

# FAMINE-GENOCIDE in SOVIET UKRAINE 1933

**Seven million Ukrainians were starved to death.**

The famine was artificially induced by the Soviet regime.

It was an act of genocide designed to undermine the social basis of Ukrainian national resistance.

At the height of the Famine, Ukrainian villagers were dying at the rate of 25,000 per day, 1,000 per hour, 17 per minute.

Ironically the Soviet regime was dumping 1.7 million tons of grain on Western markets.



A fourteen year old girl and her two and a half year old brother.

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Cover photograph: two children in a village near Kharkiv. See Robert Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow*.

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## UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON GENOCIDE

"Art. 2. In the present convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

*The Encyclopedia of the United Nations and International Relations.* New York: Taylor and Francis, 1990. Excerpt from p. 328.



# THE GREAT FAMINE 65 YEARS LATER: A MEMORIAL TO SOVIET BRUTALITY

by David R. Marples,  
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*Following is the text of a speech given at the commemoration of the Great Famine in Ukraine, sponsored by the Ukrainian Canadian Committee, Alberta Provincial Council, at Sir Winston Churchill Square in Edmonton on June 6, 1998.*

In December 1987, the Communist Party's first secretary in Ukraine, Volodymyr Shcherbytsky acknowledged for the first time that a famine had occurred in Ukraine in 1932-1933, undoing more than 50 years of official denials by the Soviet government. It marked the first step to the uncovering of the events of this complex period, a time of the greatest upheaval known to these areas in history.

The Famine occurred in the part of Ukraine known as the Left Bank of the Dnipro River, an area that had long been part of the breadbasket of the Russian Empire. Its origins lay in the decision of the Stalin government to end the eight years of partnership between the towns and the villages - known as the New Economic Policy (or NEP) in the new Soviet society. This policy had allowed for some small-scale capital enterprise in the rural areas, providing the peasantry with some incentive to produce a surplus of grain to sell on the open market. In 1918-1921 the regime had simply requisitioned what grain it wanted. From 1921 to 1928, it replaced requisitions with a straight tax, partly to permit the regions to recover from seven years of warfare.

It is not clear whether Stalin personally had any strong feelings about the New Economic Policy. If he had, then he kept them hidden for several years. The decision to end it, and embark on the collectivization of peasant agriculture also was not in itself momentous. Both Lenin and Trotsky had favoured such a route. But they had not envisaged the way in which this decision would be carried out by Stalin's government. It became a second Russian Revolution, one that reduced the villages to slave status similar to the period of serfdom. Collectivization was in theory voluntary, villages were free to choose whether or not they wished to form collective farms. In reality the process was a momentous social upheaval, and it reached its peak of savagery in the main grain growing areas, chief of which was Ukraine.

In 1929, party officials and urban volunteers descended on Ukrainian villages like locusts. Their first task was described by Stalin himself in a speech to agricultural experts as "the liquidation of the kulaks as a class." The kulaks were the designated village rich, and the regime declared its support for the poorer and average peasants against the rich. The goal was to foment class warfare. In truth, the vast majority of peasants fell into the poor to average category and the villages were not divided along class lines. The so-called richer peasants were often those who worked the hardest, the natural leaders of their community. They were either executed, exiled to distant regions, or simply banished from the community.

Once the process was under way, collective farms were established in Ukraine with astonishing rapidity, faster than any other region of the USSR. Once they existed, even if they were

often no more than names on a piece of paper, the state was free to impose a grain quota on those whose names were listed as members. This quota had to be paid before the peasants could feed themselves. Since only the poorest farmers remained in the villages, the new collectives suffered from a drastic shortage of equipment, livestock and buildings.

The peasants had no means of active protest, but many destroyed their crops, and killed and buried their livestock rather than see it confiscated and transferred to the collective farms. Even by the spring of 1930 there was a critical meat and milk shortage in many villages of Ukraine. In 1931 the harvest was calamitously poor. The grain quota, however, remained the same as the previous year. It now comprised more than one-third of the total harvest, and no reserves existed.

At this stage, Stalin and his officials compounded the process by introducing draconian laws rendering a criminal offense even the theft of an ear of grain. Barns filled with grain for export or for the needs of the Red Army in the Far East were off limits to the peasantry. Though the harvest of 1932 was slightly better, it was not enough to avert a full-scale famine, one that was clearly avoidable by the simple processes of reducing state quotas and providing grain to needy villages.

Stalin was well-informed about the critical situation in Ukraine, the Kuban region and the North Caucasus. He resolved not to alleviate the desperate plight of these villages. People were permitted to starve to death in a country that was exporting grain. This was a far cry from famines in war-torn areas like the Sudan (though here also the famine was artificial). This was a peacetime famine that could have been averted. In 1934, after several million peasants had died, the situation was ameliorated by the simple process of providing grain from state funds.

Peasants in Ukraine had nowhere to go. An internal passport system prevented them from crossing the border into Russia or the Belarusian republic, where there was no famine. In regions such as Poltava and Kharkiv, people died in their homes or collapsed on the street. Animals were consumed, even the bark disappeared from the trees. Soviet Ukrainian officials protested in vain at the lack of attention from the party leadership, an act of futile bravery that was to cost most of them dearly in the purges a few years later. But Stalin had other allies, in unexpected places.

The Western countries, and particularly the United States, had seen relations with the Soviet Union improve recently. They wished to give Stalin the benefit of the doubt when he maintained that there was no hunger in the villages. *New York Times* Moscow correspondent Walter Duranty, though admitting privately to the existence of the famine, wrote that no problems existed in the villages. Those reporters who were more intrepid, such as the young Englishman Malcolm Muggeridge, witnessed the Famine first-hand, but then were not believed when they wrote their stories. In 1933, at the height of the Famine, the United States recognized the Soviet Union, one of the great historical paradoxes.

