff as a sign of mourning. In addition, the decree directed that



Candles and wheat as a symbol of remembrance during the Holodomor Remembrance Day 2013 in Lviv

entertainment events are to be restricted and television and radio programming adjusted accordingly.[127]

In 2007, the 74th anniversary of the Holodomor was commemorated in Kyiv for three days on the Maidan Nezalezhnosti. As part of the three-day event, from 23 to 25 November, video testimonies of the communist regime's crimes in Ukraine, and documentaries by famous domestic and foreign film directors are being shown. In addition, experts and scholars gave lectures on the topic. [128] As well, on 23 November 2007, the National Bank of Ukraine issued a set of two commemorative coins remembering the Holodomor. [129]

As of 2009, Ukrainian schoolchildren take a more extensive course of the history of the Holodomor, plus fighters in the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Ukrainian Insurgent Army.^[130]

The Memorial in Commemoration of Famines' Victims in Ukraine was erected on the slopes of the Dnieper river in 2008, welcoming its first visitors on November 22, 2008. [131] The ceremony of the memorial's opening was dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the Holodomor.

On 17 May 2010, President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovych and President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev visited the Memorial in Commemoration of Famines' Victims in Ukraine in Kyiv to commemorate the victims of the famine.^[132]

In an October 2013 opinion poll, 33.7% fully agreed and 30.4% rather agreed with the statement "The Holodomor was the result of actions committed by the Soviet authorities, along with Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, and was the result of human actions". [79] In the same poll, 22.9% of those polled fully or partially agreed with the view that the famine was caused by natural circumstances, but 50.5% disagreed with that. [79] Furthermore 45.4% of respondents believed that the Holodomor was "a deliberate attempt to destroy the Ukrainian nation" and 26.2% rather or completely disagreed with this. [79]

Canada

The first public monument to the Holodomor was erected and dedicated in 1983 outside City Hall in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, to mark the 50th anniversary of the famine-genocide. Since then, the fourth Saturday in November has in many jurisdictions been marked as the official day of remembrance for people who died as a result of the 1932–33 Holodomor and political repression.^[133]

On 22 November 2008, Ukrainian Canadians marked the beginning of National Holodomor Awareness Week. Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney attended a vigil in Kiev.^[134] In November 2010, Prime Minister Stephen Harper visited the Holodomor memorial in Kiev, although Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych did not join him.

Saskatchewan became the first jurisdiction in North America and the first province in Canada to recognize the Holodomor as a genocide. [135] The Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act was introduced in the Saskatchewan Legislature on May 6, 2008 [136] and received royal assent on May 14, 2008. [137]



Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on 17 May 2010 near Memorial to the Holodomor Victims in Kiev

On 9 April 2009, the Province of Ontario unanimously passed bill 147, "The Holodomor Memorial Day Act", which calls for the fourth Saturday in November to be a day of remembrance. This was the first piece of legislation in the Province's history to be introduced with Tri-Partisan sponsorship: the joint initiators of the bill were Dave Levac, MPP for Brant (Liberal Party); Cheri DiNovo, MPP for Parkdale—High Park (NDP); and Frank Klees, MPP for Newmarket—Aurora (PC). MPP Levac was made a chevalier of Ukraine's Order of Merit. [138]

On 2 June 2010, the Province of Quebec unanimously passed bill 390, "Memorial Day Act on the great Ukrainian famine and genocide (the Holodomor)". [139]

On 25 September 2010, a new Holodomor monument was unveiled at St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, bearing the inscription "Holodomor: Genocide By Famine in Ukraine 1932–1933" and a section in Ukrainian bearing mention of the 10 million victims.^[140]

A monument to the Holodomor has been erected on Calgary's Memorial Drive, itself originally designated to honour Canadian servicemen of the First World War. The monument is located in the district of Renfrew near Ukrainian Pioneer Park, which pays tribute to the contributions of Ukrainian immigrants to Canada.

United States

The Ukrainian Weekly reported a meeting taking place on 27 February 1982 in the parish center of the Ukrainian Catholic National Shrine of the Holy Family in commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Great Famine caused by the Soviet authorities. On 20 March 1982, the Ukrainian Weekly also reported a multi-ethnic community meeting that was held on 15 February on the North Shore Drive at the Ukrainian Village in Chicago to commemorate the famine which took the lives of seven million Ukrainians. Other events in commemoration were held in other places around the United States as well.

