

# Grains of truth

A collection of UK materials  
on the Holodomor in Ukraine, 1932-33



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*This book is dedicated to the memory of  
all victims of the Holodomor*

London 2018

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Closely linked with the publication of this book in helping to raise awareness about the Holodomor, the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain held an Essay Prize Competition during 2018 which was open to all Sixth Form students in the UK. We are especially grateful to Hanya Dezyk for very ably organising this competition through from start to finish, to the judging panel - Dr. Olenka Pevny, Lecturer in Ukrainian Studies, Cambridge University, Larysa Kurylas, Architect and Designer of the Holodomor Memorial in Washington DC and Dr. Ludmila Pekarska, Curator of the Shevchenko Library & Archive in London - for taking the time to scrutinise the essays and choose the winning three entries which are now available online on the AUGB's website, [www.augb.co.uk/holodomor](http://www.augb.co.uk/holodomor)

We are grateful to everyone who has assisted in any way to make the publication and circulation of this book possible.

# Foreword

The 20th century was the deadliest in human history primarily because of the seemingly endless armed conflicts that caused tens of millions of deaths and immeasurable human suffering across the globe.

However, what happened in Ukraine over just a few months in 1932-1933 stands out, not just for the sheer number of victims, but also for the fact that the majority of them were starved to death in peacetime and despite the land providing crops in abundance.

Orchestrated by the totalitarian Stalinist regime, the 1932-1933 Holodomor in Ukraine took the lives of between 7 and 10 million people. The grave consequences of that man-made tragedy continue to haunt us to this day.

The systematic attack by the Soviet government was directed at the very fabric of Ukrainian society – designed to completely annihilate Ukraine or, at the very least, put a stop to its aspirations for independence from Muscovite rule.

It is important that we do not forget that Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term ‘genocide’ and initiated the Genocide Convention, said that the Holodomor manifested itself as “perhaps the classic example of Soviet genocide, its longest and broadest experiment in Russification – the destruction of the Ukrainian nation.”

With whole families eradicated, villages wiped out and large cities decimated, the magnitude of that mass annihilation of Ukrainians by hunger was unparalleled. Each individual victim went through unimaginable suffering and death, while each survivor had to witness the devastation through their own eyes. Some of them lived on into the 21st century, their whole lives marred by the terrible loss of relatives and friends to the Holodomor.

This book presents just a fragment of the individual Holodomor survivor accounts, which have been made more accessible by their translation into English. Some of these stories were recorded and preserved by the Ukrainian diaspora through the decades, while other survivors had to wait until Ukraine’s independence in 1991 for their truth to finally be told. We will never come close to grasping the scope of the tragedy that was the Holodomor without giving a voice to these people and letting them speak the truth in their own, simple terms.

Despite the Soviet bans, the truth about the Holodomor trickled outside, thanks not least to the bravery and professionalism of some of the Western media. Young British journalists Gareth Jones and Malcolm Muggeridge were among the very first to report on the Holo-

domor, while most of their international colleagues chose to turn a blind eye to Ukraine's plight in return for journalistic privileges in the Soviet capital.

I commend the efforts of the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain for compiling the unique materials presented here. For generations, the Ukrainian community has kept alive the memory of the Holodomor. It was also thanks to the AUGB that Europe's first memorials to the victims of the Holodomor were erected in the United Kingdom, making sure that the truth is never forgotten.

The lessons in this book remain relevant today, and I recommend it to everyone who seeks to understand the lessons of history, in the hope that such atrocities can never be allowed to happen again.

**Natalia Galibarenko**

*Ambassador of Ukraine*

*to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*

## Introduction

### *About this book*

The very word 'famine' conjures up horrific images of long and painful suffering.

In an era of instant news, we still see terrible pictures of swollen children, people too weak to move, the tragedy of mass deaths – often caused by natural disasters, but too often the result of armed conflict.

This book is about a peacetime famine – the Holodomor. A famine which was not caused by any natural disaster or failure of the harvest – but one which was deliberately engineered and which led to the deaths of millions from starvation in Ukraine in 1932-33. It was a famine which was deliberately hidden from view and denied for many years – robbing the victims of their dignity and their right to be remembered. It was a famine which even today is relatively little known, and still has to fight for its rightful place in 20th century history.

This book brings together for the first time documents and testimonies which link Great Britain and the Holodomor: eyewitness accounts from Holodomor survivors who settled in Great Britain after the Second World War; extracts from official documents which show that the UK Government was itself an eyewitness to the appalling events which unfolded in 1932-33; resolutions from local councils who have acknowledged the horrors of the Holodomor; and the memorials placed in various parts of Great Britain in permanent remembrance to the Holodomor's innocent victims.

### *What was the Holodomor?*

From the early 1920s, Ukraine suffered a series of famines. The earliest, in 1921-22, was caused primarily by drought, but the Soviet government also used it as an opportunity to weaken those sections of Ukrainian society who were seen as a threat because of their support for Ukrainian independence and their distinctive national identity. Even so, Soviet policy had to concede to Ukrainian nationalist feelings to the extent that during the early 1920s, Ukrainian culture was allowed to flourish and Ukrainians were given government posts.

However, Moscow's fear of Ukrainian aspirations to pull away from the sphere of the Kremlin's influence and control did not subside. In the late 1920s the Soviet government began a violent and massive purge against the Ukrainian intelligentsia, against cultural and political

figures and even against the leadership of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, which was brought to the point of almost complete extinction.

Stalin believed that “the national problem was in essence a peasant problem”. The attack on Ukrainian culture was therefore intensified with an outright assault on the Ukrainian peasantry, which formed the majority of the Ukrainian population.

Stalin’s drive for collectivisation and industrialisation of the Soviet Union was run in parallel with a propaganda campaign backed up by force, violence and terror against the perceived greatest ‘enemy of the people’, the kulaks, (the better off farmers who farmed their own smallholdings), who needed to be “liquidated” as “a class”.

The onslaught on the kulaks was launched in December 1929, with the most intense period lasting from January to March 1930, which coincided with the main push for collectivisation.

As a result of these policies - dekulakisation and collectivisation - 282,000 peasant households disappeared in Ukraine between 1930 and 1931, some 100,000 kulaks were shot and almost 10 million peasants were deported to the Arctic in cattle trucks, causing the deaths of about three million people. By the end of this period there were no real kulaks left.

Sanctioned state violence meant that by the end of February 1930 more than half of all privately owned farms in the USSR had been turned into collectives controlled by the state. During the same period, in Ukraine, the Kremlin took control of over 68.3% of all privately owned farms and smallholdings.

This target had been attained with uncontrolled violence. 50,000 activists with special powers were sent by Stalin into the countryside to organise, punish and intimidate Ukrainian peasants. Terror reigned in the villages.

Arrests, expropriation of property, deportations and executions spread to all peasants who resisted orders to join the collective farms.

By 1931, 75% of all Ukrainian peasants were forced into submission to work on the collective farms, where productivity fell and wastage increased. At the same time grain quotas for state use were increased to wholly unrealistic levels. The draconian quotas, together with the confiscation of all food and livestock from the peasants, led to starvation on an unimaginable scale.

The quotas demanded by the state could not be met. In spite of protests by some Ukrainian officials, even harsher laws were passed. These forbade local use of grain until quotas had been met; deprived those collectives who could not meet their quotas of all rights to trade; refused internal passports to prevent peasants from fleeing Ukraine in

search of food; and exiled (read slave labour followed by certain death) or executed those caught hiding or stealing food.

The results were appalling. Millions died of starvation during 1932-33. Bodies were collected and heaped into mass graves. In towns and cities outside the famine region, bodies on the streets were a common sight as peasants looking for work and food died where they fell. Estimates at the time, even from Stalin himself, were that 10 million died in Ukraine and other parts of the Soviet Union. More recent research indicates that the number who starved to death in Ukraine alone was around 4.5 million – more than the entire population of Wales.

### *Cover-up and denial*

The man-made famine was accompanied by a massive campaign of denial which lasted for decades.

During the Holodomor, the Soviet government introduced stringent travel restrictions into Ukraine to prevent journalists and others from seeing for themselves the extent of the famine.

There were some journalists – most infamously Walter Duranty of the New York Times – who, in return for interviews with Stalin and other high-ranking government officials, collaborated with the Soviet government to cover up the existence and scale of the famine, while admitting privately that the famine both existed and that the death toll was horrendous.

In later years, Malcolm Muggeridge, a former British journalist, labelled Duranty “...the greatest liar I ever knew...”. Indeed, only in 1990 – more than 50 years after the event - a New York Times editorial, written by Karl A Meyer, finally acknowledged that what Duranty had written constituted “...some of the worst reporting to appear in this newspaper.”

There were others, however, who evaded the restrictions to seek out the truth, in spite of the abuse and vilification that they then suffered from both the Soviet government and other journalistic colleagues. British journalists Malcolm Muggeridge and Gareth Jones were among their number.

Malcolm Muggeridge smuggled out several articles via the diplomatic pouch which were published in the Manchester Guardian. What he saw horrified him and stayed with him forever.

At a German co-operative farm (a government concession in the Caucasus), he saw peasants kneeling in the snow, begging for a crust of bread. In his diaries he wrote, “I must never pretend that I haven’t seen this. Ideas will come and go; but this is more than an idea. It is peasants kneeling down in the snow and asking for bread. Something that I have

seen and understood.”

**Manchester Guardian.**

**27 March 1933.**

**Article anonymously written by Malcolm Muggeridge**

... The population is starving. “Hunger” was the word I heard most. Peasants begged a lift on the train from one station to another sometimes their bodies swollen up—a disagreeable sight—from lack of food. There were fewer signs of military terrorism than in the North Caucasus, though I saw another party of, presumably, kulaks being marched away under an armed guard at Dnepropetrovsk; the little towns and villages seemed just numb and the people in too desperate a condition even actively to resent what had happened.

Otherwise, it was the same story—cattle and horses dead; fields, neglected: meagre harvest despite moderately good climatic conditions; all the grain that was produced taken by the Government; now no bread at all, no bread anywhere, nothing much else either; despair and bewilderment.

Gareth Jones, a young Welshman, was a former adviser on foreign policy to Lloyd George. He too travelled through Ukraine and subsequently wrote articles for and was interviewed by several newspapers.

In an interview with the *Morning Post* in March 1933, he said, “I walked alone through villages and twelve collective farms. Everywhere was the cry, ‘There is no bread; we are dying...’”

**Manchester Guardian,**

**30 March 1933.**

**Gareth Jones interview in Berlin – via Reuters.**

In a train a Communist denied to me that there was a famine. I flung into the spittoon a crust of bread I had been eating from my own supply. A peasant, my fellow-passenger, fished it out and ravenously ate it. I threw orange peel into the spittoon; the peasant again grabbed and devoured it. The Communist subsided.

A foreign expert returning from Kazakhstan told me that one million out of five million have died of hunger. I can believe it. There is insufficient seed. Many of the peasants are too weak to work the land. The new taxation policy, which promised to take only a fixed amount of grain from the peasants, will fail to encourage production because the peasants refuse to trust the Government.

In short, the Government’s policy of collectivisation and the peasants’ resistance to it have brought Russia to the worst catastrophe since the famine of 1921 swept away the popula-

tion of whole districts.

Jones was murdered in Mongolia in 1935 in suspicious circumstances – a murder that has been attributed to the NKVD, the Kremlin’s Secret Police, for his open dispatches on the Holodomor.

Other eyewitnesses include Andrea Graziosi, who was the Italian consul in Kharkiv in 1933. His letters and dispatches form a unique account about the events of 1932-33 in Ukraine. He described the influx of starving peasants from the countryside to the city and the children abandoned by desperate parents in the hope that someone would look after them. He told how the dead and dying were dealt with, “People who are already starting to swell up are moved out in goods trains and abandoned about forty miles out of town so that they can die out of sight. When they arrive at the destination, huge ditches are dug and the dead are carried out of the wagons...”

Western governments knew what was happening, including the UK Government, which received detailed dispatches from its Embassy in Moscow – some of which are reproduced in this book.

However, *realpolitik* dictated that maintaining good relationships with Stalin and the Soviet government were more important than openly speaking up for the victims of famine in Ukraine and other parts of the Soviet Union.

This is borne out by Foreign Office documents. Laurence Collier wrote, in 1934: “The truth of the matter is, of course, that we have a certain amount of information about famine conditions... and there is no obligation on us to make it “public””. Less than four weeks later, in an internal FCO memo by “R” dated 25 July 1934, the government position was clear: “The least said [about the Holodomor] the soonest mended”.

In the great sweep of historical turbulence in the 20th century, the Holodomor, then, became a minor footnote. It is perhaps not surprising that the deliberate famine, which destroyed millions of lives, received no mention in Soviet school history books. However, even UK school history books focused more on Stalin’s great industrialisation and modernisation of the Soviet Union than the human consequences for the millions that suffered and perished during this period. The victims became, as Stalin wanted them to be, just a statistic.

### *The campaign for recognition*

Ukrainians in the diaspora fought an uphill battle for many years to maintain the memory of the Holodomor and raise awareness about the crimes perpetrated by the Soviet government.



The fall of the Soviet Union opened the doors to thousands of hitherto suppressed documents and invigorated the search for historical truth, both from academics and from a mass of eyewitnesses who had never spoken out before for fear of the consequences.

In addition, the family members of Gareth Jones, Dr. Siroli Colley (niece) and her son Nigel (great nephew), dedicated over two decades of their lives to collecting and publicising the diary and writings of Jones on the Holodomor, which are now recognised as valuable source material throughout the world.

There is now absolutely no doubt about what happened not only in 1932-33, but also during the years before, when the clear aim of the Soviet government was to destroy Ukraine's national identity and hopes for independence.

The question as to whether or not the Holodomor was an act of genocide against the Ukrainian nation has yet to be tested legally. Eminent historians and commentators, including Robert Conquest, James Mace and Anne Applebaum amongst others, have concluded that taken together with the repressions against Ukrainian nationalism, the Holodomor was an act that was deliberately inflicted to destroy Ukrainian identity and ethnicity.

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. 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."

Although 17 countries around the world have acknowledged the Holodomor as a genocide, others have not taken that step.

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 a preamble that acknowledged that millions became 'victims to the cruel actions and policies of the totalitarian regime' and that the Holodomor 'became a national tragedy for the Ukrainian people'.

Pope John Paul II called the Holodomor 'an inhuman scheme put into effect in cold blood by those in power at the time'.

The EU Parliament recognised the atrocities of 1932-33 "as an appalling crime against the Ukrainian people, and against humanity".

The UK Government has acknowledged the scale of the Holodomor as a horrific human tragedy for the Ukrainian people.

**FCO letter to the Association of Ukrainians in GB.  
December 2017.**

It is important that the events of the Holodomor are not

forgotten and that the Government pays tribute to the people who continue to work to keep alive the memory of all those who perished in the Holodomor.

The Holodomor was a horrific, man-made disaster of unimaginable scale. We recognise the appalling human tragedy that occurred and its importance in the history of Ukraine and Europe.

The fact that the UK government has not recognised the Holodomor as genocide in no way lessens our recognition of its severity and awfulness. Nor does it lessen our recognition that it is the Soviet leadership at the time who were responsible for the policies and political decisions taken which resulted in the famine causing the deaths of millions of Ukrainians.

### *Conclusion*

Ukrainians will continue to campaign for the Holodomor to be universally recognised as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian nation.

This is unlikely to be achieved in our lifetime for many reasons, both legal and political. However, regardless of when that recognition will be ultimately achieved, there can be no doubt today that the Holodomor was a crime against humanity, which should be exposed in its full horror.

This is not a history book, but it nevertheless has several key aims.

First, we believe that the Holodomor deserves wider recognition and that Stalin's hidden purge against the Ukrainian nation should be an integral part of the mainstream narrative of 20th century history.