The official 1939 census, now acknowledged to have been doctored by officials to make the situation look much better than it was, indicated that Ukraine's population had fallen by over 3 million since 1926. That of Russia had grown by 16 million in the same period. The shortfall, based on growth in the 1920s, is around 7 million to 10 million people. Historians today do not know how

many died in the Ukrainian Famine. The leading demographer on the subject has verified that the minimum figure is 4 million, but the maximum is not known. During wartime discussions, Stalin informed Churchill almost casually that 10 million peasants had died during the upheavals of the 1930s.

All we know about the Famine has emerged in the past 15 years, the vast majority of it in the past decade (Robert Conquest and James Mace are two of the leading Western historians who have helped to uncover many facts). Historians in Ukraine have elevated the Famine to the prime position of contemporary research: as one of the greatest tragedies in the history of Ukraine. Its import, however, has been diminished because of a truly astonishing series of events in 20th century Ukraine: the purges that embraced the elimination of cultural leaders of Ukraine as well as its political elite; World War II, in which over 5 million Ukrainians lost their lives in the Red Army and perhaps 1 million in other armies, partisan and insurgent groups; deportations and purges from western Ukraine in the 1940s; the wholesale crackdown on Ukrainian dissidents in the 1960s; and more recently the sudden and dramatic explosion at the Chornobyl nuclear plant north of Kyiv that has contaminated about 15 percent of Ukrainian land.

The Famine is the most distant of these events, the most carefully concealed, and the most difficult for scholars to uncover, find reasons for, and assess the results from archival and fast-disappearing human sources. But one can put it simply: the Soviet regime in effect declared war on its own villages, emptied them of grain, allowed the population to starve to death, and then systematically concealed these events from the world.



# THE CAUSES AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAMINES IN SOVIET UKRAINE

by Roman Serbyn

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This year we commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Ukrainian Famine, a genocide which reached its highest point of mass destruction in the spring of 1933. Why the breadbasket of Europe was suddenly thrown into such an unprecedented abyss of human suffering, is a question that continues to haunt us even today. In fact within a quarter of a century, Ukraine suffered not one but three major famines: the first in 1921-23, the second in 1932-34 and the third in 1946-47. In order to fully understand the reasons for these calamities, we must go back to at least 1920, the time when Ukraine was re-conquered by the Red Army, and trace how the Communists approached what they considered to be the national and the peasant problems.

The Bolsheviks expected that under socialism the various nationalities would begin to disappear and peasants would be transformed into agricultural workers. The October revolution was a start in that direction but the targeted populations showed so much opposition to what was planned for them that Kremlin had to operate another "strategic withdrawal". In 1921, "war communism", which was ruining agriculture with its unbridled requisitions, was replaced with the more liberal "new economic policy" (NEP). But the change came too late to prevent the severe food shortage which gripped the Russian part of the Soviet Empire. At the same time, two years of drought and harvest failures gripped the Volga region, the northern Caucasus and southern Ukraine. Several million people died in Russia and over one million in Ukraine. And yet, there was no need for anyone to die in Ukraine; there were still some reserves in the south and there were normal harvests in the north. There was enough food to feed all of Ukraine's population, had the Soviet authorities not confiscated foodstuffs, not only from the northern provinces but also from the starving south. While Ukrainians starved, Ukrainian grain went to feed the Russian cities and the Volga region; during the second year of the famine it was even exported to Western Europe. Moscow asked for and received famine relief from the West but prevented Ukraine from getting any for the first eight months of the famine. In a typical colonialist gesture, Moscow deliberately sacrificed Ukrainian lives to save the Russian population.

After this famine, during the rest of the 1920s Ukraine experienced a period of economic recovery and the peasantry regained some of the lost ground. Still making up 80 % of the republics population and remaining free from the Russification that had engulfed the urban population, Ukrainian peasants became the mainstay and the *raison d'être* of the regime's new "retreat" on the "nationalities front". Occupied with the struggle for Lenin's succession, Kremlin leaders tried to rally support in Ukraine by recruiting "indigenous" cadres and promoting the Ukrainian language. The spread of literacy among the peasantry created a new market for Ukrainian publications while the influx of Ukrainian peasants into the industrial centres contributed to the Ukrainianization of the urban population. Inevitably, the Ukrainian revival began to assume political overtones. The writer M. Khvylioviy urged Ukrainian writers to seek inspiration from the West, the economist Volobuev condemned Moscow's colonial exploitation of Ukraine, and even M. Skrypnyk, once Lenin's faithful lieutenant and now a member of the ruling party elite in Ukraine, was demanding more autonomy

for his republic. The leadership of the Ukrainian movement was made up of Ukrainian intellectuals, but many of them came from the peasantry, and the countryside was still their firmest base, Stalin had been right to claim that "the nationality problem is by its essence a peasant problem." The spectre of Ukrainian independence was haunting Moscow: it was necessary to put an end to it, once and for all, by destroying its leaders and its base.

By the end of the twenties, having consolidated his power and having decided to transform his "socialist fatherland" into a great industrial and military power, Stalin set his huge empire on the track of frantic industrialization. This criminal adventure would be played out on the backs of the industrial workers and would lead to the final destruction of the traditional village. In Ukraine, the "Stalin revolution" will result in the largest genocide that Europe has ever witnessed in times of peace.

The industrialization of the USSR was to be financed by capital derived from agriculture. Peasants would have to feed the new armies of industrial workers and fill the bins of export ships, and all this, enforced and without compensation. Stalin was well aware that, as "war communism" had shown, direct door-to-door requisition was both inefficient and dangerous. The State could more easily dispose of the harvest once it was transferred from private to collective ownership and stocks were laid in communal silos. The State could then cart the wheat to the cities and to the export ships.