On 29 May 2008, the city of Baltimore held a candlelight commemoration for the Holodomor at the War Memorial Plaza in front of City Hall. This ceremony was part of the larger international journey of the "International Holodomor Remembrance Torch", which began in Kiev and made its way though thirty-three countries. Twenty-

two other US cities were also visited during the tour. Then-Mayor Sheila Dixon presided over the ceremony and declared 29 May to be "Ukrainian Genocide Remembrance Day in Baltimore". She referred to the Holodomor "among the worst cases of man's inhumanity towards man". [141]

On 2 December 2008, a groundbreaking ceremony was held in Washington, D.C., for the Holodomor Memorial. [142] On 13 November 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama released a statement on Ukrainian Holodomor Remembrance Day. In this he said that "remembering the victims of the man-made catastrophe of Holodomor provides us an opportunity to reflect upon the plight of all those who have suffered the consequences of extremism and tyranny around the world". [143][144] NSC Spokesman Mike Hammer released a similar statement on 20 November 2010. [145]

In 2011, the U.S. day of remembrance of Holodomor was held on 19 November. The statement released by the Press Secretary reflects on the significance of this date. 2011 was a year of celebration for Ukraine – the 20-year anniversary of Ukraine's independence. Yet on this date "in the wake of this brutal and deliberate attempt to break the will of the people of Ukraine, Ukrainians showed great courage and resilience. The establishment of a proud and independent Ukraine twenty years ago shows the remarkable depth of the Ukrainian people's love of freedom and independence." [146]

Images of Holodomor memorials



"Light the candle" event at a Holodomor memorial in Kiev



Monument in Kiev



Monument in Boryspil, Ukraine, Kiev Oblast



Memorial cross in Kharkiv, Ukraine



Memorial at the Andrushivka village cemetery, Vinnytsia Oblast, Ukraine



Memorial in Poltava Oblast, Ukraine



Memorial cross in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine



"Barrow of Sorrows" monument in Mhar, Poltava Oblast, Ukraine









Holodomor in Luhansk, Ukraine

Monument to victims of Monument to victims of Holodomor in Novoaydar, Luhansk Oblast, Ukraine

Roman Kowal's Holodomor Memorial in Winnipeg, Canada

1983 Holodomor Monument in Edmonton, Canada (first in the world)









Monument near Chicago, Illinois, USA

Holodomor Memorial in Windsor, Ontario, Canada

Holodomor Monument in Calgary, Canada

Poster by Australian artist Leonid Denysenko



Stamp of Ukraine, 1993

See also

- Famine-33, 1991 film
- The Soviet Story, 2008 documentary film
- Bloodlands: Europe Between Stalin and Hitler, 2010 book by historian Timothy D. Snyder
- Holodomor The Unknown Ukrainian Tragedy (1932-1933), 2013 book coordinated by José Eduardo Franco and Beata Cieszynka
- Soviet famine of 1932-1933
- Famine in Kazakhstan of 1932-1933

- Memorial in Commemoration of Famines' Victims in Ukraine, Ukraine's national museum and a world-class centre devoted to the famines that ravaged Ukraine at the beginning of the 20th century.
- Great Chinese Famine, widespread famine in 1958–1961 due to drought, poor weather conditions, and the
 policies of the communist government
- Russian famine of 1921
- 1921–22 famine in Tatarstan
- Droughts and famines in Russia and the Soviet Union
- Mass killings under Communist regimes
- Great Famine (Ireland), Famine by the British

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Further reading

Declarations and legal acts

- Findings of the Commission on the Ukraine Famine (http://www.faminegenocide.com/resources/findings.html), U.S. Commission on the Ukraine Famine, Report to Congress. Adopted by the Commission, 19 April 1988
- Joint declaration at the United Nations in connection with 70th anniversary of the Great Famine in Ukraine 1932–1933
- Address of the Verkhovna Rada to the Ukrainian nation on commemorating the victims of Holodomor 1932–1933 (in Ukrainian) (http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=789%2D15)

Books and articles

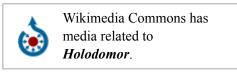
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