In highlighting the barbarity of the Holodomor, we hope to turn a horrific statistic into a collective memory of individual lives and give back to the innocent victims the dignity they were robbed of.

And finally, we hope that the world will never again turn a blind eye to another people's suffering, and that nowhere, ever, can such an atrocity be allowed to occur again.

**Iryna Terlecky**

*Chair*

*National Holodomor Committee, UK*

# Personal recollections

The following pages are a collection of personal accounts of a number of people who survived the 1932-33 Holodomor.

After living through the turmoil and horrors of the Second World War, all these eye-witnesses subsequently settled, lived and worked in the United Kingdom.

Their statements, which are being published for the first time, add to the body of personal recollections that have been gathered in Ukraine since 1991, and from amongst survivors in the Ukrainian diaspora. The testimonies provide present and future generations with an invaluable human and individual perspective on the systematic and brutal persecution which swept through Ukraine in 1932-1933.

The authors all witnessed and lived through an unimaginable atrocity. Somehow they managed to survive and their harrowing experiences remained etched in their memories - undiluted by the passage of time - for the rest of their lives as they recalled their homes, villages, family members, friends and neighbours.

There were many Holodomor survivors who, to the end of their lives, were unable to talk about their experiences – partly because they did not want to recall the horrors that they had seen, and partly because they lived through a time when speaking out was a crime punishable by imprisonment and even death. And that fear stayed with them.

We are therefore all the more grateful to those survivors featured in this book for recounting their very painful experiences – difficult and upsetting as it might have been for them - so that the sufferings of the nation can never be forgotten.

The accounts have been subject to minor editing in translation from Ukrainian, but the eyewitnesses' own words and expressions have been kept as faithful to the original as possible.

## KATERYNA BURIAK

28/11/1925 - 16/09/2010.

*Born Kherson region.*

*Settled in Bradford.*

*Interviewed by Maria Danyleczuk in 2008.*

It is very difficult for me to talk about the Holodomor. Every time I think about it I just want to cry.

There were six of us in our family – my mother and father, two sisters, a brother and me.

I remember that there was nothing to eat. I walked and walked far and wide with my brother searching for branches and bushes to feed on.

My eight-month old sister Oksana was the first to die because my mother did not have any milk to feed her with. Then Halyna, my three year-old sister, died followed by my older brother Philip, who was born in 1923.

My mother kept telling my father to go and work on the kolkhoz<sup>1</sup> where he would at least receive something to eat. However, he [refused and] said that he would rather die than work there. Sadly, that is what happened. He died leaving only my mother and me.

My mother went to work on the kolkhoz and would leave me on my own all day. At least she returned home at the end of every day with a cupful of food. I was so young to have had to live through all of this.

We both survived. Eventually, when the famine had ended, with the help of my mother's sister, we were able to grow crops but it was so hard to get used to there just being the two of us out of a family of six.

---

<sup>1</sup> State-controlled Soviet collective farm owned by the workers.

## REV. MYCHAJLO DIACHENKO

17/08/1922 - 04/12/2016.

*Born Khutir Shevchenko, Cherkasy region.*

*Settled in Stockport.*

My father and mother had four children: Marusia, Oksana, Anna and me.

During Ukraine's brief period of independence in 1918-19, my father helped to establish Ukrainian schools and was himself a Schools Inspector. However Ukraine's [period of] Independence was short-lived. In 1922 we fled [Soviet] persecution and moved to Kosoroteva in the Donetsk region. It was less repressive there and the authorities did not ask as many questions. My mother died of tuberculosis in 1924 and my father remarried.

Stalin wanted to collectivize the farms in Ukraine. My father had built a house, had a smallholding, grew his own food and had livestock. He was classed as a 'kulak' - a well-to-do person, an enemy of the Soviet people. In 1930 they arrested and interrogated him but then later released him. In 1932 he was re-arrested, sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment and his citizenship was revoked for 10 years. [At the time] I did not know where he was incarcerated because in those days if you asked too many questions, you would have also been imprisoned.

In the autumn of 1932 they confiscated our house and all of our possessions. A brigade came and took everything - food from the table, seeds for sowing next year's crops, foods that were drying near the fire and food to feed us during the winter months. They even took the boots that I was wearing. Steel rods were pushed into the thatched roof of our house to see whether we had concealed any grain there and they poured paraffin into the river to prevent us from catching any fish to eat.

We were taken away on a sleigh to Khutir Lukiv in the Donetsk region. The previous inhabitants of the village were Germans who had been deported to Germany leaving all of the houses empty.

We were given one of the larger houses to live in. There was nothing inside but a blanket and there was also nothing to heat the house with. The winter of 1932 was particularly harsh. My stepmother, three sisters and I slept together under one blanket. We were forbidden to return to our village. We searched the fields for the odd potato, crushed stones from fruits and looked for other roots [to eat]. My sisters caught sparrows to eat. Just before Christmas life became so intolerable that my stepmother decided that we should return to Kosoroteva village. We could not continue to stay where we were.

Against orders we returned on foot to Kosoroteva village hoping

that my stepmother's godmother would be able to help us. We arrived at our house but it had been taken apart - there was nothing left except for the walls. That was the kind of year that it was. People were so desperate.

We went to my stepmother's godmother's house but she was not there. We later learned that she had been taken to Siberia. We broke into her house and found that it was empty except for a bed and a couple of blankets. My sisters went out to try and find what they could. We made bread from the chaff of wheat and the few grains of wheat that we could find.

Two days before Christmas in 1932-[33] there was an amnesty and my father was released from prison. He returned home in a terrible state. He was black and blue from being tortured. His body was covered in bruises. Three wounds that he had received during the Great War had opened up and he needed food and medical attention. But where could he hope to get such help?

My sister Oksana died of starvation aged 16 just after Christmas in [January] 1933. My father lived until the Saturday before the feast of the Holy Trinity. I remember sitting on a wooden bench that day and my father died with his head on my lap. I was only ten years old. It was a terrible time.

This is how they forced the kulaks to work in the kolkhoz. We were not allowed to gather what was left from the harvested wheat fields for fear of being shot.

There was one family in the village that exchanged some flour to make bread but it was mixed with chalk. They made a flat cake and after eating it they all died.

The worst time was in the spring of 1933. However, an old man helped me. He gave me a piece of *makukha*<sup>2</sup> to eat. He told me that I should go to the town as it was better there. I had an aunt that lived in the town so I went to find her. I searched but couldn't find her. I called out: 'Aunt Maria...' because I did not know her surname. People laughed at me - Maria was a very popular name. I then lived on my own for a year. Eventually my aunt Maria recognised me in a market near the station at Sartana. She took me to her house in Mariupol and invited me to live with her family.

I do not know how I survived those two years. It was a miracle.

---

2 Poppy-seed cake.

## IVAN DOWHOPIAT

15/07/1919 - 2008.

Born Sloboda village, Burynskiy, Sumy region.

Settled in London.

Interviewed by Ukrayinska Dumka in 2007.

*Q. What can you remember?*

It is very difficult to talk about it [the Holodomor]. I keep it to myself.

I remember when they took away the grain, when they took everything away. I remember my father chasing after them after they had taken the flour saying: "What are you doing? We have five children...!" I was the eldest. In 1933 I was 14 years old.

We had a smallholding. They had given us land for four people when the new economic policies were introduced. My father did not want to join the kolkhoz. We had plenty to meet our family needs - a cow, a horse, pigs, and some chickens. That was until they started to take everything away. The communists (or Stalinists) came - however you want to describe them - collectivisation was implemented and that was the end of the matter. They did not evict us from our home because my father had bought an old house and then built a woodshed. It wasn't worth turning us out.

My father worked as a blacksmith at the sugar factory. None of us (five children) died in the famine because my father and mother always tried to get some food. We had a few clothes, so they travelled to Kharkiv and bartered them for some flour. We [even] ate the chaff of buckwheat. My mother dried it, I then went to my grandmother's house to grind it, and then my mother baked small pancakes. When we still had some flour, she would mix that in so that the pancakes would hold together. She put them into boiling water to make a soup.. And that's how we survived.

One of my younger brothers became very swollen, just as wheat began to grow near our house. I stripped the ears of wheat and gave them to him, which ultimately saved his life.

*Q. Tell us how the food was taken away.*

They had these designated yards for people who were not part of the kolkhoz. The communists came with revolvers and those who weren't part of the collective had to go to their headquarters. There they gave orders on how much potato and grain you had to bring in. After dinner, you had to go back to them so that they could give you a receipt for the amount that you had collected. And if you didn't bring anything in, the brigade would take everything from you. We didn't have anything left

for them to take, but the brigade nevertheless came to the house.

Since the sugar factory was only a short distance from where we lived, I ran to tell my father that they had come. My father ran home and they were still there, on a sledge - it was January. My father begged a small amount of flour from them, but because he had left work without permission, he was thrown out of the factory.

They took the grain, they took my father's job... So what can you do...?

My father went to the railway station because they gave out bread there. I remember him coming home in the evening and we took the crumbs out of his pocket and ate them.

*Q. You managed to survive, but what about the other villagers?*

Few survived in our village. Very few people were left alive. The older people all died.

I remember my grandfather and grandmother... my grandfather lying in bed asking for someone to bring him even a sweet...

In the spring, the real crimes began. Potato was sown, and people dug them up to eat... and they caught and killed them all...

Yes, that's how it was. If it were possible to describe everything, it would be a huge history. But not everyone believes that it happened, that we had to eat chaff... They say we are making it up.

## REV. MYCHAJLO HUTORNYJ

*24/04/1924 - 05/05/2013*

*Born Kryvyi Rih.*

*Settled in Bradford.*

*Interviewed by Orysia Chymera and Bohdan Lanovyj in 2008.*

During the famine my parents left the village. I remember my father laid out in the house. There was nothing left for us to exchange for food. He did not survive the terrible fate and died on the 17 June 1932. My mother was pregnant at the time and three days after my father's death, my sister Halyna was born.

My mother went to work down a mine because the workers there were given 250 grams of bread. She worked there for five years, in the iron-ore mines.

My mother's father, my grandfather, lived 3 kilometres from us and worked as a bread delivery man. He would collect morsels of bread – they were not packaged in those days - and brought them to us.

Also, in order to survive, we collected weeds to make soup. However, at that time, there wasn't even any salt around.

After my father had died I went to his workplace to ask for help to dig his grave. Six men arrived but they were all afraid to dig the grave because they themselves were not sure whether they would be able to climb out of it once it had been dug.

However, they did dig it and we buried my father. To this day I do not know where that grave is.

My mother later told me that before his death, my father had told her that if he could just survive, that I would grow up to be successful. Without him, he feared that I would have difficulties. Hence my mother ensured that I received at least some education. She worked hard all her life.

During the famine I walked about 2 kilometres in search of bread. However, at that time, because of the density of the queues, you could only get bread if you either climbed over the heads of people or in between their legs. Whenever I managed to get some bread, I would cut off a piece and immediately sell it to buy some milk.

In 1932 – and this was just the beginning – all of the kulaks were removed from the village. My father did not let on at the time that my grandfather had been [one of those] exiled “to the new land”. We did not see him again until 1942.

The famine was not hidden. When we set off in the morning, we would see dead bodies in the streets. We used to go to the banks of the river to pull up the reeds to eat.

That period was sorrowful. Many members of our family died. My father had three sisters – they all died. My mother's brother was shot over some ears of wheat. He went into the field to gather some wheat and was shot there.

I also used to go to the station. As the train wagons pulled in you could usually pick something up. One man said to me: "let's go, the troop train is coming and we should be able to get some corn...". We went and filled our pockets but he was then arrested and imprisoned for 6 years [for appropriating state property]. I was young then and so avoided punishment.

On one occasion I was stopped on a bridge and asked what I was carrying. I had some bread. I began to cry and one of them said: "Let him go...". Fortunately for me, they did let me go.

It was a miracle that we survived.

The communists showed their power and satisfaction through the suffering of people. I saw how a communist ate: he ate three *varenyky*<sup>3</sup> and threw 2 away. A number of us boys watched and waited to grab the leftovers.

Ukrainian wheat was transported through our station en-route to somewhere. If anybody got too close to the train, they were immediately shot by the guards.

Somehow, thank God, we survived. It is a fact, that it was mass-murder.

## ANASTASIA OSTAPIUK (NEE ZHURAVEL')

05.05.1923. - 31.03.2014.

*Born Kropyvniya village, Novohradskiy raion, Zhytomyr region.*

*Settled in Manchester.*

*Interviewed in 2008 by Viktor Andrusyszyn and Bohdan Ratycz.*

I was born into a village family and was 10 years old when the Holodomor took place in 1933.

I remember 1932 well, and the preceding years. My father was a bookkeeper in the kolkhoz and the village council. He was responsible for calculating the number of days worked on the basis of the information provided to him by workers out in the fields. The amount [of grain] reaped, or whatever other work they carried out, was calculated in terms of a working day, or a day and a half, and this in turn determined the amount of bread that the worker would receive.

I know from a photograph shown to me by my mother that my father had been in Petliura's army. However, she hid that photograph so that nobody would know. Indeed, nobody did know, not even us [her children].

Then the famine began to spread through the village. People had very little food because they stopped being paid a wage or in kind for a working day. The authorities simply gave them a little grain or something on account of the work carried out in the kolkhoz. They stopped giving out bread. This was the beginning.

As time passed people began to fall ill from hunger. Some fled the village. They didn't know what to do because they had eaten everything that they had at home.

Komsomol brigades came to search the houses to check whether there was anything hidden in storerooms or elsewhere, and whether there was an icon or cross hanging on the wall. The komsomol activists did what they wanted with the people and nobody punished them... They searched the houses every week. If they found something cooking on the fire, some soup or borscht, they would take it and pour it away into the ground. It was as if we all had to die, as if we were marked out for death. This was in 1931-32.

Seeing what was going on, my father left his job in the village council and put in a request for a horse so that he could plant potatoes (in the kolkhoz). He ploughed a furrow in a large field with the horse and a plough. Behind him people planted potatoes and they were followed by others who covered the plantings. On a number of occasions he took some potatoes, dug them into the ground and then marked the spot with a small stick. At night, in the dark, he crawled out so that nobody would

see him heading for the field.

We would have soup on following day made with the potato that he had brought back and mixed with some other type of plant. We ate anything that we could because it was spring and nothing had grown yet.

Later in 1932 my father died – he simply did not have any strength left in him. Initially he became very thin. None of us had enough to eat. My father worried and then became ill with pneumonia. The hospitals didn't take people in and so he died at home. He called me and said, "My daughter, you are the eldest. Look after the little ones...".

I was the oldest in the family. Then there was Ludmila, who went blind and died from hunger. Then there was Sonya and Yevhen, the youngest. Both of them survived.

After my father had died, my mother went around the garden and picked horseradish. It was springtime and the green leaves were sprouting out of the ground. She took the horseradish, cleaned and grated it, and then pulled leaves from a tree. My mother knew what was edible – she dried the leaves, mixed them with the horseradish and baked biscuits or pancakes. She gave them to us to eat and then went to work.

I saw with my own eyes how each morning a cart would come to collect the dead from the houses in the village. Our neighbours, the Khomenko family, had a house full of children. So when Mr Khomenko, the father, died, his wife ran from the house and cried, "Wait, don't take him yet, because my son will be ready tomorrow. Let them at least lie together." This was because the dead were all thrown into a single grave. You know, there was such misery that it is impossible to describe...

There was one family in the village where everyone had died except for one son, Matviy. The leaders of the kolkhoz built a small wooden shed in the farmyard. They used it to store the potatoes and they locked Matviy in there too. He lived and slept in that shed and was tasked to cook the potatoes for the horses, so that the horses had something to eat and could work in the fields. Then they would take the potatoes. They smelled so good!