Kremlin saw the main obstacle to collectivization in the *kulaks* or rich peasants (*kurkuli*, in Ukrainian). But collectivization, which began in 1929, went beyond the class definition and targeted all peasants who opposed the new plunder of the village. Collectivization of the Soviet Union began in Ukraine where the regime expected stiffer opposition due to a more individualistic mentality of the Ukrainian peasants and the absence of the Russian type *obshchina* (common ownership of land). The "kurkuli" were dispossessed and deported in cattle wagons to Russia. Simultaneously a wave of repression swept over the Ukrainian intelligentsia. Having thus disposed of the elements which could provide leadership for a mass struggle against the new enslavement of peasantry, the regime could now implement its project of forceful collectivization. Once more, Ukraine became the prime target of government action and by the summer of 1932 70% of Ukrainian agriculture was in kolhosps (collective farms), as compared with only 59% in Russia. It was then, when collectivization was assured, that the worst phase of the famine began.

Unlike the famine of the twenties, which was regional and affected the urban as well as the rural population of southern Ukraine, the Famine of 1933 was directed essentially against Ukrainian peasantry. The urban centres, especially the smaller ones lived moments of extreme need, but the people who actually died in the towns were primarily refugees from the villages. There was no famine in the heartland of Russia; the famine was limited to Ukraine proper and the adjacent territories to the east, inhabited in great part by Ukrainians, i.e. the Kuban, and to the other non-Russian minorities such as the Volga Germans. No serious scholar today would blame nature: there was no drought and the harvest, although greatly reduced by the turmoil of dekurkulization and collectivization, was adequate for the sustenance of the whole peasant population. But while the people starved the harvest was kept under lock and key in overflowing silos, rotted in open



heaps under the watchful eyes of sentries or was dumped on Western markets. Nor was the famine the principal weapon used to break the peasants' resistance to collectivization, as some historians still claim – most of the Ukrainian peasants who starved to death did so precisely because they were already in the collective farms when the famine mowed them down.

The Famine was a conscious instrument of Soviet policy. "Food is a weapon" said Maxim Litvinov, the Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs. This weapon was not directed against the Soviet peasants in general, nor did the Ukrainian peasants become its target by chance. The 1933 Famine was part of a wider campaign against the Ukrainian nation, and must be considered together with the destruction of the Ukrainian national elites launched at the end of the twenties, and the renewed Russification of Ukrainian cities begun in the early thirties. As the peasants lost their freedom of movement (a new passport system tied the farmers to the collective farm), a new era of serfdom began. Meanwhile, Russian colonists filled the emptied Ukrainian villages, changed the demographic composition of the Ukrainian countryside and helped carry Russification into the very heart of the Ukrainian nation. The present situation in central and eastern Ukraine is to a large measure a direct consequence of the demographic engineering facilitated by famine.

## **RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS OF THE UKRAINIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC (6 DECEMBER 1932)**

*Drafted by Joseph Stalin*

In connection with the shameful wrecking of the grain procurement plan, which was organized by counter-revolutionary elements with the participation of some Communists and with a passive or indifferent attitude by Party organizations in some regions, the Council of People's Commissars and the CP(b)U have decided to place these regions on the blacklist and to apply to them the following repressive measures:

1. To halt trade of consumer goods to these regions and to halt all state and cooperative trade, for which purpose state and cooperative shops in these regions will be closed and existing goods will be removed;
2. To ban the trade in consumer goods that collective farms and individual enterprises have been conducting until now;
3. To halt all credits for these regions and to withdraw all the credits that have already been issued to them;
4. To change the personnel of the local administrative and economic leadership, eliminating all hostile elements;
5. To do the same in the collective farms, eliminating from them all the hostile elements that took part in the wrecking of grain procurements.

## BRITISH DIPLOMATIC REPORTS ON THE UKRAINIAN FAMINE

### Document #22 (5 March 1933): Correspondents forbidden to visit Ukraine

Conditions in Kuban have been described to me by recent English visitors as appalling and as resembling an armed camp in a desert - no work, no grain, no cattle, no draught horses, only idle peasants or soldiers. Another correspondent who had visited Kuban was strongly dissuaded from visiting Ukraine where conditions are apparently as bad although apathy is greater. In fact all correspondents have now been "advised" by the press department of Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to remain in Moscow.

*N.B. The description of the conditions then prevailing in the Kuban Territory also applied to Ukraine. At the time of the Famine, the majority of the inhabitants of Kuban were ethnic Ukrainians.*

### Document #26 (9 April 1933): Letters from Ukraine on the famine

4. Letters have been addressed to the Embassy begging for England's help against the present regime. One of these, from Ukraine, states that the Communist administration has ruined the working people and has reduced them to starvation, barbarity and even cannibalism. After the words "England, save us who are dying of hunger; help us to get rid of the Bolsheviks," the letter is signed by "The Committee of One Hundred," and a postscript adds: "Oh, Mr. Ambassador! We cannot express in a letter all our misery; we are being forced to cannibalism by our Workers' Government of Desperates; save us!"
8. Reports indicate that nowhere is the situation worse than in Ukraine, where the only hope of the desperate population seems to lie in the rumour of a contemplated annexationist coup on the part of Poland.

### Document #50 (September 26, 1933): Walter Duranty of the New York Times on the Famine in North Caucasus and Ukraine.

Walter Duranty, the Moscow correspondent of the *New York Times*, returned to Moscow a few days ago after a ten days' trip in the North Caucasus and Ukraine in company with Mr. Richardson of the Associated Press. Mr. Duranty has given to a member of my staff the following account of the impressions gathered during his trip...

5. According to Mr. Duranty, the population of the North Caucasus and the Lower Volga has decreased in the past year by 3 million, and the population of Ukraine by 4-5 million...
7. From Rostov Mr. Duranty went to Kharkov, and on the way he noticed that large quantities of grain were in evidence at the railway stations, of which a large portion was lying in the open air. Conditions in Kharkov were worse than in Rostov. There was less to eat and the

people had evidently been on very short commons. There was a dearth of cattle and poultry. Supervision over visitors was also stricter in Kharkov. During the year the death rate in Kharkov was, he thought, not more than 10 per cent above the normal. Numerous peasants, however, who had come into the town had died off like flies...

10. ...Ukraine had been bled white...
12. At Kharkov Mr. Duranty saw the Polish consul, who told him the following story: A Communist friend employed in the Control Commission was surprised at not getting reports from a certain locality. He went out to see for himself, and on arrival he found the village completely deserted. Most of the houses were standing empty, while others contained only corpses. The consul also mentioned that during the early part of the spring, stones were thrown at any car passing through a village, it being supposed that any such car must be an official one...
13. Mr. Duranty thinks it quite possible that as many as 10 million people may have died directly or indirectly from lack of food in the Soviet Union during the past year...

Star reporter for the *New York Times*, Walter Duranty, conveyed the information contained in document #50 to a British diplomat off the record. Officially he wrote the following: "And here are the facts... there is no actual starvation or death from starvation, but there is widespread mortality from disease due to malnutrition... These conditions are bad but there is no famine." *New York Times*, 31 March 1933, p.13.

For his reporting from the Soviet Union, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. As yet, it has not been revoked.



## PROFILES IN COURAGE

*Survivors of the 1933 Famine - Genocide in Soviet Ukraine residing in Toronto.*

### **Maria Boshyk - Kyiv Province**

- nine years old at the time of the Famine
- lost her mother and brother
- witnessed the death of half her village of 2000 - a great majority of them children and young people.
- saved by a kind physician who placed her older sister and herself into a hospital.

### **Valentyna Podasz - Dnipropetrovsk Province**

- four years old at the time of the Famine.
- lost older sister, grandmother and two uncles
- her mother's entire village of Preobrazhenka (population 2500) perished. It was blockaded.
- survived because her father worked at the railroad station and received 500 grams of bread per day which saved the family for about half a year. Later, a Jewish friend of the family secretly gave them potato and cucumber peelings, which saved them from starvation.

### **Benjamin Chmilenko - Sumy Province**

- ten years old at the time of the Famine
- lost grandfather
- out of 60 families in the khutir (farming community) where his family lived, 20% perished
- survived because his father successfully hid a bag of rye in a collaborator's yard whose property was not searched. Also, his family lived near a river and his father was an expert fisherman. Fishing was strictly forbidden but Benjamin and his father chose fishing times carefully and managed to evade the authorities.

### **Pavlo Makohon - Dnipropetrovsk Province**

- fourteen years old at the time of the Famine
- out of a family of eight - five died of starvation: grandmother, three brothers and a sister.
- "I witnessed my entire village become hell on earth." Out of 2500, about 1800 died of starvation.
- He survived by escaping to the city. There he met a boy who also escaped and whose entire village, Holodajivka, perished. This boy told Pavlo that if he wished to survive, he must learn how to steal food at the bazaar. Pavlo learned to steal. Having left his mother still alive, Pavlo returned with a bag of food and found his mother dying. He managed to revive her and save her from starvation. She lived to be 92 years old.

## JEWISH WITNESSES ON THE UKRAINIAN FAMINE

*The documents reproduced below were written by eyewitnesses of Jewish background. This fact has a double significance. First, their authors cannot be accused of Ukrainian bias. Second, their testimony is valuable. They too belonged to a nation which had been persecuted and thus the authors were able to both understand and empathize with the sufferings of others.*

VASILY GROSSMAN, a Russian language journalist and writer worked in the Donbas region of Ukraine in the early 1930s and saw the famine with his own eyes. In his autobiographical novel, **Forever Flowing**, he describes life under Stalin, and devotes two touching chapters to the famine in Ukraine (Ch. 14 & 15). The novel is also available in French (**Tout passe**. Paris, 1972), and in Russian (**Vse techet**. Frankfurt, 1970). Excerpts have been published in the Ukrainian Journal (Suchasnist).

LEV KOPELEV, a journalist and a writer, was a young Communist activist in the 1930s. He was part of the cadres responsible for implementing Stalin's genocidal policies in Ukraine. His memoirs, **The Education of a True Believer**, published after the author's emigration to the West, reads like a confession and a testimony.

### 1- Vasily Grossman, *Forever Flowing*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972 (Chapter 14).

I don't want to remember it. It is terrible. But I can't forget it. It just keeps on living within me; whether or not it slumbers, it is still there. A piece of iron in my heart, like a shell fragment. Something one cannot escape. I was fully adult when it all happened...

No, there was no famine during the campaign to liquidate the kulaks. Only the horses died. The famine came in 1932, the second year after the campaign to liquidate the kulaks...

And so, at the beginning of 1930, they began to liquidate the kulak families. The height of the fever was in February and March. They expelled them from their home districts so that when it was time for sowing there would be no kulaks left, so that a new life could begin. That is what we all said it would be: "the first collective farm spring."...

Our new life began without the co-called "kulaks". They started to force people to join the collective farms. Meetings were underway from morning on. There were shouts and curses. Some of them shouted: "We will not join!"...

And we thought, fools that we were, that there could be no fate worse than that of the kulaks. How wrong we were! The axe fell upon the peasants right where they stood, on large and small alike. The execution by famine had arrived. By this time I no longer washed floors but was a book-keeper instead. And, as a Party activist, I was sent to Ukraine in order to strengthen a collective farm. In Ukraine, we were told, they had an instinct for private property that was stronger than in the Russian Republic. And truly, truly, the whole business was much worse in Ukraine...

Moscow assigned grain production and delivery quotas to the provinces, and the provinces then assigned them to the districts. And our village was given a quota that it couldn't have fulfilled in ten years! In the village rada (council) even those who weren't drinkers took to drink out of terror...

Of course, the grain deliveries could not be fulfilled. Smaller areas had been sown, and the crop yield on those smaller areas had shrunk. So where could it come from, that promised ocean of grain from the collective farms? The conclusion reached up top was that the grain had all been concealed, hidden away. By kulaks who had not yet been liquidated, by loafers! The "kulaks" had been removed, but the "kulak" spirit remained. Private property was master over the minds of the Ukrainian peasant.