The children crowded around the shed and begged – like bees around a hive. Matviy couldn't do anything, because he was locked in. They only unlocked the door to take away the cooked potato, deliver fresh potatoes and then locked the door again. However, there were a few small holes and gaps in the wood that we would peep through and sometimes Matviy would push some potato through these holes for us children. That was about all he could do.

Harvest time was a real tragedy. Many ears of wheat lay in the fields. We would go along the paths and hide in bushes. When we saw that there was nobody around, we collected the wheat into our aprons and ran home quickly because every field had two guards with sticks on

horseback. If they caught anyone in the field, they would beat them...

Our village was large. It had a school with a large orchard containing apple and pear trees. However, nobody was allowed to pick any of the fruit. It was removed and given to someone else.

I remember that on one occasion my mother gave me some sort of pastry to eat during school break time. However, I was afraid that if other pupils saw me eating it, they would report me to the teacher and that she would then tell her superior... So I told my mother that I couldn't eat it – I had asked to be excused to go to the toilet and threw the pastry into the hole fearing that otherwise, my mother would be arrested and tried. They would have taken my mother away and then put the children into an orphanage. So even the children were scared of each other.

My mother would stand the four of us in a line each morning and would then take out a small religious picture. I do not know where she normally concealed it. We would repeat the "Our Father". My mother told us all; "For the fear of God never tell anyone at school that your mother has taught you this..."

I remember when I went with my aunt Olha (my mother's sister) to another village to see if we could find anything to eat or to trade something in. When the train stopped at the station, there were children lying all around close to the tracks begging for food. However, those on the trains had nothing themselves to throw out to them through the windows.

There was a good, bumper harvest in 1932-33, but when the grain had been collected and placed in the grain store, they said that the government needed help. They then loaded cart after cart with sacks of grain, attached a red flag, and moved off to Novohrad to deliver up everything to the government. So the [good] harvest didn't help anyone because practically everything was being sent somewhere else to someone else.

Meanwhile, the people suffered from hunger. It was an impossible time, but as you can see, God is good and we somehow managed to survive.

The communist authorities were so terrible. They simply wanted to break the Ukrainian people so that they stopped believing in God and believed only in Stalin. Such a government...! May God prevent the same kind of atrocity from ever happening again in any country... because it was horrific... They spoke so nicely at the meetings – about how everything would be better and that it would be paradise. However, the reality was very different. Famine scythed down everyone who lived on Ukrainian land – including Poles, Germans, Russians...

## REV. MYCHAYLO HRYHOROVYCH PYSHNENKO

23.09.1923. - 15.02.2013.

*Born Pyshenky village, Opishlyan district, Poltava region.*

*Settled in Keighley.*

*Interviewed by Orysia Chymera and Bohdan Lanovyj in 2008.*

My name is Mychaylo Hryhorovych Pyshnenko. I was born on 23 September 1923 in the village of Pyshenky in what was the Opylanskyi district of the Poltava region.

My father was thrown out of the kolkhoz in 1931. A member of the commissariat then arrived at our house during the night and said: "Hrytsko, you have to escape because they're going to arrest you tomorrow and throw you out of your home".

My parents immediately then hid a few items and my father quickly fled into the night. They [the brigade] came to the house the next morning. "Where is Hrytsko?", they asked. My mother replied that he'd gone to Poltava. They then said that they would make an inventory of everything in the house and that she and the family would have to leave the house altogether. My mother responded: "Where to? It is winter. There are four children. Where will I go?"

They took my mother and threw her and us children out of the house. I was only eight years old in 1931 and my youngest sister had only just been born. They sealed the house and told my mother that she did not have the right to live anywhere.

Fortunately, an elderly neighbour, living on her own, took us into her house. They mocked her for this, but she retorted that we were human beings and that she would not turn us away.

So my father had escaped and found work at the Dnipro Hydroelectric Station where a dam was being constructed for the power station on the Dnipro river.

We lived with the elderly lady, Mariyana, thanks to the good will and help of people, neighbours.

By 1933, we had reached a point where there was nothing left and nobody could help us anymore because there was nobody left.

My brother Mykola was the first to die. He was only three years old. Then my one year-old sister died. This left just me and my brother, who was five years younger than me.

We survived by searching through gardens and weed beds. We ate weeds and raided birds nests, taking their eggs and even eating their young – that is how my brother and I survived.

My mother was swollen by this time, but later when things began to improve and people had more, they helped us. My father returned from

the power station and that eased things a little.

There was also my uncle Luka. In 1933 his wife Evdokhia died and Luka died on the following day. As for their children, my cousins, one went to work in the Sovkhoz<sup>4</sup> and the other stayed at home.

Luka and Evdokhia's son, who was born in 1928 and was just five years old, was taken by my cousin to the village council so that he could be taken into care. She completed the paperwork, left him there and went home. Several weeks later this boy was found drowned in a bath – that communist-activist had drowned him. Instead of taking care of him, he drowned him. So my mother and cousin buried him and now there are five gravestones: my uncle Luka, aunt Evdokhia, my brother Mykola, sister Nataalka and little Ivanko.

Our house was sold and we had no rights to it at all. Later, when my father returned in 1934, he bought a house on the farmstead for 50 karbovantsi. There was then me and my brother Oleksiy together with my mother and father. In 1937 another sister, S'anya, was born. However, in 1938 my father was taken away. We did not know where to and only discovered more recently that my father had been shot [executed] in May 1938.

Our village suffered greatly. It consisted of some 300 homes and several smallholdings. 146 people had died but what can one do about it now? Such was our fate. In a neighbouring village, some 10 kilometres away, 700 people died out of the 1000 dwellings there.

That's what I remember. I lived through too much.

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<sup>4</sup> Soviet state-owned collective farm.



## KLAVDIA SEMIANIW

*Born 6 September 1925.*

*Petrovske village, Kharkiv region.*

*Settled in Farsley (nr Bradford).*

*Interviewed by Orysia Chymera and Bohdan Lanovyj in 2008.*

I lived in my parents' house in Ukraine during 1932-33. We had a smallholding, were dekulakized, and they [the communists] took absolutely everything from us. All that remained were my father, my mother and the four of us girls. They cleaned us out to the last piece of grain.

We lived this way for some time, without anything, eating potatoes in their skins, potatoes that had been discarded because they were rotting...

At one point my father told my mother that he would go to the town, to Donetsk, in search of a job. We could then, perhaps, follow on and things would surely get better.

While my father was in Donetsk, my younger sister died from hunger because there was nothing to eat. Some two weeks or so later, another sister died. That left me with my mother and younger sister.

Soon afterwards, my father returned from Donetsk. He could not be registered for work there because he was a villager, had been dekulakized and he was Ukrainian. They told him that he was not needed there. When he returned home he was thin, battered and tired. We were all bloated with swollen stomachs because there was nothing to eat - no dogs, no chickens, no pigs... Nothing!

We even ate grass and fought over it when we found some because we thought that if we rubbed it between our fingers we could extract some milkwort (milkweed) which we could eat.

Eventually I was the only child left in the house and my mother said the same to my father who responded by saying that none of us would survive. The next morning my mother found him dead - he had died during the night. I didn't know this and just wanted to climb onto my father and play - I was only a child then, I didn't understand...

That is how we ended up, just me and my mother.

My mother sometimes left me at home by myself. There was nothing in the house to drink from or to cook with. People lay dead in the streets, flies ate their eyes out. Nobody paid any attention. Everyone only thought about one thing - where to find something to eat. People walked about swollen, stepping over corpses, but nobody did anything. There was nothing anywhere.

On one occasion I was left alone by our house. I slept in the garden for I don't know how many nights before my mother miraculously

returned home from the town. At this time the kolkhoz wheat fields were abundant with grain but (by contrast) there were also thieves about. If they caught sight of anybody carrying anything that they could feed their children with, the thieves would pounce, beat them, take whatever they had been carrying and prevent them from entering their house.

When my mother returned, I don't know who it was, but someone said to her: "Maria, take the child, meaning me, and somehow try and get to the town. You might be accepted there. There is nothing left here. You won't survive if you stay".

At that time, as far as I could tell, the man transported post (or something similar) from our village to the town. He took me with him but left my mother behind. We arrived in another village, but I cannot now remember its name. I was left there to stay with a woman until my mother arrived. We remained there for some time. My mother would go and beg for bread and this kept us alive.

Then, somehow, my mother got us to Donetsk. She had a brother living there and we went to see him. However, we could not stay with him straight away. So when we arrived in Donetsk, we effectively had nowhere to live, had no job, and my mother could not register for work because she was not registered in the town. Since she had no home address, she could not get any work. We had to sleep on the streets, outside houses, and beg for bread.

Eventually, my mother did find a job. She was then able to register and we went to stay with her brother. He had a family so we had to sleep on the floor in the corner of one room. Thus began my life in Donetsk.

That is what I can tell you [about the Holodomor].

But, do you know, every child when close to death would ask for some milk or food. When my sister was dying she said to me: "Klavdia, give me some milk...". "Mummy, please give me something to eat...". But there was nothing to give. We walked around like skeletons. Our bodies were glowing and we looked as though we had been pumped up. That is how we were. It was terrible, truly terrible! Nobody paid any attention to anything. No attention at all.

On the streets in the villages, people, usually children, just sat there - one here, dead, one there, dead... Dogs walked by, sniffed them and even they didn't want to eat them because they were... oh...!

It was a terrible time for me - one that I will never forget.

## ANDRIY SKOK

*Born 17 September 1925.*

*Arbuzynkakh village, Mykolayiv region.*

*Settled in Halifax.*

*Interviewed by Orysia Chymera and Bohdan Lanovyj in 2008.*

I have one document, a birth certificate, which shows my date of birth in Ukrainian and in Russian.

In 1927-28 when everyone was being dekulakized, my father lived on a farmstead in the Mykolayiv region. He had a couple of cows, a couple of horses and a few hectares of land.

Some time later, when I was older, I found out that my father had fled home but then returned after a while to take us, his children and our mother, to live in Kyiv on the left bank of the Dnipro, opposite the centre of the city. This area was known as Mykolayivska Slobidka and it was where we lived until 1934.

It was here that I remember seeing a dead boy lying in the street. This was either in 1932 or '33. I remember this clearly even though I am now 83 years old this memory is lodged firmly in my head. I was walking down the street with very few people around, and there was this young boy, perhaps 7-8 years old, lying dead in the street. Nobody paid any attention. People just walked around him, passed by him. Nobody even glanced at him. I then crossed the road and there was a man lying there, uncovered, dead. Again nobody came near, not [even] the police, nor the militia. Nobody. I remember this!

I also remember where we lived across the river from Kyiv that the area was surrounded by steppes. The school that I attended was situated beyond the city by some woodlands. I will never forget the dead people. To get to the school I had to go through the deserted woodlands. There were no houses or habitation, nothing, and I was always told – be careful because they catch children there and eat them... This is what I remember of 1932-33, a time when people were eaten...

I went to school at the time of Soviet rule. At school it [the famine] was a taboo subject, nobody spoke about it.

Some English journalists were aware of it at the time but when they returned to England and tried to recount what they had seen they were told to “shut-up – there is nothing going on there”.

## VERA SMEREKA

*19/01/1923 - 01/05/2010.*

*Born Krolevets, Sumy region.*

*Settled in Bradford.*

*Interviewed by Orysia Chymera and Bohdan Lanovyj in 2008.*

I was born in the town of Krolevets, Sumy region, Eastern Ukraine, on 19 January 1923. My father was a priest with parishes in neighbouring villages.

In 1932, when I was 9 years old, famine began to take hold in Ukraine. It is hard for me to talk about this because we suffered greatly.

Bread disappeared as did all seasonings for soup. We were told which herbs were poisonous and which were not. We wandered through gardens and orchards looking for edible herbs. My mother would cook some borscht but this consisted of just water and herbs. We all had to eat this borscht - water and herbs. We couldn't even get any salt. From then on our stomachs were often swollen.

People collected linden leaves. Even now, when I pass a linden tree, I pull off a leaf and eat it. This serves as a reminder that we used to eat linden leaves. They were very bitter but we ate them whenever we could.

What saved us was that there were many woods in our region. They were known as the Kochubeyski woods. When the trees were felled there, strawberries would grow in the clearing. Women from our village would gather at midnight and walk for 10 kilometres to get to these clearings. I was 10 years old at the time and my mother took me with her. We reached the clearing at dawn, just as the sun was rising, gathered the strawberries and took them home. This helped to boost our morale and to save us from starvation.

Understandably, at that time people became very ill. To minimise the level of psychological damage to us, my mother tried to protect us from seeing the terrible scenes that were everywhere around us. When my friend's father died, I begged my mother to let me go and visit my friend, but she would not allow it. Many people were dying at that time. We children used to run to the funerals because we knew that we might be given some broth or soup afterwards.

Every day my mother examined our fingers, because when a person is hungry their body begins to swell. This swelling always begins in the fingers. My mother always checked our fingers to see if there were any signs of swelling.

Thank God, somehow we survived.

When our grain began to grow in 1932, people collected it whilst it

was still green to make flour.

On one occasion my father returned from a funeral and brought back a loaf of bread which was so yellow that it was almost green.

In 1933 the situation worsened. My mother sent me to live with my grandmother, thinking that it would be better for me there. Unfortunately, it was even worse. At least where we lived there were meadows nearby where we could collect sorrel leaves. But where my grandmother lived, all of the sorrel leaves had already been collected. With no sorrel leaves, the soup was made from herbs alone. This did not taste good.

There was an apple tree in the orchard. We collected all of the small unripe apples and grated them into the soup to at least make it a little bit more appealing. But my grandmother never ate apples until harvest time and she banned us from putting any apples into her dish.

It was hard for me to understand the strong will of my grandmother. No matter how bad the famine got, she steadfastly refused to touch the apples before harvest time.

[Prior to the Holodomor] my grandfather (on my father's side) had a good smallholding. He had a garden, some land, horses, pigs and cows. But during the Holodomor he was left with nothing. Everything had been taken away from him.

Initially, the state imposed a tax. Anyone that could not pay the tax had their possessions taken away. I remember that my mother had a cabinet which she brought to the house after she got married. They even took that cabinet.

The village council, that is to say those that ruled the village - the head of the collective farm, head of the village council, secretary of the village council - were given unlimited powers. They did whatever they wanted. They could confiscate property from ordinary village people at will. First they took taxes. If somebody could not pay these taxes they took their cows and pigs. Later they took all the food in the house. Some people tried to hide food from the authorities, burying it in the soil under the floorboards (if they had earthen floors in their homes). The authorities searched for food and grain, dug up gardens, pulled up floors... Whatever food they found, they took.

Some villagers said that the authorities kept whatever they took from the villagers for themselves, personally.

My path to school took me past the farmstead of the secretary of the kolkhoz. People used to say that he had fat running down his moustache. As a child during the famine, I imagined that he had everything, cows, pigs..., and that fat literally poured out of his mouth.

The confiscated cattle and pigs were herded into sheds in an attempt to create a kolkhoz. The cattle would bray because nobody fed or tended to them. People were forced to go and work in the kolkhoz,

but nobody wanted to become a member of the collective, because this would have meant that one would have been left with nothing in return for becoming a member.

One man described how he travelled to Belarus because there was no famine there and that food was still available. He earned some money, travelled to Belarus and brought back some salo (salt-meat) and loaves of bread. However, the Komsomol activists - young people preparing to join the communist party - peering through a window, saw that he had returned with some food. They immediately went to his house to confiscate it. Fortunately, his mother managed to throw the salt-meat into the slop-bucket. She threw it into the dirty water to save it knowing that the activists would not search there. This man's father then sent his son to Belarus again. However, on this occasion, his return was delayed as he sought to find some salt. By the time he had returned home, both his mother and father had died and were already buried.

The Ukrainian nation suffered great hardship. The famine was horrific. Thank God we somehow survived.