Who was it who then signed the act which imposed mass murder? ... For the decree required that the peasants of Ukraine, the Don, and the Kuban be put to death by starvation, put to death along with their tiny children. The instructions were to take away the entire seed fund. Grain was searched for as if it were not grain but bombs and machine guns. The whole earth was stabbed with bayonets and ramrods. Cellars were dug up, floors were broken through, and vegetable gardens were turned over. From some they confiscated grain, and dust hung over the earth. And there were no grain elevators to accommodate it, and they simply dumped it out on the earth and set guards around it. By winter the grain had been soaked by the rains and began to ferment -- the Soviet government didn't even have enough canvases to cover it up!...

Fathers and mothers wanted to save their children and hid a tiny bit of grain, and they were told: "You hate the country of socialism. You are trying to make the plan fail, you parasites, you pro-kulaks, you rats." ... The entire seed fund had been confiscated...

Everyone was in terror. Mothers looked at their children and began to scream in fear. They screamed as if a snake had crept into their house. And this snake was famine, starvation, death...

And here, under the government of workers and peasants, not even one kernel of grain was given them. There were blockades along all the highways, where militia, NKVD men, troops were stationed; the starving people were not to be allowed into the cities. Guards surrounded all the railroad stations. There were guards at even the tiniest of whistle stops. No bread for you, breadwinners! ... And the peasant children in the villages got not one gram. That is exactly how the Nazis put the Jewish children into the Nazi gas chambers: "You are not allowed to live, you are all Jews!" And it was impossible to understand, grasp, comprehend. For these children were Soviet children, and those who were putting them to death were Soviet people...

Death from starvation mowed down the village. First the children, then the old people, then those of middle age. At first they dug graves and buried them, and then as things got worse they stopped. Dead people lay there in the yards, and in the end they remained in their huts. Things fell silent. The whole village died. Who died last I do not know. Those of us who worked in the collective farm administration were taken off to the city...

Before they had completely lost their strength, the peasants went on foot across country to the railroad. Not to the stations where the guards kept them away, but to the tracks. And when the Kyiv-Odesa express came past, they would just kneel there and cry: "Bread, bread!" They would lift up their horrible starving children for people to see. And sometimes people would throw them pieces of bread and other scraps. The train would thunder on past, and the dust would settle down,



and the whole village would be there crawling along the tracks, looking for crusts. But an order was issued that whenever trains were travelling through the famine provinces the guards were to shut the windows and pull down the curtains. Passengers were not allowed at the windows...

And the peasants kept crawling from village into the city. All the stations were surrounded by guards. All the trains were searched. Everywhere along the roads were roadblocks -- troops, NKVD. Yet despite all this the peasants made their way into Kyiv. They would crawl through the fields, through empty lots, through the swamps, through the woods -- anywhere to bypass the roadblocks set up for them. They were unable to walk; all they could do was crawl...

What I found out later was that everything fell silent in our village... I found out that troops were sent in to harvest the winter wheat. The army men were not allowed to enter the village, however. They were quartered in their tents. They were told there had been an epidemic. But they kept complaining that a horrible stink was coming from the village. The troops stayed to plant the spring wheat too. And the next year new settlers were brought in from Orel Province (Russia). This was the rich Ukrainian land, the black earth, whereas the Orel peasants were accustomed to frequent harvest failures.

## **2 -- Lew Kopelev, *The Education of a True Believer*. New York: Harper & Row, 1980. (Chapter IX "The Last Grain Collections")**

The Myrhorod district had not fulfilled its plan of grain collection in December 1932. The oblast committee dispatched a visiting delegation of two newspapers, the *Socialist Kharkiv Register* and our *Locomotive Worker*, to issue news sheets in the lagging villages. There were four of us: two lads from Myrhorod -- a typesetter and a printer; and two from Kharkiv -- my assistant Volodya and myself...

The highest measure of coercion on the hard-core holdouts was "undisputed confiscation."

A team consisting of several young kolhospnyks and members of the village rada, led as a rule by Vashchenko himself, would search the hut, barn, yard, and take away all the stores of seed, lead away the cow, the horse, the pigs...

Several times Volodia and I were present at such plundering raids. We even took part: we were entrusted to draw up inventories of the confiscated goods...

The women howled hysterically, clinging to the bags-...

I heard the children echoing them with screams, choking, coughing with screams. And I saw the looks of the men: frightened, pleading, hateful, dully impassive, extinguished with despair or flaring up with half-mad, daring ferocity...

And I persuaded myself, explained to myself I mustn't give in to debilitating pity. We were realising historical necessity. We were performing our revolutionary duty. We were obtaining grain

for the socialist fatherland, for the five-year plan.

Some sort of rationalistic fanaticism overcame my doubts, my pangs of conscience and simple feelings of sympathy, pity and shame, but this fanaticism was nourished not only by speculative newspaper and literary sources. More convincing than these were people who in my eyes embodied, personified our truth and our justice, people who continued with their lives that it was necessary to clench your teeth, clench your heart and carry out everything the party and the Soviet power ordered....

I have always remembered the winter of the last grain collections, the weeks of the great famine. And I have always told about it. But I did not begin to write it down until many years later.

And while I wrote the rough drafts and read them to friends, questions arose... Questions put to history, the present day, myself.

How could all this have happened?

Who was guilty of the famine which destroyed millions of lives?

How could I have participated in it?...

On December 27 [1932], the Central Committee issued a ruling on passports: they were to be introduced for city residents in order to facilitate "the counting of the population, the unburdening of the cities and the purging of kulak criminal elements from the cities."

But in fact the passport system laid an administrative and juridical cornerstone for the new serfdom; it provided one of the foundations for an unparalleled state totalitarianism. The "kulak elements" of which the cities should be cleansed proved to be all peasants who had left the countryside without the express permission of the local authorities. Once again the passport system tied down the peasantry, as it had before the emancipation of 1861.

In February 1933 I was sick... My father arrived after a trip through the provinces, where he had been checking on the preparations for planting sugar beets. He sat hunched over; his face was dark and his eyes inflamed, as if after a bout of malaria. But he was not emaciated. People don't go hungry at the sugar refineries...

Father was gloomy and immediately let into me.

"Everything is done for! Do you understand? No grain in the village! I'm not talking about the Central Workers Co-op or the city story, but the village. The grain growers are dying of starvation! Not some derelict, tramps, not some unemployed Americans, but the Ukrainian grain growers are dying from want of grain! And my dear little boy helped to take it away."

## QUOTES ABOUT THE 1933 FAMINE - GENOCIDE IN SOVIET OCCUPIED UKRAINE

" Food is a weapon."

Maxim Litvinov - Soviet Commissar of  
Foreign Affairs

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"As many as 7 million Ukrainians were starved in Soviet Socialist dictator Joseph Stalin's artificial, forced famine in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933. This is approximately the total population of Manitoba, Newfoundland, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island."

Inky Mark, M. P. Dauphin - Swan River  
House of Commons 2 June 1998

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*Sir Winston Churchill to Joseph Stalin:*

"... Have the stresses of the war been as bad to you personally as carrying through the policy of the Collective Farms?"

*Stalin:* "Oh, no, the Collective Farm policy was a terrible struggle... Ten million [he said, holding up his hands]. It was fearful. Four years it lasted. It was absolutely necessary..."

Winston Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*  
(This exchange took place during Churchill's visit to the Kremlin in August 1942.)

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"...A famine that came about without drought and without war."

Alexander Solzhenitsyn  
*The Gulag Archipelago*

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"This was the first instance of a peacetime genocide in history. It took the extraordinary form of an artificial famine deliberately created by the ruling powers. The savage combination of words for the designation of a crime - an artificial deliberately planned famine - is still

incredible to many people throughout the world, but indicates the uniqueness of the tragedy of 1933, which is unparalleled, for a time of peace, in the number of victims it claimed."

Wasył Hryshko - Survivor  
*The Ukrainian Holocaust, 1933*

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"Moscow employed the famine as a political weapon against the Ukrainians in the years 1932-1933. The famine was in its entirety artificially induced and organized."

F. M. Pigido - (an economist who lived and worked in Ukraine during the Famine of 1932-1933) *Investigation of Communist Takeover and Occupation of the Non-Russian Nations of the U.S.S.R* p. 35

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"This artificially induced famine was in fact an act of genocide, designed... to undermine the social basis of a Ukrainian national resistance."

Leo Kruper  
*The Prevention of Genocide*

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"I can't give an exact figure because no one was keeping count. All we knew was that people were dying in enormous numbers."

Nikita Khrushchev  
*Khrushchev Remembers*

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"Farmers present by themselves the basic force of the national movement. Without farmers there can be no strong national movement. This is what we mean when we say that the nationalist question is, actually, the farmers' question."

Joseph Stalin  
*Marxist and the National-Colonial Question*

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"Famine was quite deliberately employed as an



instrument of national policy, as the last means of breaking the resistance of the peasantry to the new system where they are divorced from personal ownership of the land and obligated to work on the conditions which the state may demand from them... This famine may fairly be called political because it was not the result of any overwhelming natural catastrophe or such complete exhaustions of the country's resources in foreign and civil wars..."

William Henry Chamberlin -  
(Correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor*), *Russia's Iron Age*  
p.82

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"... [Our reporting] served Moscow's purpose of smearing the facts out of recognition and declaring a situation which, had we reported simply and clearly, might have worked up enough public opinion abroad to force remedial measures. And every correspondent each in his own measure, was guilty of collaborating in this monstrous hoax on the world."

Eugene Lyons - (Moscow United Press correspondent from 1928 to 1934)  
*Assignment in Utopia* pp. 572-573

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"... On one side, millions of starving peasants, their bodies often swollen from lack of food; on the other, soldiers, members of the GPU carrying out the instructions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They had gone over the country like a swarm of locusts and taken away everything edible; they had shot or exiled thousands of peasants, sometimes whole villages; they had reduced some of the most fertile land in the world to a melancholy desert."

Malcolm Muggeridge - British foreign correspondent, "War on the Peasants",  
*Fortnightly Review*, 1 May, 1933

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"I saw ravages of the famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine - hordes of families in rags begging at the railway stations, the women lifting up to the

compartment windows their starving brats, which, with drumstick limbs, big cadaverous heads and puffed bellies, looked like embryos out of alcohol bottles."

Arthur Koestler  
*The God That Failed* p. 68

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"And the peasant children! Have you ever seen the newspaper photographs of the children in the German camps? They were just like that, their heads like heavy balls on thin little necks, like storks, and one could see each bone of their arms and legs protruding from beneath the skin, how bones joined, and the entire skeleton was stretched over with skin that was like yellow gauze. And the children's faces were aged, tormented, just as if they were seventy years old. And by the spring they no longer had faces at all. Instead, they had bird-like heads with beaks, or frog heads - thin, wide lips - some of them resembled fish, mouths open. Not human faces!"

Vasily Grossman  
*Forever Flowing* pp. 156- 157

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"Anger lashed my mind as I drove back to the village. Butter sent abroad in the midst of the famine! In London, Berlin, Paris I could see ... people eating butter stamped with a Soviet trade mark. Driving through the fields, I did not hear the lovely Ukrainian songs so dear to my heart. These people have forgotten how to sing! I could only hear the groans of the dying, and the lip-smacking of the fat foreigners enjoying our butter..."

Victor Kravchenko - Former Soviet trade official and defector, *I Chose Freedom*

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"Huge events like the Ukraine famine of 1933, involving the deaths of millions of people, have actually escaped the attention of the majority of English russophiles."

George Orwell - Commenting on the British attitude towards the Russians

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"Yet it is well to remember, as Robert Conquest's powerful book obliges us to do, that the forced collectivization of agriculture decreed by the Soviet master and his party likely cost the lives of more people than perished in all countries as a result of the First World War."