What was hardest to comprehend was that the famine was man-made and that our own people took the food from ordinary citizens. They [the communists] also sent people in from Moscow, who ransacked villages, robbed people and confiscated their last items. How many innocent people were lost...

I had a friend called Halya. When I looked at her, her eyes were like cherries. Lovely brown eyes. Her father had a small house and kept tools for his smallholding. One day they were arrested (they came to our school to fetch Halya) and exiled them to Siberia. They were dekulakized, as were many other good landowners.

In our village there was a family with the surname of Drotiv. They were ginger-haired with lots of children. My mother often gave them things because they were very poor. They took this Drotiv family and re-settled them into the empty house of a good landowner. Before my very own eyes this house [deteriorated and] became dirty, the land unkempt, because they did not know how to look after it or how to tend to the land. Several years later, just before the war perhaps, the good landowner returned home. He wandered around the village and then disappeared again. Nobody knew what became of him.

The good landowners were destroyed and the village holdings suffered for a long time after this. Those that worked on the kolkhoz had no initiative. They did not have the level of knowledge that the dekulakized villagers had... They did not know how to work the land. They were told to do a day's work and that is what they did - and then they went home. They were incapable of working the land properly. That is how the better people in the village were ruined.

When I returned home from my grandmother's house, I remember our home being quite dark. My mother gave me a biscuit but it was not very nice. I took it, started to bite into it and then broke down and started to cry. My mother said to me: "What else can I give you? There is nothing else in the house".

In 1934 we left to go and live in the nearby town. There [at least] they gave out small portions of bread.

One of my friends recalled that when the famine began she was with her mother while her father had gone to the Donbas region in search of work. She and her mother went to Kyiv. They didn't know anybody there and had nowhere to live. They went to the cemetery and slept amid the gravestones. During the day, the mother left the girl to lie amongst the graves or to play in the cemetery itself while she went in search of work or money to buy some bread with. Then on one such day, somebody approached the girl and tried to persuade her that all she had to do was to say that she had no mother or father and she would be taken to a Children's Home. The girl refused to say this and then told her mother about what had happened. On hearing the story, her mother took the girl to the river Dnipro and said: "if you leave me, I will throw myself into the river and drown". However, the girl had become so hungry that when she was next approached, she succumbed and said that she did not have a mother or a father... She was then immediately taken to an orphanage where she remained until the start of the war.

Subsequently, however, she somehow managed to escape the orphanage and went in search of her village and parents. When she reached her old family home (her family had been dekulakized) and asked for some water, her mother gave her the drink and said: "Our own daughter has disappeared somewhere. I do not know where she is". The girl replied: "Mama, it is me – I am your daughter...".

I have heard many sorrowful tales of what happened to people during the Holodomor. It was a terrible time. I just thank God that I survived.

## MARIA VOLKOVA

*Born 23 June 1926.*

*Serhiyivka village, Donetsk region.*

*Settled in Nottingham.*

*Interviewed by Nick Higham, BBC, in 2009.*

*Q. Maria Volkova. How old are you?*

Eighty three years old. I was born on 23 June 1926.

*Q. Maria, tell me how old you were and where you lived when the Holodomor began?*

I was six years old. I lived in the village of Serhiyivka, Krasnoarmiysk district, Donetsk region. I was born in this village.

*Q. Can you describe to me how the Holodomor began, when you began to realize that there was a lack of food.*

You know, our childhood ... I obviously do not remember anything from when I was a one year-old, but by the time we reached the age of 3-4, we understood everything. We knew that we had nothing to eat. We played in the street and would come running home: "Mama, we want something to eat!" And my mother would reply: "Go and eat the cherry tree leaves."

*Q. So, this was when you were pretty young and the famine grew really bad in 1932-33. Can you describe some of the scenes in your village in '32 and '33.*

This is how it looked in our village. We saw how people walked... elderly people, young people, children, all carrying bags, moving from yard to yard, begging. For some reason I said to my mother: "Mama, the children have come again", and I cried as I said it. And my mother replied: "There is nothing for me to give to the children. You yourselves are also hungry."

We really were absolutely hungry. And my father, who was still with us at that time in 1930, saw that my mother had emptied everything from her wardrobe (chest) in exchange for food. She traded all of her clothes for bread, wheat, or some type of cereal.

There were some people who had things [stored] somewhere, but nobody knew where.

My mother had a suit and one woman said to her: "I will swap you a glass of wheat for this suit" and with tears in her eyes, my mother gave away/swapped the suit for the glass of wheat.

*Q. Did people fall ill as a result of this?*

They were all so ill that their stomachs were swollen. Their hands and feet looked as though they had been pumped up with water - so full of water.

However, I also want to add that when the last remaining garment had been removed from the wardrobe, my parents asked themselves what they should do next. “You have a bicycle, sell the bike...”, my mother said to my father.

At that time, a cousin whose name I remember very well, Ilko Sukhnov, had said that there were people selling wheat. So my father sold the bicycle, bought a bucket of wheat and brought it home that same morning. That night, however, KGB or NKVD officers came to our house, confiscated the wheat and took my father away.

They initially sent him to a prison in Artemivsk, some 90 kilometres from our village, as an enemy of the people. From there he was then sent to Moscow to work [as a slave-labourer] on the construction of the Moscow-Volga Canal. He never returned from there and we were left without a father.

I remember how we woke up that next morning with the sun brightly shining in the street and my mother standing there, crying. We asked her what the matter was and she replied: “your father isn’t here – they have taken him away”.

Each day they [the communists] spread this rumour... There were individuals who would walk around saying that grain could be bought. And that same night they would come and arrest those who had been sucked into the trap. It was all prepared and specifically aimed at removing good people, labelling them as enemies of the people, taking them away to work on that five-year plan adopted in 1929. ...And we were left without a father.

That grain that they took – they re-sold it. It was a deliberate ploy... They re-sold it several times to take people away to carry out unpaid work. They needed this type of labour force.

*Q. When there was no grain left, you could find no grain, what did you do for food?*

We had nothing in the garden. People didn’t have the strength to plant anything. So nothing grew that year - 1931. We went in search of weeds. Nobody saw us and, by this time, they no longer followed us.

I remember how we would get the roots from weeds... they were all bitter. We were told that the weeds might be poisonous.

On one occasion I found some root. I didn’t know what it was, we didn’t look at the leaves ... whatever it was it looked like a root. I ate it and the area around my mouth and hands turned brown. Later I needed to be scrubbed clean but I realised that this root was good for me. I somehow began to feel stronger. We then always looked out for this – and soon all children looked for it. I subsequently discovered that it was burdock.

Then in the summer we also looked for bittersweet, which literally

is bitter and sweet. We were told that this too was poisonous. It grew on heaps of rubbish – a tall trunk with branches that had lots of small berries, similar to blackcurrants, but with green water and tiny seeds inside. There was nothing more to it other than this green water, but it was sweet and we searched for it and ate it day and night. We even picked a bucketful of this bittersweet and dried it for the winter. And we proved that it was not poisonous!

In 1932, there were 28 children in my class at school. By the following spring there were only 12 of us left. It was only then that they (the authorities) thought that something needed to be done.

*Q. Many people must have died. What happened to them, to their families?*

They died as families. In some cases fathers were taken away and their wives and children were condemned to searching for weeds.

My grandmother cried all of the time, upset that we were spending all of our time among the weeds. But other children died [from sheer hunger] doing this.

Someone said that they were selling grain dust at the mills. This dust was produced during the grinding process – and it was, perhaps, mixed with some earth... I do not know... But people took this grain dust and mixed it [to eat]...

In 1932, pumpkins planted in the spring grew and my grandmother fed them to us. We ate a piece of the pumpkin but without anything else - there was no bread - we developed serious stomach problems. We were very ill! Standing in line at school, feeling faint and needing to run to the toilet... Diarrhoea! Incessant diarrhoea! I said that I wouldn’t eat it any more. Then at lunchtime we came home from school to find that my grandmother had taken the pieces of the pumpkin that we hadn’t eaten, mashed it up and told us that it was porridge. And there was nothing to add into it - no kind of groats or the like. We stopped eating those pumpkins.

Then my grandmother obtained some “flour” from the place where they ground the grain. It was actually the grain dust. She took the pumpkin, added the roots of some type of herb to it and then mixed it with the grain dust to make so-called *hal’ety*<sup>5</sup>. There may have even been some earth in there. We ate that *hal’ette* during the day.

One further thing. My mother made an occasion of my sixth birthday by inviting children to our house. I well remember that all of the swollen children came and I also remember that my mother picked some little yellow pumpkin flowers and put them into the soup along with something else. The children ate this pumpkin-flower soup and

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5 Hard dry biscuits.

said: “God, what a good egg-soup this is!”

Some time later, in 1935-36, they recalled that soup “with the eggs”. So I asked my mother where she had got those eggs from. She then admitted that they were pumpkin flowers (and not eggs).

Even when we met up in later years as adults, those children continued to recall how my mother had saved them. They still couldn’t believe that there were no eggs in that soup.

*Q. Can you remember when it started to get better and how did it change?*

I will tell you how it was at school in 1933. Children had become so weak by then that they were unable to stand in a line. They would collapse and excrete blood as a consequence of eating all sorts of weeds.

The teachers then sent a statement to the village council saying that something needed to be done with the children.

Close to the school there was a grassy area where people used to bring their cattle to graze. They then ploughed this area and planted some millet seeds. And this millet grew. We went there to tend to it to make sure that it grew.

At school we received a plate of soup. I do not remember eating anything at home at that time. This was in the winter and spring of 1933. The soup was cooked in the school every day. On account of being fed at school, we were forced to do work outside of the school. We walked into the waterlogged fields where the snow was still thawing, each with a bucket to scoop out the excess water. We dragged this water to the countless burrows and poured the water into them to flush out the gophers. These are grain-eating agricultural pests. As the grain grew, they would eat it. I didn’t have the nerve to try and catch them so we called on the boys to catch them as they came out of their holes. The boys would then eat these gophers. They also caught hedgehogs and ate them too.

When the beets had been sown in the kolkhoz, we went to collect weevils, a type of beetle, which destroyed the beets by eating the leaves. There were so many of them that we all carried a small bucket or jar and were tasked to collect a kilogram each. We would put these beetles into our buckets and they would start crawling out. We then shoved them back in again... Once done we would empty the bucket out in the field and burn them. There were heaps of these burned beetles in that field. In payment we received 125 grams of bread per kilo of beetles. This was in the summer of 1933.

In the autumn, the law on grain was introduced. Ten years imprisonment [for gleaning ears of grain]. However, the schoolchildren prepared themselves and agreed to collect sunflower seeds and not ears of grain. We wandered through the field, everyone with their own bag which we

filled with the sunflower seeds. Suddenly a guard on horseback caught us and forced us to empty our bags out. We did this and left...

*Q. Your father was arrested and I think you never saw him again. What happened to the rest of your family, your brothers and sisters, your aunts and uncles, your grandmother?*

I had two sisters and my mother. We did not see our mother very often then. She would go somewhere [for long spells] to stand in bread queues.

There was no bread in the village, but in the cities, where there were workers, it was possible to get one eighth of a bread. She would stand in the queue all night and in return she could have received one eighth of a bread, or perhaps nothing at all. She spent a week there, gathering eighths of bread and then carrying them home. This was in the winter of 1932. My father was no longer at home - they had already taken him away.

On one occasion there was a big freeze and she had to walk 25 kilometres to get home. A man on a sleigh passed by her and pulled up his horses. He asked her whether she would like a lift? My mother replied that she would. The frost was so severe that she was not sure whether she would make it home before dark. As soon as my mother put down her things into the sleigh, the man quickly set off leaving my mother standing there. She began to run after him – running and crying. He had taken everything – that bread that she had bought after a week of queuing. He rode on and on and eventually turned, came back and pulled to a stop. My mother ran up to him, fell on the sleigh and cried... “I stood for a week [to buy this] and you did that to me...! You want to take this from me?” He replied: “No. I did not want to take it from you. Had you sat down straight away onto the sleigh, you would have never got up again because of the freezing temperature. But you have now got your blood circulation going and will therefore live.

*Q. Some people say that this famine was deliberately brought about, deliberately engineered by Stalin. Looking back now, what do you think?*

The Holodomor did not begin in 1930. It began in the 1920s when everything started to be taken away from people. This was the overture to the Holodomor. They were preparing for it and then, in 1929, when they released the first five-year plan. At its core was the industrialisation of the country.

However, to achieve the plan they needed finances and human manpower. Where could they get this from? Only from the village! Label people as kulaks, take everything from them, evict them from their homes, take the men away to work and leave the women and children to their own fate.

The houses that had been emptied after the people had died during the Holodomor were then re-populated with Russians from Russia.

Why are there so many Russians living in Ukraine [today]? Because they moved in then. This was a deliberate policy. They wanted to destroy the [Ukrainian] nation because it was always striving for freedom. And they did not need this. They needed slaves.

At that time the following anecdote circulated around our village about the first five-year plan: Five years worth of sowing seeds were delivered to a village. People couldn't understand it. They were accustomed to sow every spring and then reap the harvest in the autumn. Yet here was a five-year sowing plan. They decided that only Stalin could answer their question so they decided to send some village representatives to meet with Stalin. The representatives arrived in Moscow but began to worry that they might be labelled 'enemies of the people' and taken away. They were afraid that they might never return home. However, Stalin took them in and one of the representatives asked Stalin to clarify how to sow five year's worth of seeds when the village only had enough land to cope with one year's worth of sowing. Stalin led them to his window and said: "Look at Red Square. There is only one car to be seen. You see, this is the beginning of the five-year plan. By the end of the five-year plan, cars will be swimming through like a river. Do you understand?" They understood. "And you will have a car [at the end of the five year plan]", he added. The representatives thought that this could be a good thing and with that, they returned to their village. The people were eagerly awaiting to hear about the meeting and so, like Stalin, the representative walked over to the window just as a coffin was being driven past. The representatives then said: "Do you see that? This is the beginning of the five-year plan – they are carrying a deceased. By the end of the five-year plan the number of corpses will be flowing through here like a river".

This was 1933 and the numbers of deceased people was by this time flowing...

My mother shared the bread that she had brought back with her after the incident with the sleigh. I did not eat it but kept it for my father. I did not know whether or not he was alive.

In the spring of 1933, people collected money and we travelled to Moscow to try and find my father. We stayed with friends on Krasnaya Presnya. I brought an apple with me. There were no trees, all the trees had been cut down. There were no apples, nothing! Yet I had brought an apple for my father. I thought that I would see him and be able to give him the dry piece of bread that I had saved for him.

We were promised that they would find out whether he was alive. We did not know anything about him, but we knew that the Moscow-

Volga canal was being built.

The friend took us there to the construction site. I looked. The fence was very high to prevent the prisoners from escaping. There was a guard. And there I was, barefooted. We had nothing. It was summer. I moved closer, noticed a dug-over piece of land leading to the site and raced past the guard as he screamed: "Where are you going? Where are you going...?"

I had been told that there was a construction site where all enemies of the people worked. I ran towards it. It was a massive building site. People were so tiny that they looked no bigger than a finger. This showed how deep the canal would be. All of the workers were carrying baskets of cement on their backs and were scaling the ladders. I looked and looked, but I didn't recognise anyone. I did not see my father. How could I have done when there were thousands of them, like ants, dragging cement on their backs. These were the labour resources. This is what I saw in the summer of 1933...

## LIDA YATSYUCH

25/07/1925 - 09/05/2018

Born Tsybuleva Stantsia, nr Mykhailivka village, Kirovograd region.

Settled in Bramley (nr. Leeds).

Interviewed by Orysia Chymera and Bohdan Lanovyj in 2008.

I was born on 25 July 1925 at Tsybuleva Stantsia, near Mykhailivka village, Kirovograd region, and attended school in Mykhailivka.