Prof. Michael Marrus - Review of Robert Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow : Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* "Globe and Mail" December 20, 1986

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"Almost single-handedly did Duranty aid and abet one of the world's most prolific mass

murderers, knowing all the while that was going on but refraining from saying precisely what he knew to be true. He had swallowed the ends-justifies-the-means-argument hook, line and sinker. When Stalin's atrocities were brought to light, Duranty loved to repeat 'you can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs.' Those few "eggs" were the heads of men, women and children, and those "few" were merely tens of millions."

Mark Y. Herring - Review of S. J. Taylor's *Stalin's Apologist: Walter Duranty, the New York Times Man in Moscow*, "Contra Mundum" No. 15

# FACTS ABOUT THE 1933 FAMINE-GENOCIDE IN SOVIET OCCUPIED UKRAINE

## Censuses

- \* In late 1932 - precisely when the genocidal famine struck - the Central Statistical Bureau in Moscow ceased to publish demographic data.
  - \* The 1937 census was given top priority. The census director I. Kravel was awarded the Order of Lenin for his
- meticulous work. After the results of the 1937 census were submitted to the Government, the census was declared "subversive", its materials destroyed and the top census officials were shot for not finding enough people.

## Harvest and Climactic Conditions

The "natural disaster" excuse to cover up the 1933 Famine-Genocide does not hold water. It was not caused by some natural calamity or crop failure:

- \* 1. The 1931 harvest was 18.3 million tons of grain.
  - \* 2. The 1932 harvest was 14.6 million tons of grain.
  - \* 3. The 1933 harvest was 22.3 million tons of grain.
  - \* 4. The 1934 harvest was 12.3 million tons of grain.
  - \* In 1934 during the poorest harvest - a
- mere 12.3 - there was no massive famine because Stalin reduced the grain requisition quotas and even released grain from existing "state stockpiles" to feed the population.
- \* The highest death rates were in the grain growing provinces of Poltava, Dnipropetrovsk, Kirovohrad and Odessa: usually 20-25%, although higher in many villages.

## Laws and Decrees

- \* The 7 August 1932 law drafted by Joseph Stalin on the protection of the socialist property stipulated the death penalty for "theft of socialist property". Ukrainian villagers were executed by firing squads for theft of a sack of wheat and in some cases even for two sheaves of corn or a husk of grain.
  - \* The 6 December 1932 decree stipulated a complete blockade of villages for allegedly sabotaging the
- grain procurement campaign - *de facto* sentencing their Ukrainian inhabitants to execution by starvation.
- \* An unpublished decree signed by Molotov encouraged Russian peasants to settle into the empty or half-empty villages of "the free lands of Ukraine" [and North Caucasus also inhabited by Ukrainians and likewise devastated by the famine].



## **Means of Implementing Forced Collectivization and Draconian Grain Requisition Quotas**

- \* The All-Union Peoples Commissariat of Agriculture in Moscow initially mobilized some of its most reliable '25-thousanders' - Party members, majority of them Russians - and sent them to Ukraine to organize collective farms.
- \* Further 'thousanders,' the army, the secret police [GPU], the militia and armed brigades were sent into Ukrainian villages to force the farmers into collective farms and to supervise the Draconian grain expropriation and eventually the entire output of butter, corn, sugar beet, etc.
- \* Local granaries in Ukraine held large stockpiles of 'state reserves' for emergencies, such as war, but the raging famine did not qualify as an emergency.

## **Geography of the Famine**

- \* The 1933 Famine-Genocide was geographically focused for political ends. It stopped precisely at the Ukrainian-Russian ethnographic border.
- \* The borders of Ukraine were strictly patrolled by the military to prevent starving Ukrainians from crossing into Russia in search of bread.
- \* For example: The Kharkiv Province on the Ukrainian side was devastated while the contiguous Belgorod Province on the Russian side with similar climactic conditions and demographic profiles showed no evidence of starvation or any unusual mortality
- \* Armed GPU officers were also stationed to prevent starving Ukrainians from entering the zone near the Polish and Roumanian borders. Those who tried to cross the Dnister River into Roumania were shot.

## **Exports**

- \* The Soviet regime dumped 1.7 million tons of grain on the Western markets at the height of the Famine.
- \* It exported nearly a quarter of a ton of grain for every Ukrainian who starved to death.

## **Victims and Losses**

- \* At the height of the Famine Ukrainian villages were dying at the rate of 25,000 per day or 1,000 per hour or 17 per minute.
- \* According to dissident Soviet demographer M. Maksudov "no fewer than three million children born between 1932-1933 died of hunger."
- \* By comparison the Allied soldiers died at the rate of 6,000 per day during the Battle of Verdun.
- \* 80% of Ukrainian intellectuals were liquidated because they refused to
- \* Among the children one in three

- \* collaborate in the extermination of their countrymen.
- \* Out of about 84 linguists 62 perished.
- \* Out of about 240 Ukrainian authors 200 were liquidated or disappeared.
- \* The Ukrainian population may have been reduced by as much as 25%.

### Western Press Coverage

- \* Foreign correspondents were "advised" by the press department of the Soviet Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to remain in Moscow and were *de facto* barred from visiting Ukraine.
- \* of the Western press coverage with authoritative denials of starvation and referred to the Famine as the "alleged 'man-made' famine of 1933."
- \* Not a single Western newspaper or press agency protested publicly against the unprecedented confining of its correspondents in Moscow or bothered to investigate the reason for this extraordinary measure.
- \* However, according to British Diplomatic Reports, Duranty off the record, conceded that "as many as 10 million" may have perished.
- \* The majority of reporters feared losing their journalistic privileges and toed the line.
- \* For his reporting Walter Duranty received the Pulitzer Prize for journalism. To this date the *New York Times* refuses to revoke the prize and still lists Duranty among its Pulitzer winners.
- \* The only correspondents permitted into Ukraine were the likes of Walter Duranty of the *New York Times* who reported that there was no famine except for some "partial crop failures."
- \* A number of intrepid reporters, such as William Henry Chamberlin, Harry Lang, Malcolm Muggeridge and Thomas Walker ignored the ban and reported on the Famine, substantiating their reports with photographs.
- \* Star reporter Walter Duranty of the "*New York Times*" set the tone for most

### Collusion by Western Governments

- \* Available archival evidence (such as reports sent in diplomatic pouches as well as coverage on the press by a few honest and courageous reporters who managed to penetrate into starving Ukraine) indicates that several Western governments (especially Great Britain, Canada and the United States) were well informed about the Famine-Genocide in Ukraine but chose to adopt
- \* a policy on non-interference in the internal affairs of a foreign sovereign state. Ironically, the United States recognized the Soviet Union in November, 1933.
- \* Offers to aid the starving by numerous charitable organizations such as the International Red Cross, Save the Children Fund, the Vienna-based

Interconfessional Relief Council and Ukrainian organizations in the West and Western Ukraine (occupied by Poland)

were discouraged or blocked by their Governments.

### Findings and Conclusions

- \* The International Commission of Inquiry into the 1932-1933 Famine in Ukraine May 23-27, 1988 in Brussels, Belgium
- "Investigation of the Ukraine Famine of 1932-1933"

*concluded that:*

*and*

The U.S. Congress 1988 Commission on the Ukraine famine in its

JOSEPH STALIN AND THOSE AROUND HIM COMMITTED GENOCIDE AGAINST UKRAINIANS IN 1932-1933.

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Ukrainian Famine: <http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/SDG/Experimental/soviet.exhibit/famine.html>

Useful Idiot: Stalin's Apologist: Walter Duranty, The New York Times Man in Moscow:  
[http://www.wavefront.com/~Contra\\_M/cm/reviews/cm15\\_rev\\_idiot.html](http://www.wavefront.com/~Contra_M/cm/reviews/cm15_rev_idiot.html)

Sources on Ukraine Famine: <http://www.orbiter.com/gam/famine.htm>

Soviet Democide: [http://www.bomis.com/fn/rummel\\_soviet.html](http://www.bomis.com/fn/rummel_soviet.html)

Genocidal Acts During the Twentieth Century:  
<http://www.wce.wvu.edu/necc97/poster2/UtahLink/WebWhacker/ww412.html>

Harvest of Despair (Canada, 1984): <http://www.viamall.com/ihf/377.html>

Ukrainian Famine: <http://sunsite.unc.edu/expo/soviet.exhibit/famine.html>

Ukrainian Weekly: [http://www.ukrweekly.com/Archive/TOC\\_files/83/TOC\\_032083\\_1216.shtml](http://www.ukrweekly.com/Archive/TOC_files/83/TOC_032083_1216.shtml)

Ukrainian Weekly: [http://www.ukrweekly.com/Archive/TOC\\_files/83/TOC\\_102383\\_4316.shtml](http://www.ukrweekly.com/Archive/TOC_files/83/TOC_102383_4316.shtml)

*Compiled by Gerald William Kokodyniak of Info-Ukes*



## **UKRAINIAN FAMINE IN THE GENOCIDE MUSEUM**

The fall of the Soviet Union made possible the access to more documents and the famine can be studied in all its dimensions. The victims deserve a place in history and in our memory. Canada became the home for many famine survivors after the Second World War, and, although this generation is passing away, their children carry the memory of their parents' nightmare. Awareness of this tragedy must not be limited to the Ukrainian community; the famine victims deserve to be honoured, along with victims of other genocides, in a GENOCIDE MUSEUM.

The Ukrainian Famine of 1933 must not be left out of any future Canadian museum dedicated to the victims of genocide for yet another important reason. Food is still a favourite Weapon with many authoritarian regimes in the world today. Studies of the famine can bring us to understand and take the necessary position towards this persisting evil.

### **Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Toronto Branch.**

UCC is an umbrella organization encompassing over 40 organization whose aim and objectives are to actively advance better communication, understanding and mutual respect between Ukrainian Canadians and other communities in Toronto, and to act as a public advocate on issues affecting Ukrainians in Canada. (416) 762-9427, fax: (416) 762-9298

### **Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre.**

UCRDC is an academically oriented organization which promotes the collection of research materials and oral history relating to Ukrainian Canadians and Ukraine. (416) 966-1819 fax:(416) 966-1820

### **Media Watch Ukraine.**

Media Watch Ukraine is a proactive association dedicated to fair and accurate representation of Ukrainians and Ukraine in the media. (416) 487-5002, (416) 767-7149, (416) 767-8075



# FAMINE - GENOCIDE UKRAINE 1933



**7 million Ukrainians were starved to death**

- The Famine was artificially induced by the Soviet regime.
- It was an act of genocide designed to undermine the social basis of Ukrainian national resistance.
- At the height of the Famine, while Ukrainian villagers were dying at the rate of  
25,000 per day,  
1,000 per hour,  
17 per minute  
the Soviet regime was dumping 1.7 million tons of grain on Western markets.

## **Commemoration week**

**Sat. Sept. 26 - Educational Program - 9:30am - 12:30pm**

Ukrainian Canadian Research & Documentation Centre, 620 Spadina Ave.

**Mon. Sept. 28 - Famine Exhibit - opening 7:00pm-8:00pm**

Rotunda, Toronto City Hall exhibit continues to Fri. Oct. 9

## **Sun. Oct. 4**

- **Memorial services** at all Ukrainian Churches

- **Memorial Procession - 1:00pm**

starting at Queen's Park walking to Nathan Phillips Square

- **Commemorative Assembly - 2:00pm**

**Keynote Speaker: Prof. James Mace**

**Survivors honoured**

Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto City Hall

**Mon. Oct. 5 Famine Symposium - 4:00-6:00 pm**

Frank Josef Scheybal Seminar Room, 143542 (14th floor) Robart's Library  
University of Toronto, 130 St. George St.

UCC Office: (416) 762-9427 or (416) 487-5002 or (416) 767-7149

Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Toronto Branch  
Ukrainian Canadian Research & Documentation Centre  
Media Watch Ukrain