I was about 7-8 years old when the famine took hold but I also still recall the period leading up to it - when they started to close down churches.

We were children then and only later learned who had caused the famine and why.

My father was a tailor by profession but during harvest time (before dekulakization) he would stop his own work to help local farmers with the threshing. He had his own flail and a tractor-runner. He was also trained to operate a steam engine.

That was how we lived. We didn't have any land, only a garden. Life then was normal and good.

Later, because my father did not have a lot of cattle - we only had one cow, a few chickens, geese and the like - they confiscated his flail and the tractor-runner for the kolkhoz and wanted him to join the collective.

They didn't send him to Siberia because we didn't have any cattle to speak of. However he refused to join the kolkhoz arguing that he was specialised as a machinist and would find employment elsewhere. He found a job at the local sawmill.

Then the famine began. Firstly they took our cow, a piglet... and then they took everything... all of our stored grain... They even took the salt that was stored high up on a shelf in a large pottery jar.

The people that took everything from us were members of the Komsomol (Communist Youth). They were very young and tended to come from a class of people that didn't want to work.

When the Soviets came to power they took control of the villages. They went from house to house, in a drunken state, beat people, searched the houses to try and find who had hidden what and where, and they forced people to go and work on the collective farm.

They took everything, and if there was anything left over that they couldn't take, they poured petrol over it to destroy it. They did everything that they could to ensure that the people had nothing to eat. And when they had taken everything from us, everything that we could possibly eat, the famine began.

My grandmother on my father's side had some gold - earrings,

rings, little crucifixes on chains and suchlike, some nice pottery and tablecloths. Initially she started to take them to the marketplace to trade them in. Later she took them to the "Torgsins" - shops where people could trade in their gold for a bowl of wheat or corn. The "Torgsins" took the valuables practically for nothing. Yet people, compelled by their hunger, continued to bring in all of their valuables.

It got to the point that there was absolutely nothing left in our house. It was empty. The walls were bare. My mother had even removed the *rushnyk*<sup>6</sup> and sold it for a piece of bread or some grain.

At that time there were five of us children. The youngest two died quickly: the smallest died shortly after birth followed by my brother, who was about 3-4 years old. He had nothing to eat and kept asking for milk. My mother told me to give him water.

As for us, she placed a small bowl of salt on the table, told us to wet our fingers, dip them into the salt and then suck on them. That is how it was...!

On one occasion my grandmother on my father's side brought us 2-3 ears of corn with the corn kernels still attached. My mother took this corn, cleaned it and placed it into some sort of a bowl, blessed it with holy water and distributed a handful of the corn kernels to each of us. That was what we ate on Easter Sunday.

My parents often cried, but we were all small - I was small - and could not understand why they were crying.

In time it turned out that I had become quite swollen. Since my father had been a tailor, we had a mirror in the house and I remember looking into it wondering why I looked that way. I went outside into the sunshine. There was a bank of earth up against our house but things had got so bad that I couldn't even climb up onto that bank.

My father fully understood the dire circumstances that we were in but he did not know what he could possibly do.

Our neighbours, who were almost all grown-ups, with the two youngest children being teenagers aged about 14-15 years old. All five of them in that neighbouring house died from hunger. It was terrible. They [the brigades] had also taken everything from them. They wanted to force them to work in the kolkhoz...

But what did people receive for working in the kolkhoz? I will tell you. My mother worked in the kolkhoz while my father was still working in the sawmill. They said, "go work there... they have made some soup or dumplings". So she went, brought back the soup, but it was just water, no dumplings. There was nothing - just water.

And so it came to pass that people began to die on the streets on a massive, massive scale. Some man would be going somewhere and



would then just die in the street. Someone else would move his body over so that the corpse didn't get in the way or get run over. A cart would come by and collect the dead.

There was one girl, my age, who lived close to us and who I played with. At one point I just didn't see her again... and her mother and father died too.

Another one of our neighbours, a Ukrainian, whose husband was taken away to Siberia, had a daughter. Well, she ate that daughter. Obviously the daughter wasn't alive by then but nevertheless the woman was prosecuted. She had eaten her daughter after her death. Everything that took place then was truly horrific.

They took away all grain from everyone. They would come and 'pick', as we would say, in the cellar, always searching, breaking down fireplaces, digging up floors, pulling up wooden floorboards where there were floorboards, probing with metal poles, searching to find anything that might have been hidden. And if they did find anything hidden, it was straight to Siberia [for the homeowner].

My aunt lived two doors down from us. Her husband was a doctor. They had two sons and lived well because of his profession. However, because he was Ukrainian and supported Ukrainian causes, they sent him to Siberia and threw my aunt and her sons out of the house. It was taken over by the NKVD – otherwise [more latterly] known as the KGB.

They saw everything that happened in the villages, but they didn't care. The KGB woman herself went around forcing people to work in the kolkhoz where [she said] they would find a good and prosperous life.

Many people travelled out of the villages trying to get to a major town in the Donbas region. Some died on the way while others died in the Donbas where they had to register [for food]. To register, they were asked where they lived? Where do I live? On the street. Well, if you live on the street, you cannot register. And so they just died there. A terrible, terrible scenario evolved.

As for the church, I even remember when we still blessed the *paska*<sup>7</sup>. Our church was still open at the time. Drunken Komsomol youth, agitators, who forced people to work in the kolkhozes, drove their cart around the church singing songs. If you like, I'll even repeat the words of one of those songs because I can still remember it:

*Pioneers: do you believe in God?  
Where is your church?*

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7 Easter bread.

And the others sang:

*This is where our church is:  
Pioneers do not believe in God.  
And where is your Christmas?  
The snow has swept away our Christmas,  
That's where our Christmas is.*

Those are the kind of songs they sang - against God, against the Church.

People were afraid and nobody challenged them because the consequences were dreadful – they would beat or even kill.

Then an "intelligent one" from their midst climbed up onto the roof of the church, dislodged the cross and threw it down to the ground. They closed the church and sent the parish priest and the church warden to Siberia. After that, nobody heard anything more of them and they never returned.

They closed the church... Lord knows what happened to everything... They smashed everything up, destroyed it.

At the outset of the famine they still collected the grain from the people and stored it locally. However, there were some large hangers situated close to the railway station. So they then began to transport the grain – wheat and rye and everything else from the kolkhoz – from all surrounding villages and stored it all in these hangers. They then had to ship off somewhere into Muscovy.

This began to be called the grain factory and its manager tried to mechanise the process of transferring the stored grain directly into the railway freight carts by introducing a conveyor belt machine. However, he had no specialists to operate it and someone told him about my father who was still working at the sawmill. At the time, my father could only provide us with sawdust and nothing else, so we then ate things like white acacia, acorns, all sorts of weeds, leafy spurge and something that we called *kalachyky*<sup>8</sup>, which grew close to the ground and produced tiny berries... We ate anything that we could lay our hands on.

People had eaten up all of the cats, dogs and caught birds. My older brother caught birds using a small trap that he had made, removed the feathers and we boiled and ate the bird. Then there were no more dogs, cats or birds left to eat. Meanwhile, they loaded the grain onto those wagons...

The manager of the [so called] grain factory approached my father and asked whether he understood the workings of machinery. In the first instance the machine needed to be repaired and he asked my father whether he would be able to repair it. My father agreed to take a look,

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8 Malva.

went, and repaired the machine. In return the manager gave him a pood<sup>9</sup> of flour and three litres of oil.

This was like pure gold because it could not be bought anywhere at any price. My father could not carry it all so he took my brother, his eldest son, and they brought everything back to the house. Well, it was paradise then in our household. This gift, the pood of flour and those three litres of oil, saved us from hunger. And not only us, but also our elderly grandmother who had brought us those ears of corn.

Some time later the same manager of the grain factory asked my father whether he would work the machine. My father immediately agreed. He could work with the grain, grab a fistful and eat it while working.

Then they began to transport all of that grain somewhere into Russia – mainly to Moscow, while our people were dying [from starvation].

I would like to come back to the issue of the church. The person that took down that cross later committed suicide by hanging himself. Before they had emptied the church, he visited it and found some religious book there. He hung himself after reading it. They took the church apart. Only the stone steps and floor remained. Everything else was taken away [and the church demolished].

By the time the famine had begun to subside and we all started to revive, my mother had left the kolkhoz and went to work in the Sovkhoz.

As I told you earlier, the two youngest children in our family had died and so there were three children that survived the famine. These were my two older brothers and me. I was still quite small then and I went to a kindergarten while my mother went to work.

It is true that they gave us something to eat at the school so the famine was already coming to an end. People began to revive because what had been sown in the fields in the autumn went on to grow in abundance. And so the famine passed.

As for the church, only its foundation remained. At Easter, people would still bake their little *paska* and bring it to the site of the church. There, an elderly man would bless these Easter breads.

And that is how we survived the famine. Had our father not been a mechanic, we would have all died. But the memories of everything, as I recall them now, are horrific – something that I didn't fully understand at the time when I was just 7-8 years old.

# UK Councils and the Holodomor

## UK COUNCILS THAT HAVE RECOGNISED THE HOLODOMOR AS GENOCIDE

### **Keighley Town Council**

*4 September 2009*

The first Council in the UK to pass a motion calling the 1932-33 Holodomor genocide.

The motion, proposed by former Keighley Town councillor and Deputy Mayor, Mykola Lajszczuk, unanimously agreed that “the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-33 be recognised by this Council as Genocide in order that its victims can be properly remembered, and that this is never allowed to happen again”.

The Council also undertook to petition the UK Government to formally recognise the Holodomor as genocide.

### **Rochdale Borough Council**

*17 October 2008*

Rochdale Council unanimously adopted the following motion (item 12(b)) proposed by Councillor Irene Davidson and seconded by Councillor Angela Coric:

“That this Council notes that Rochdale’s Ukrainian community, which has for more than 50 years made a significant contribution to our diverse society in the Borough is commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Holodomor in the Ukraine. Council further notes that the Holodomor was the systematic starvation to death of at least 7,000,000 Ukrainians during 1932 and 1933, when the Soviet regime imposed its policy of collectivisation of farming and livestock and confiscation of food, causing untold famine in Ukrainian villages.

“That this Council recognises that the Holodomor was a devastating act of inhumanity and one of the largest national catastrophes to affect the Ukrainian nation in modern history. Furthermore this Council notes the importance of this anniversary and that we properly remember the

atrocities which took place, so that they are never allowed to happen again.

“This Council therefore calls upon the three party leaders and our Members of Parliament to write to the Government and request that Britain officially recognises the Holodomor as an act of genocide.”

### **Bolton Council**

*4 March 2009*

At a plenary session of the Executive of Bolton Council, the Executive unanimously passed the following motion (“Under Standing Order No.4”) proposed by Councillor Nicholas Peel, seconded by Councillor John Walsh and further seconded by Councillor Roger Hayes:

“That the Council supports the campaign to raise awareness of the Holodomor and for the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-33 to be recognised as Genocide, in order that its victims can be properly remembered and that this is never allowed to happen again.”

### **Kirklees Council**

*10 December 2009*

Before a full meeting of Kirklees Council, Dr. Siriol Colley, great-niece of Gareth Jones, read extracts from his diaries on what he saw in Ukraine at the height of the Holodomor.

The Council unanimously passed the following motion formally proposed by Councillor John Smithson and seconded by Councillor Jim Dodds:

“This Council remembers the many millions of victims of the Ukrainian Famine, known as the Ukrainian Holocaust or Holodomor, inflicted on the Ukrainian Nation between 1932 and 1933 by Stalin as part of his plan for collectivisation during which over seven million Ukrainians died, and recognises this as an act of Genocide against the Ukrainian Nation, and to ask Her Majesty’s Government to also recognise the Holodomor as Genocide.”

### **City of Bradford Council**

*15 December 2009*

City of Bradford Council unanimously passed the following motion proposed by Councillor Ian Greenwood and seconded by Councillor Kris Hopkins:

“The Council notes that the Executive has already acknowledged the historic significance of the Holodomor as a systematic starvation to

death of at least 7,000,000 Ukrainians by the Soviet Authorities during 1932 and 1933.

“While the Council recognises that neither the current Government of the Russian Federation nor the Russian people in general bear responsibility for the Holodomor it does consider it to have been an act of genocide.

“The Council therefore:

“1) Formally acknowledges the Holodomor to have been an act of genocide.

“2) Instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Government informing it of the Council’s position and requesting that the Holodomor be officially recognised by Government as an act of genocide.”

### **Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council**

*9 July 2013*

Following consideration of a motion proposed by Councillor Teresa Smith and seconded by Councillor Joyce Bowerman, the Council resolved:

“That Tameside Council note that the Ukrainian community in Tameside has for many decades made a significant contribution to our borough and it is right that the Council recognises the eightieth anniversary of Holodomor. The Ukrainian Community have for many years sought to raise awareness of Holodomor, the Ukrainian Famine in 1932-33 and to have Holodomor recognised as genocide. The recognition of Holodomor as genocide will help the victims be properly remembered and help prevent this ever happening again.

It is right that this borough recognises the eightieth anniversary of Holodomor and supports the campaign to have it recognised as genocide. This Council therefore agrees to write to the Government to request that Britain officially recognised the Holodomor as an act of genocide.”

# Holodomor memorials in the UK

- 1. National Memorial.**  
**Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), London.**  
*Type:* Marble Cross.  
*Inscription:* In memory of the seven million victims of the artificial famine in Ukraine, 1932-33. Ukrainians in Great Britain.
- 2.(1) Ukrainian Grove, edge of Bradford centre.**  
*Type:* Tree.  
*Inscription:* In memory of 7 million victims of the man-made famine in Ukraine 1932-33. This tree was planted on the 50th Anniversary by the Lord Mayor of Bradford Councillor N. Free on 4th December 1983.
- 2.(2) Memorial Gardens, Bradford.**  
*Type:* Commemorative Plaque.  
*Inscription:* Holodomor 1932-33. For the millions of victims of the genocide by famine in Ukraine. Dedicated by the Ukrainian Community in Bradford, November 2013.
- 3. Ukrainian Catholic Church, Halifax.**  
*Type:* Commemorative Plaque.  
*Inscription:* Genocide in Ukraine 1933. This remembrance plaque commemorates the tragic event of fifty years ago when over seven million Ukrainians fell victim to an artificial famine caused by the Russian Godless regime. Its purpose was to break the Ukrainian spirit and will in the struggle against Russian enslavement and occupation of the Ukraine. Unveiled on Sunday, 22nd May, 1983 by Donald Thompson Esq., M.P. in Halifax.
- 4. AUGB Huddersfield Branch.**  
*Type:* Commemorative Plaque.  
*Inscription:* Holodomor 1932-33. In memory of the millions of innocent victims of the enforced Famine-Genocide in Ukraine engineered by Joseph Stalin. Vichnaia Pamiat!
- 5. Memorial Gardens, Rochdale.**  
*Type:* Memorial Stone.  
*Inscription:* Голодомор 1932-33. Ukrainian Famine. An Act of Genocide.

Holodomor. Dedicated on the 22nd November, 2009 by the Ukrainian Community of Rochdale.

**6. Ukrainian section, Heaton Cemetery, Bolton.**

*Type:* Memorial Stone.

*Inscription:* A memorial to the undying memory of the millions of Ukrainian victims of Holodomor-genocide 1932-33. Erected 24.11.2013. by the Ukrainian Community in Bolton.

**7. AUGB Ashton Branch.**

*Type:* Commemorative Plaque.

*Inscription:* Association of Ukrainians in Tameside. 'HOLODOMOR' An act of Genocide against the Ukrainian Nation. In commemoration of the 75th Anniversary. Remembering the millions of innocent victims who perished during the enforced famine in Ukraine. Вічна їм Пам'ять! Ukraine Remembers - The World Acknowledges. AD2008.

**8. Aberystwyth University, Wales.**

*Type:* Commemorative plaque to Gareth Jones.

*Inscription:* In memory of Gareth Richard Vaughn Jones, born 1905, who graduated from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth and the University of Cambridge. One of the first journalists to report on the Holodomor, the Great Famine of 1932-33 in Soviet Ukraine.

**9. Memorial Gardens, Cheltenham.**

*Type:* White Stone Cross.

*Inscription:* In memory of seven million Ukrainians who died during the famine 1932-1933.

**10. Junction of Blenheim Place and Royal Terrace, Edinburgh.**

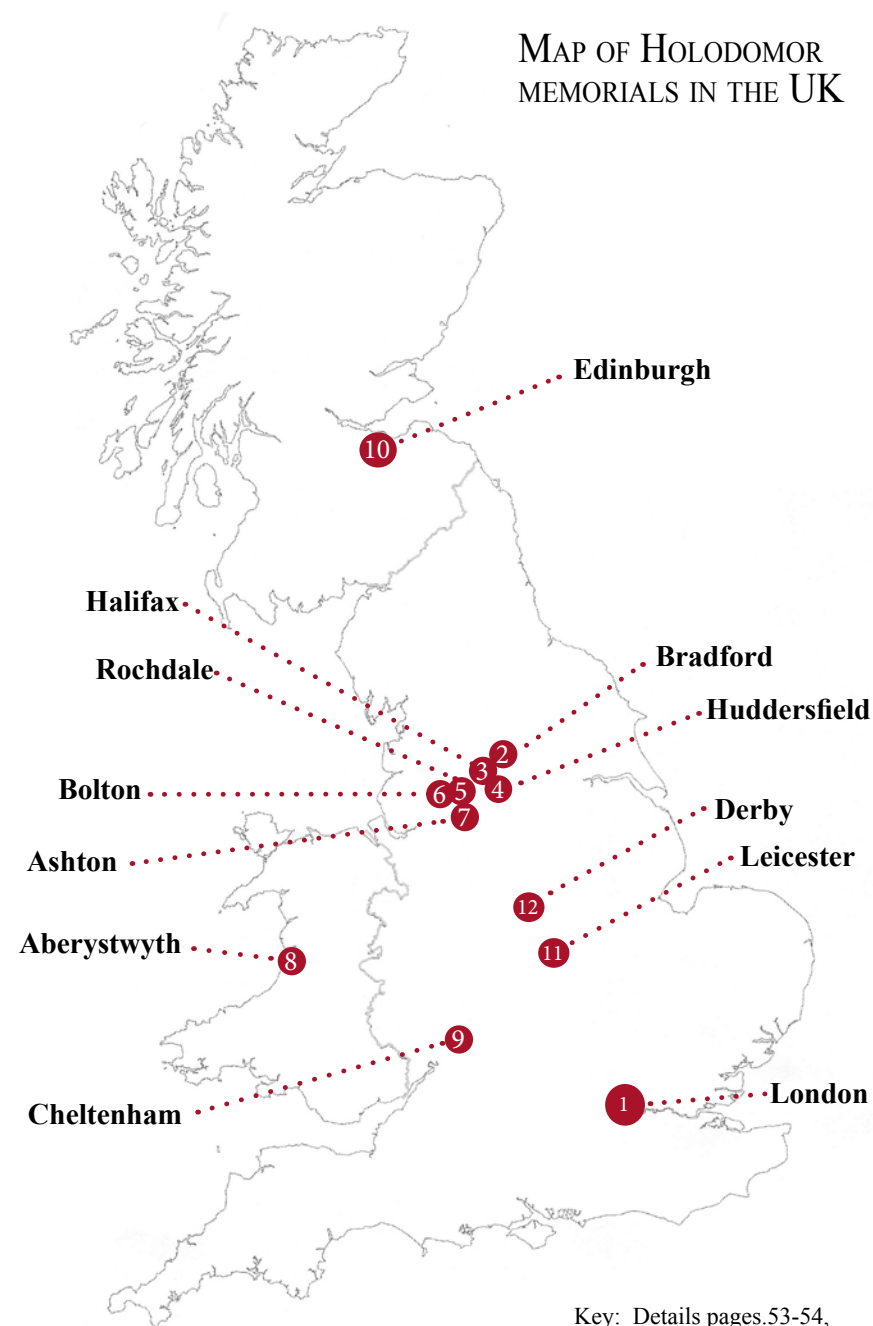
*Type:* Memorial Stone.

*Inscription:* Holodomor. Eternal Memory. Genocide by forced famine in Ukraine. More than 7 million died. We remember best when we remember together. Dedicated by the Ukrainian Community in Scotland. November 2017.

**11. Ukrainian Catholic Church, Leicester.**

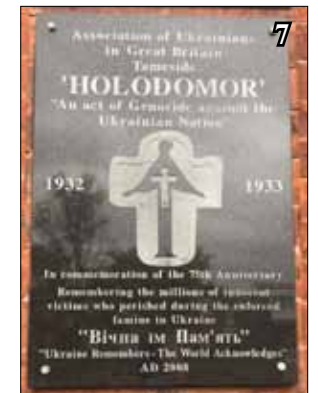
*Type:* Commemorative Plaque.

*Details:* Due to be unveiled on 25 November 2018.

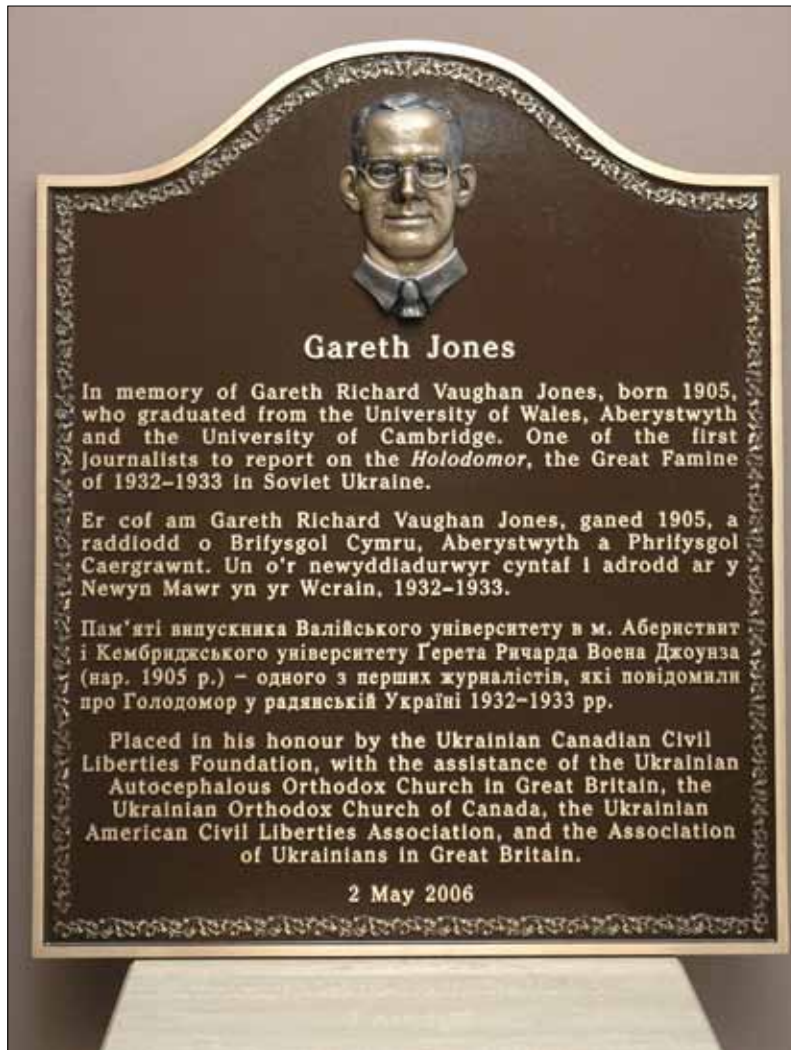




(1) National Holodomor memorial. UAOC, Acton, London.



Holodomor memorials in the UK (as listed on pp. 53-54.



Commemorative plaque to Gareth Jones.  
Aberystwyth University.



Malcolm Muggeridge (above) and Gareth Jones (right), the two British journalists who risked their lives by visiting areas ravaged by famine and then accurately reporting on what they had witnessed. In 2008 their bravery for reporting on the 1932-1933 Holodomor was posthumously recognised by Ukraine.



**Holodomor survivors: (right) Vera Smereka, below, (left to right) Anastasia Ostapiuk, Rev. Ivan Diachenko, Klavdia Semianiw, Rev. Mychaylo Pyshnenko, Rev. Mychajlo Hutornyj, Andriy Skok, Lida Yatsyuch, Maria Volkova.**



**Top: 1963. Ukrainians in the UK commemorating the 30 anniversary of the Holodomor. Middle and bottom: 2008. 75th anniversary Commemorative Concert held in Westminster Central Hall followed by participation in Evensong in Westminster Abbey and a Panakhydia Service at the memorial to all Innocent Victims of oppression, violence and war.**





**Top: Dnepropetrovsk, 1932. Grain for the State.  
Bottom: Grain being delivered to hangers for storage and ready for transportation.**

**Top: Kolkhoz workers.  
Bottom: "Torgsin" shop - where the starving trading any gold or jewellery for little return.**

# Foreign Office Excerpts



Top: Photo by Otto Wienberger, Kharkiv, 1933. Corpses of the starving lie on the pavement and are a normal sight. Passers-by no longer pay attention to them.

Bottom: "A great multitude, which no man could number". 1933. One of a series of photographs taken by Dr. Fritz Dittloff which were reproduced in Dr. Ewald Ammende's book: "Human life in Russia". George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1936.

It is incredible to think that for over half a century, the 1932-33 Holodomor was shrouded in total secrecy in the USSR. It was as if the millions of deaths hadn't happened. Soviet press and literature made no mention of the famine, not even during the Khrushchev "thaw" years when the Great Purges of the 1930s and state police repressions began to be exposed. Soviet TV, when dealing with 1933, would consistently resort to showing a smiling Stalin overseeing the May-Day parade during that year. Even as late as 1984 - 50 years after the Holodomor - the extensive "History of the Ukrainian SSR" publication described 1933 as the year of victory for kolkhoz order throughout Ukraine and improved living standards for villagers.<sup>1</sup>

Violence, repression and census falsification successfully quelled discussion of the famine in the USSR.<sup>2</sup>

The active suppression of the famine story by Soviet authorities also had a powerful impact on Western historians and writers. Ukrainian emigre claims sounded too political to many scholars in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. They could be dismissed as 'notoriously biased' and their accounts scorned as 'dubious atrocity tales'.<sup>3</sup>

Yet extensive documentation did exist in the free world which makes it all the more curious that Western scholars preferred not to research the Holodomor in more detail until Robert Conquest had published the first full history on the subject in 1986, "The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine".

One rich source of documents was the British archive. In the 1930s, by virtue of its experienced foreign service, its importance in world affairs and the fact that it was the first European power to establish diplomatic relations with Moscow after the revolution, London knew more, with the possible exception of Berlin, about the situation in the Soviet Union than any other Western government. In 1932 and 1933, the British embassy in Moscow regularly forwarded to the Foreign Office dispatches in which it drew on information from diplomats, correspondents, British subjects in the Soviet Union and Soviet citizens to report what was happening in the famine regions.<sup>4</sup>

1 Kovalenko and Manyak, 33: *Holod. Narodna Knyha-Memorial*, (Radianskyi Pys'mennyk, 1991), 16.

2 Applebaum, *Red Famine. Stalin's War on Ukraine*, (Penguin Random House UK, 2017), 308.

3 *Ibid.*, 338-340.

4 Carynnyk, Luciuk and Kordan, ed., *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, (Lime-

These documents, published as “The Foreign Office and the Famine” by M. Carynnyk, L. Luciuk and B. Kordan in 1988, show the extent to which the Foreign Office knew about the famine as it was happening, but pursued the line of maintaining “correct and friendly relations with the Soviet Government, with a view to encouraging trade as much as possible”.<sup>5</sup>

Without doubt this is a field that requires further research and study.

“The Foreign Office and the Famine” has long gone out of print so its content (or that of the Public Records Office) is likely to be only accessed by researchers or academics (or, perhaps some very determined laypersons).

With the kind permission of the book’s editors, we are able to reproduce below a fraction of self-explanatory excerpts of despatches - specifically in relation to Ukraine - which, in most cases, were sent from the British Embassy in Moscow to the Foreign Office.

Appeals to the British Government made by Ukrainian organisations in Europe and Canada, or other organisations, and correspondence relating thereto are not being reproduced here.

We are, however, in addition to extracts, reproducing one particular report almost in full - that of Andrew Cairns, which makes compelling reading.

It should also be noted that the Foreign Office referred - interchangeably and often misleadingly - to famine in “Ukraine”, “South Russia”, “Russia” and the “Soviet Union”.<sup>6</sup> We have retained the original reference.

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stone, 1988), xix.

5 Ibid., xlvi.

6 Ibid., xlvii.

## SEED COLLECTION IN SOVIET UNION

**Sir Esmond Ovey (Moscow) to Sir John Simon (Foreign Secretary)  
28 March, 1932.**

There are stories going about Moscow to the effect that traffic between the Ukraine and the consuming regions lying to the north of it is closely controlled, no one being allowed to bring more than 1,000 roubles out from the Ukraine, and all grain in the possession of private persons entering the Ukraine being confiscated. The Ukraine is, normally, the granary which feeds these consuming areas, but the granary, it is said, has been stripped very bare and some of the population in both town and country in the Ukraine is short of food...<sup>7</sup>

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7 Ibid., 3.

## CONDITIONS IN SOVIET UNION

**William Strang (Moscow) to Sir John Simon  
4 May 1932**

Recent visitors to the Ukraine report that the bread ration, even for manual workers themselves, has been cut down; that members of workers' families and other employees and their families have no ration of bread at all and have to supply themselves with bread as best they can outside the co-operatives, at prices which swallow up the greater part, or even the whole, of the workers' wages on bread alone. They also confirm, as already reported in previous despatches, that the Ukrainian peasants have been left in a state approaching famine after successive grain collections, whether for the needs of the towns, or for the war reserve, or for export, or for seed purposes in other areas, and that many of them move to the towns in search of bread. Live stock is dying for lack of fodder or is being killed for food. At the barrage works at Dnieprostroi, in addition to the ordinary worker, who is entitled to a reduced ration of 400 or 600 grammes a day, there are said to be gangs of pressed workers, who receive no more than 200 grammes.<sup>8</sup>

## CONDITIONS IN UKRAINE

**Sir Esmond Ovey (Moscow) to Sir John Simon,  
18 July 1932**

As will have been apparent from my despatch No. 239 of the 4th May, conditions in the Ukraine are apparently unsatisfactory. Agriculture in particular has not accomplished what was expected of it and there is a severe food shortage... It is doubtless due to the seriousness of the situation that the Central Government has thought it necessary to make use of the Congress of the Ukrainian Communist Party... of the 18th July, to address a series of admonitions through the mouths of Molotov and Kaganovich.

...It was clear from their speeches that the main reason for their presence at the Congress was to take the Ukrainian Party organisation severely to task. The Party conference had laid it down that the cereal yield of the Ukraine in the course of the next two or three years must be raised by 1 ½ times the amounts harvested in the most favourable of recent years and must be realised in the present year. (It is difficult to imagine that this objective will be attained.)<sup>9</sup>

## CRIMEA AND UKRAINE

### **William Strang (Moscow) to Sir John Simon 4 May 1932, Forwarding a Report by J.M.K. Vyvyan**

...It is impossible so much as to have one's shoes blacked without being met with the same outcries: "We have no leather here like yours, no bread, no meat - nothing. There is nothing to live for!" This was said to me with a G.P.U. officer within 2 yards. Except in the case of rare Communists, there seems to be no patriotic inclination to hide conditions from a foreigner. He is the natural receptacle for complaints against the "system," in whom I found on two occasions that even Communists were willing to confide.

On our arrival at Sinelnikovo Station on the 14th July I saw, for the first time, people huddled on the roofs of the trains, and the first questions which we asked bystanders was to account for the queues and heaps of would-be passengers, some of which were scarcely distinguishable in appearance from the beggars and cripples, many of them children, that wait at stations to ask for bread or alms. The first man to whom we spoke was most communicative. The peasants, he said, were either fugitive members of collective farms who would not work, or those who could not get work. Many peasants from his neighbourhood (Voronezh) had been arrested and transported. But in Voronezh, Kiev and Chernigorsk conditions were worse than elsewhere, and in one area (rayon) of the Voronezh district the numbers of live-stock had fallen, as a result of collectivisation, from 400 cattle and 200 sheep to 10 cattle and 50 sheep.

The station restaurant was patrolled by some scavengers, who were not, however, beggars. We had finished a tin of sardines and emptied some tea-leaves into it, and, when we left, one of these unfortunates went up to the tin and began to scrape the mixture of oil and tea-leaves into his mouth. A crowd of the more mobile passengers (those who have waited for a day or more usually lie in heaps on the platforms) then approached me and began to ask questions. "Were not conditions bad?" I was noncommittal, and suggested that the new harvest would bring plenty of bread. An old man laughed and exclaimed: "Whatever the harvest is we shall get no bread - nothing," and was greeted with approval. A man, who turned out to be an above-ground mine worker in the Donbass, however, contradicted him, and began a disquisition on the future, employing the usual figures of Communist rhetoric. I was therefore surprised when the same man came up to me a few minutes later, accepted a glass of so-called beer and began to talk. Conditions

varied, he said, but even for the Donbass workers there was nothing to eat. All the food went to the engineers and specialists. He said this, he added, although he was a Communist and a shock-worker.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 95-96.

## PROTECTION OF PROPERTY OF STATE UNDERTAKINGS, COLLECTIVE FARMS AND CO-OPERATIVES

**William Strang (Moscow) to Sir John Simon  
10 August 1932**

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a translation of a decree of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R., dated the 7th August, instituting severe sanctions for the protection against pilferage of the property of State undertakings, collective farms and co-operatives, and of goods conveyed by rail or by water. By this decree goods in transit, and the property of cooperatives and collective farms, including crops in the fields, are to be treated as State property and the maximum penalty which may be inflicted in case of pilferage is the supreme measure of social protection namely death. The decree also provides severe penalties against kulak or capitalist elements who use threats against loyal collective farm workers with the object of disorganising the collective farm system and damaging collective farm property.

...The decree is also directed against the taking of grain by marauding or merely provident peasants. To pluck an ear of corn by the wayside is now in this country a capital offence.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 102-103.

## MR. CAIRNS' INVESTIGATIONS IN SOVIET UNION

**William Strang (Moscow) to Sir John Simon, 12 August 1932,  
and Andrew Cairns to E.M.H. Lloyd, 3 August 1932**

*Editor's note: This next despatch from the British Ambassador in Moscow is followed by a lengthy report by Andrew Cairns, a Canadian wheat expert whose reports were among the most graphic and extensive accounts of suffering, contained concrete human reality and were grounded in his own careful investigation.<sup>12</sup>*

*Internal Foreign Office minutes justifiably described Mr. Cairns's report as "excellent", "long but not long-winded" and "amazingly full of facts, and full of interest on almost every page..."<sup>13</sup>*

Confidential

With reference to Sir Esmond Ovey's despatch No. 323 of June 21st I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of a further report by Mr. Cairns on conditions in the Ukraine, Crimea and North Caucasus. This report is of special interest as it deals with two of the chief grain producing areas of the Soviet Union, and as in the course of his travels Mr. Cairns visited such well-known establishments as the State farms "Verblud" and "Gigant," as well as "Drusag," the German agricultural concession in the Kuban.

2. I will not attempt to summarize or comment on Mr. Cairns' account of his journey. The truth about Soviet Russia is best apprehended not by facile generalisation but by the merciless impact of multitudinous fact. Mr Cairns is by training and temperament singularly well qualified to acquire and sift the facts about Soviet agriculture and his reports have a unique value as a mirror of the state of the country at the present time...

William Strang

**Enclosure in No. 10**

Dear Lloyd,

Moscow, 3rd August, 1932

I left Moscow on June 15th and returned July 30th. During my six weeks absence I saw a good sample of the Ukraine, Crimea and Northern Caucasus. As I did not have time to write an account of my

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 165.

observations in time for yesterday's bag, I sent you two draft cables, one for publication by our correspondents, and a confidential one. This letter will go out in the next bag, about the middle of August.

In view of the fact that prices and crop prospects vary considerably, depending on the time of year, I am writing this report in the form of a chronological description of what I have seen and heard.

I rose very early on June 16th to watch the fields. Up to 11 a.m., at about which time we reached the Ukraine, the farming seemed to be done mostly by individual peasants as the grain was largely confined to small strips. All morning and forenoon the crops were very poor - a good deal of winter kill, thin and short. At a station close to the Ukrainian border the peasants I spoke to in the bazaar all cursed collectivisation. There was practically no bread for sale and small buns of very coarse black bread were being sold for one rouble each, and small chickens at fifteen roubles each. From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. the fields increased in size rapidly (more collectivisation), but the bulk of the crops were very poor, thin and very weedy. The spring sown crops were extremely bad - late and almost smothered in weeds. In such an old district, where, according to the official statistics, every acre of suitable land is supposed to be cultivated, I was surprised to see a great deal of land recently in crop, but now uncultivated. From 1 to 7 p.m., at which time I arrived in Kiev, I collected prices at many stations, of which the following are typical. At the first large station a loaf of extremely coarse black bread sold for 10 roubles. I asked the women why the bread was so dear and they said a pood (36 pounds) of very poor rye meal cost 90 roubles, and as they could not afford to buy a pood, they had to pay proportionally very much more for smaller amounts. In the depot, the Government were selling small rolls for 1½ roubles, and thin slices of pork fat (about 2 by 3 inches) for 2 roubles. I saw very little butter or milk and no meat for sale at all the bazaars I visited during the day. Every station had its crowd - from scores to several hundred, depending on the size of the town - of rag-clad hungry peasants, some begging for bread, many waiting, mostly in vain, for tickets, many climbing on to the steps or joining the crowds on the roof of each car, all filthy and miserable and not a trace of a smile anywhere. All day long I saw much fine grass, but practically no livestock of any kind. I did not see a single good crop until we got very close to Kiev. The autumn sown crops were generally badly winter-killed, spindly, weedy and short, and the spring sown crops were choked by weeds. But all crops were of good colour, indicating that they had ample moisture. I did not see a single tractor all day. In the late afternoon there was a little butter for sale at 2 roubles per pound and slices of heavy, black bread (from a loaf about the size of a Canadian 5 cent loaf) at 1 rouble each. The peasants said the cheapest

and poorest rye meal was 100 roubles per pood. At the depot in Kiev many people asked for bread.

In the morning of June 17th, I went for a walk and soon came across a small street bazaar. The chief trading was being done in wild strawberries and green vegetables (mostly pulled much too soon). The following are typical of the prices quoted: Milk 2½ roubles per litre, old potatoes 1.2 roubles per Russian pound of 400 grammes, very little coarse black bread at 6 roubles per kilo, small rolls 1.3 roubles, 10 eggs 5½ roubles, leg of chicken 2½ roubles. Several women followed me around the bazaar, but I could not make out much of what they said as they all talked at once, some in Ukrainian and some in Russian, and two of them were crying between each sentence. But what first class actresses they were! Despite the tragedy of it all, I could not keep from laughing at the expressions on their faces as they drew their finger like a knife across their throat, pulled in their cheeks and held their hands on their stomachs while they pretended to vomit, and while they bent their backs and hobbled about. I can understand only a few words of what people say unless I am directing the conversation, so I finally got one woman alone and made her stop talking and answer my questions. She said there was practically no bread because the Government had collected so much grain and exported it to England and Italy; that the collective farms around Kiev were very bad; that all the members were hungry and many were leaving; she had left her village with many others because she could not get food and that some were dying of starvation; she had a job in Kiev but it was impossible to keep from being hungry as she could not buy much food with her small salary. Later I found a little butter being sold in small pieces at the rate of 12 roubles per pound. It was the most expensive butter I have seen in Russia and when I asked the peasants why, they all said there were no cattle as they had all died or had been killed. I asked several women why they did not belong to a collective farm; they said they did not join, or had left, because they and their children were very hungry. In this bazaar, as in scores of others I have visited, I noticed that many of the hens for sale contained a good few fairly large and many small eggs, so they had obviously been killed while still laying.

In the afternoon (after a fair lunch at the Intourist hotel for 15 roubles) I called on Narkomzem - the Department of Agriculture. I was turned over to the Vice-President of the collective farm centre - an extremely stupid man who had been in Chicago several years (a mechanic in a printing shop) and understood English. He said he had just returned from a month's inspection trip of the surrounding villages and had found them very interesting and beginning to improve. Last summer, and especially last winter and this spring, conditions had been

extremely bad as the peasants did not like the collective farms and would not work, but now they have learned that if they do not work they cannot live, so they are beginning to work. Last year they had a good crop, but this year they were going to have a better one! He said they would take me to see institutes in Kiev for two days and to farms on the third day. I protested and got him to agree to only one day for institutes.

In the evening I met a man (the manager of a very small co-operative store) who had been in New York. He said he was a third category worker and received only 100 roubles per month. From the Government he got 200 grammes of black bread per day for himself and 200 for his boy and had to buy everything else at open market prices. He asked the price of white bread in the States and remarked that it cost 5 roubles per pound in Kiev. I asked him why prices were so high and he said it was due to inflation and the great shortage of food, because the peasants did not like the collective farms and, when forced or taxed into them, would not work; pointing to the crowds he said: "There they are, wandering up and down the streets." He said the purchasing power of the monthly income of the average worker in Kiev was about five dollars. While climbing up a very steep hill to get a good look at the beautiful Dnieper River, I came across two women pulling what at first I thought was dandelions or young leeks for greens, but upon examination it turned out to be tender grass. I asked them what they were going to do with the grass and they said "make soup." They were third category workers and got only 125 roubles per month and only 200 grammes of bread per day. I pointed to the river and remarked that it was very beautiful; they agreed but said they were hungry. Later I climbed to a high hill to look at several very large churches. All were in a terrible state of dilapidation; one had been used for a prison, another was being used as some sort of club for workers, and around the others were many old priests begging, and groups of women and children, in rags and filth, taking turns at killing the lice in each others hair before retiring for the night on the damp grass. On the way back to my hotel I saw a horrible sight - a man dying on the street. He was apparently insane as he was going through all the motions of eating and rubbing his stomach with apparent satisfaction. A crowd gathered around and some, thinking he was begging, dropped a few kopeks, but he was quite unconscious and soon stopped moving. Further on I took advantage of a foreigner's privilege and took my place at the head of a long queue and got into a store to see heavy, warm, soggy bread being sold for 10 roubles per loaf, and a little pork fat at 12 roubles per pound. Outside the store were swarms of people; some retailing the bread at a rouble a slice, others buying a few young vegetables, and a few begging or eating bits of bad vegetables or fish scales picked up from the street.

I asked several people why things were so dear, and, seeing I did not understand a word of Ukrainian, they pulled in their cheeks, pretended to vomit, drew their finger's across their throat, and said, in Russian, "Kushat' nyet, nichevo nyet" (there is nothing to eat, nothing at all). A woman was selling bread for 6 roubles per kilo, which she said you could buy for 5 if you stood in line for hours and got into the shop before it was all gone. I spoke to two young peasant girls and heard much abuse of the collective farms which I could not understand.

In the hotel next day, June 18th, I tried to get eggs and strawberries for breakfast, but had to be satisfied with bread and butter and slightly coloured water called tea. I asked why I could not get strawberries when the whole of Kiev seemed to be living on strawberries and premature vegetables, but was told they did not know. All over Russia, even in special foreign restaurants and shops, I have had similar experiences - they don't seem to want your money and show no enterprise whatever.

We were supposed to visit five institutes around Kiev, but thank goodness it turned out to be a free day, so I had to visit only two. The first one was for research and teaching work in the sugar industry. The teaching department had 50 professors and 600 students - 60% from collective farms and 40% from State farms. The right side of the Ukraine, called the Kiev Oblast, has 63% of the peasants and 66% of the land collectivised. The professors I met seemed intelligent, well educated and had good laboratory equipment, but the directors were of the usual type. The second institute was a very large sugar experimental station, said to be the finest in all Russia. On the way home my guide (the Chicago mechanic and Vice-President of the collective farm central organisation) tried hard to get me to agree to visit the other institutes on the following day, but I would not be moved. He said he would take me to an institute where they were turning out 400 expert sugar engineers every year and that although they were very short of such engineers just now, as they had built many new sugar factories, they would soon liquidate the problem. With the exception of my stay in the tourist hotels of Kiev, Rostov and Kharkov, I got no sugar during my six weeks absence from Moscow, despite my offer of dollars in Torgsin (special shops where one can buy for valuta, foreign currency, only) in six different towns.

In the evening I found one of the largest bazaars in Kiev and had a most interesting time. Mens' soft leather top boots, 300 roubles; ladies' split leather shoes, 120 roubles; a few small squares of sugar at two thirds of a rouble each; butter 10 roubles per pound; eggs 6 roubles for 10; very small tins of fish 7 roubles; old scabby potatoes 1 rouble, and very small new ones 1½ roubles per pound; bread 10½ roubles per loaf; a policeman offering a pair of completely worn out top boots for



5 roubles; pigs feet 4 for 10 roubles; and scores of men and children, with badly swollen tummies, in rags, asleep on the ground (while flies by the thousand crawled over them) or begging or picking up scraps of vegetables and fish scales to eat. A terrific rain storm broke and I had to stand under a roof for 2 hours, during which time many people crowded around to try and make me understand them. Many of them were quite young, and nearly all were town workers. They were unanimous that things had never been so bad, that nearly everybody was hungry, that the peasants would not work, because they were all hungry, and were moving into the towns by the thousands, that less than 80% of the crop had been sown by collective farms and that the individual peasants had eaten their seed. All pointed to a crowd of over 500, everyone soaked to the skin, waiting for a store to open where bread was only 8 roubles per loaf and said in effect: "there is the Five Year Plan for you." Apparently they were not exaggerating about the number of peasants who had left the farms, as my Government guide told me earlier in the day that the population of Kiev had increased from 400 to 600 thousand in 2 years, and the number of workers by 110 thousand. On my way home I stopped to give coins to 3 small girls (they were all nearly dead with hunger and the smallest one certainly could not have lived more than a few days longer) and a crowd gathered around to tell me there were many such children in Russia. A man came forward and called me comrade, and said the people were telling lies because soon, with mechanization, kolhoses and sovghoses, everything would be lovely, but the crowd shouted him down. In the hotel I got my key from a young Jewess who said she had come there from Philadelphia for a visit in 1929 and saw "what was what"; so she had returned 9 months ago, given up her U.S. citizenship and never wished to return to America.

On June 19th the Government were to call for me at 8. At 10 a.m. a messenger came with a note saying it had rained so hard that we could not go to the country, but that they would call at 11 to take me to see collective truck farms near the city. At 2 p.m. another note arrived to say their car was broken and they could not get another one. I returned to the big bazaar and spent two hours visiting several Government shops and stands. There was no real meal, either rye or wheat, for sale but oats were being sold at 3.6 roubles per kilo, peas 7.5 per kilo, lentils at 1.6 per pound, beans at 3.2 per pound, potato meal at 1.96 per pound, soya bean meal at 1.68 per pound, and many other different types of "meal." There were many kinds - some poorer, some better, than the two samples enclosed — which were being sold for 2.9 roubles per kilo. You will notice that they are a mixture of ground chaff, oat and other hulls, bran, a little straw, very much fibre, a little flax and very little starch or other digestible nutrients. Shortly before I left London

in the early part of April, the Economist published a series of letters over the signature of Frank Wise. All of them told of how wisely and efficiently the Russians had sold their grain, especially as compared with the Canadians and Americans. How about presenting him with one of the samples to show him what a complete job of selling they really did! I wandered into a small repair shop and, to my surprise, found the owner could speak English. He had been in New York before the War, had been through the War and Revolution in the Red Army and ever since he had been trying, without success, to get back to the States. The Government charged him 1500 roubles per year for the privilege of working hard in his tiny shop (he was a very good worker as I watched him at it) and, in addition, had charged him 400 roubles as his "voluntary contribution" to the success of the Third decisive year of the Five Year Plan. He did not know what they were going to ask as a voluntary contribution to the success of the "Fourth and Final Year of the Five Year Plan," but he was sure it would be more than 400 roubles, as many people were watching him and every communist in Kiev seemed to be his boss. He said that before the Five Year Plan started there was plenty of food in Kiev and that he could buy all the white bread he wanted; now there was virtually nothing to eat. The people did not believe a word that the papers said, because they knew the collective farms were "no good" and that the peasants were too hungry and angry to work. The night watchman of the bazaar came and took me to see several groups of children with straw legs and enormous stomachs, women standing at shop doors begging, and women and children picking over garbage heaps; and also to see the "meal" I had seen previously. He had been a prisoner of war in Germany and liked it very much. Later I went with the New York man to his home — one small room for himself, wife and two children.

Next day, June 20th, I did not wait very long for Narkomzem to come for me, but went to see them. After passing through office after office, all filled with scores of planners, most of them arguing, I found the Vice-President of Kolhoz-center. He said he had already had a 4 hour party session and had a 6 hour one in the afternoon so could not go to the country with me. I told him it did not matter as I could easily get an interpreter from Intourist, so he took me to the President of Narkomzem, who told me he would like to take me to the country, but his car was also being remounted. We next went to the office of the President of Kolkoz Center. The office was empty when we arrived, but soon there were 13 people in it, all arguing (apparently unaware that I knew a few words of Russian) which communes or collective farms were good and which were very bad. They then 'phoned about ten people for a car, but none of them would let their car go out to the

country as the roads were very bad. I said I would gladly pay dollars and hire a car from Intourist as I could not afford to waste any more time. They 'phoned, but Intourist refused to let their cars go out of the city. While they argued further I picked up some tables on the President's desk and noticed that up to June 15th the collective farms had sown 72.7% of the spring seeding plan and only 37.8% of the potatoes and the individual peasants only 44.6% of all spring crops. Later the President arrived and said he would get a car in the morning for sure. I went back to the hotel (a distance of only three blocks, yet I was asked by 5 people for bread) to sit alone in a big dining room over a 20 rouble meal while 12 men played music to help my digestion.

In the evening I went for a very long walk in a new direction, saw a woman dying on the street and finally wandered into a big church where, to my surprise, I found a very large crowd worshipping very devoutly. Later I saw a christening and a wedding. The bride appeared to know the elaborate ceremony by heart, but the groom knew only the wine-drinking part. I was surprised to see a good proportion of young people worshipping in the Church. Outside a crowd gathered around to tell me the wedding was very poor because people needed every kopek of what small wages they got for food, as the Government gave them only a very small piece of bread each day. On the way home I saw a truck load of rye meal being unloaded into a big bakery. The men carrying the bags told me the meal would cost over 100 roubles a pood in the bazaar. As usual, a crowd soon gathered around and all agreed that conditions were very bad, that people were hungry because there was no bread or anything else, that the peasants were not working so there would be less bread next winter, and that the collective farms were in a very bad condition. One man followed me all the way back to the hotel. He said he was a second category worker and got 180 roubles per month and 525 grammes of bread per day, that first category workers got 600 grammes of bread per day and street car conductors only 400 and absolutely nothing else. What surprised me most in Kiev was not what the people said (although conditions there seemed to be worse than in any place I visited in the next five weeks), but that they should all - young, middle-aged and old alike - be unanimous and that none of them seemed to care what they said or who heard them, even the police and G.P.U.

Next morning (June 21st) the car actually arrived in good time and we set out for the country. As we passed several big gun wagons along the road, and also a very large military camp, I remarked that never in all my life had I seen so many soldiers as I had seen in Russia. My interpreter said perhaps it was because we were fairly near the Polish and Roumanian borders, but the Government guide told her to tell me it

was because everything was open and above board in the Soviet Union, whereas in other countries the soldiers were kept in secret places. I thought of the hundreds and thousands of armed soldiers I had seen in every village, town and station I had seen, and of the large numbers I had seen even on farms, but I did not say anything. We drove for a good few miles over extremely poor roads (the crops were very weedy and poor in most places, but here and there I noticed a good field where the cultivation had been good; all the crops were of good colour as the weather had been ideal all spring) and passed quickly through several villages, in all of which the people looked thoroughly miserable, before reaching our destination - the October Revolution Commune. After many narrow escapes we got stuck in the mud. The Government guide started out for a nearby kolhoz and the chauffeur shouted at him to bring horses which could pull, because most of the horses in the country were starved. While waiting for the horses, I took advantage of the Government's absence and had an interesting conversation with my interpreter. She told me she got only 130 roubles per month and, being classed as a third category worker, only 300 grammes of very poor bread per day, 1¼ pounds of sugar per month and a small cake of soap. Everything else she had to buy in the bazaar. She said she was so thin partly because she had to study and work very hard, but largely because she had a baby boy 18 months old and that she could not possibly describe the difficulties she had in raising him as it was practically impossible to get anything babies needed. She said first category workers were supposed to get 800 grammes of bread per day and second category 600 and 500, but they got less. I questioned her further and she said: "Please let us not talk about it any more as it is too painful. Things were very good in Kiev in 1928, but they have been getting steadily worse ever since. They are terrible just now and from the questions you ask and what you say you have seen I know that there is no use my pretending otherwise to you." Later she told me that the housing conditions in Kiev were extremely bad and that many people living in basements had been drowned a few nights before, owing to the floods caused by the heavy rains.

In about an hour the Government man returned with 22 peasants (apparently the collective farm had no horses available) who pulled the car out. I gave some of the peasants tobacco and paper to make cigarettes, and was sorely tempted to ask them questions, but from their faces I could tell what their answers would have been, so I did not ask my interpreter to put my questions. Just as we were approaching the Commune we had to stop to find our way around a water hole. A large group of women passed on their way out to work in the fields. They asked me, according to my interpreter, to come and help them so I asked

them how they liked the Commune and they said the Commune was alright but they got very little bread. I was rather annoyed - because my coat had jumped out of the car on a bump half a mile back and picked up by someone before we noticed it and returned - so I asked them why they had very little bread and, much to the displeasure of my guide, they replied that the Government had collected and exported it all.

The president of the Commune, who was waiting for us, said they had finished the spring sowing plan and had just completed a counter plan of 20% more than the Government plan for the commune. The farm had 1,233 hectares, 725 in crop, 183 winter wheat, 37 spring wheat, 54 oats, 20½ potatoes, 15 cauliflowers, 7½ tomatoes, 20 barley, 180 clover and alfalfa, 10 maize, 148 milking cows, 236 young cattle, 90 horses, 198 pigs, 80 hens, 250 chickens, 3 tractors, 257 workers, 515 people, 56 members of the Communist Party, 36 Komsomols and 100 pioneers. I had already learned from experience that the number of Communists in a commune or artel was a direct function of the amount of money the Government had supplied for capital equipment, so I was not surprised to find a very large and expensive brick barn, a fine machine shed, a large brick building for the workers' club, a fine office, a big building used for a kindergarten, a small park and fine flower beds, fairly good livestock and, of course, good land. In 1930 they got 90 poods of winter wheat per hectare, 71 in 1931 and were expecting 110 this year. The wheat I saw was all very good, but it was all on ground which had been manured, a practice which is virtually unknown in Russia. The director said they were getting 900 to 1,000 litres per day from 145 cows, 50% of which went to the Government factory for 40 to 50 kopeks per litre, depending on the percentage of butterfat; the members got ½ litre each day and the rest was sold in the kolhoz bazaar for about 50 kopeks per litre! I was also told that the commune was not interested in the bazaar as they preferred to sell their produce to the Government. I asked the president how long he had been in his present position and was surprised to learn that he had been a simple member for 6 years (the commune was organised in 1924 out of 3 artels which were organised in 1919) and the president for 3 years. He said only a communist could become president of a commune and the Government guide added that it was not necessary to be a communist to be the president of an artel. I have not been on an artel yet that did not have a party man as president. After we visited the barns, nearby fields, and, of course, the inevitable kindergarten, the president completely gave my guide's game away by asking me to sign the visitors' book. Before doing so I looked through it and read all the passages in English which had been written by American and English tourists. All of the notes contained many words of high praise, a good few writers said Russia was setting a splendid and

noble example to the world, but I looked in vain for a faint hint that the farm was not exactly typical of what one would expect to find in Russia, and found instead expressions of regret and humility that the authors' countries were doing nothing of the kind. I could not quite see why establishing a show place for foreign tourists who visited Kiev, and putting red pants on a group of children, was a particularly great accomplishment so, after praising the farm as the finest commune I had seen in Russia and enumerating several of its good points, I wrote that I regretted that it was not exactly typical of Russian farms.

When we left the office I learned to my surprise that we were going straight back to Kiev. I protested vigorously. I said I had waited three days to get out into the country and could see no sense in returning to Kiev in the early afternoon, and asked why I could not see the artel a few miles from the commune. My guide was troubled, but after a discussion with the president said he would take me to another one instead. On our way to the farm he wished to show me, we passed through several villages (all containing many very unhappy-looking people), but we stopped in only one and that only accidentally. We were just entering the village on a narrow street, when some horses took fright at our car and we had to stop. I immediately took advantage of the opportunity and jumped out and went over to where some women were standing. They all said they were very hungry as they had no bread, but as I could make out little else they were saying, I called to my interpreter to help. She hesitated, but I insisted; so out she came, followed by my guide. Soon a large crowd gathered and oh how angry they were! A woman came up weeping and wailing, and said she could not work much because she had a bad heart, and the Government had taken her horses and cows and that she had practically nothing to eat. My interpreter turned to me and said, "she is a kulak, it is the class struggle in the village; what is there to do, it is the class struggle." I told her I found it difficult to appreciate what she said, as I could easily see all the women in the crowd were genuinely sorry for the woman and that when she spoke they all said "pravda, pravda" (true, true). Soon a young fellow appeared and, according to my interpreter, told the crowd that if they were not satisfied they should come to the village soviet (he was the secretary) with their troubles, but the crowd fairly howled him down. The temper of the crowd was getting hot so noticing that most of the girls were wearing crosses I looked at one. The girl's mother was very pleased and said: "God gives us everything and he will get us out of the mess the Communists have got us into." Her remark made my guide very cross, but he had scarcely started to reprimand her when an extremely angry peasant came rushing forward and said his children had nothing to eat, to which all the women said, "pravda, pravda." The

secretary of the local party said, "it serves you right for hiding your grain from the Government collectors" and all the women said, "nie pravda, nie pravda" (it is not true, it is not true). I suggested that we should visit the office of the collective farm, but my guide said it was in another village!

Finally we arrived at the farm we were to visit - an artel called "Elich," or something like that. It had 1,362 people, 1,024 hectares, 820 in crops, 320 winter rye, 65 oats, 10 barley, 50 hectares young fruit trees and 5 bearing, 160 clover, 105 garden truck, 72 potatoes, 26 cows collectivised (136 for individual use), 97 horses, 84 sheep, 19 old and 22 young pigs, 12 oxen. Their main income was from vegetables. Last year they had delivered 75% of their vegetables and 25% of their grain to the Government, but this year they would not deliver any vegetables to the Government, but would keep 10% for their own use and sell 90% in the bazaar, to consumers only. They had also been relieved of delivering any grain to the Government this year, because they were in the "Kiev workers' area." They sold their milk wholesale for ½ roubles per litre. They paid their members 50% of the estimated income (1.2 roubles per "worker day" of eight hours — some members earned two "worker days" pay in one day and some took a week to earn one day's pay) and last year each household had earned from 300 to 1,000 roubles! (Schiller jeered at these figures when I gave them to him later.) The members got 600 grammes of bread and 3 hot meals (usually means a bowl of soup) per day for 48 kopeks. My guide said something to the fellow in the office who had given me the figures and then my interpreter told me that he (the man who supplied the data) wanted me to know that he was not a communist. I smiled, turned to a young fellow who had just come in and asked him if he was not a party man and president of the artel and he said, yes - all the people in the room laughed. He told me later that he was a metal worker, that there were 400 households in the artel, 220 peasant and the rest metal workers' and that it would be much easier for them to change the psychology of the peasants than in a typical collective farm.

On the way back to Kiev I asked the government guide why the individual peasants on the right side of the Ukraine had sown, up to June 15th, only 44%, and the collective farms only 72% of the spring seeding plan. At first he said it was not true, but when I told him I had seen the figures in the office of the president of Kolhoz Centre he said he thought I meant the Kiev rayon only, where the collective farms had sown 87% and the individual peasants 60% of the plan. On further questioning he said the chief difficulty had been lack of seed. I asked why they should be short of seed when I had been told that they had a good crop last year. He said it was due to a mistake of the local party people, particularly

the young communists, who were over enthusiastic and had collected too much and who even went so far as to collect grain to fulfil counter plans after the Government plan had been executed. I then asked why there had been so much abuse of the Ukraine in the Moscow press for not nearly fulfilling its grain collection plan and he finally admitted that the plan had been too high but that it was not the fault of the central authorities as they had been supplied with wrong information and too optimistic estimates of yields by the communist party locals. My interpreter added that she did not agree that all the fault should be placed on the local people, as the Moscow planners had been much too optimistic, especially regarding the Ukraine, and that all last autumn and winter many people were talking about the unreality of the plan. I asked her what would have happened if I had been here then and openly said the plan was unreal, and she replied: "If you were a Russian they certainly would have put you in prison!" Later I congratulated my interpreter for being so frank and told her I appreciated very much her not trying to give me only good news as I wished to see and hear as much as possible, good and bad, and then form my own conclusions. She replied sadly that she was glad I was pleased, but she was afraid that from the point of view of the Government she was a poor guide, but she realised that there was no use saying things were not very bad. She then added: "But you would be surprised to know the number of tourists who are satisfied with only the good side, and I think most of them believe all they are told." The Government guide asked what we were talking about and I told her not to translate what I had said as she might get into trouble and she answered that she must say something as she did not know him personally. Later she said: "But I'll be even more frank; when we were talking about food rations and living conditions this morning I told you only part, not all." The communists, she said, realised very well that the French revolution had been broken by the peasants and they were very much afraid the Russian peasants would break the Russian revolution if they were left alone as they were in NEP (when things were very good, and there was an abundance of food and she could take a holiday and spend money and not worry about tomorrow). The Party was, therefore, determined to change the psychology of the peasants and eventually to make good communists of them. I said they might do so eventually, but in my opinion they would never do so in one, or even two, generations. She agreed, and added that although the communist papers and books said there would soon be plenty of food and clothes, she was afraid she would not see such days, although her little boy might, as in order to get plenty of food it was necessary for the Government to be on friendly terms with the peasants.

(Tonight I was talking to the correspondent of the Polish Telegraphic

Agency and he made a remark which I thought very smart. "Lenin said, 'the Russian soldiers won the war with their feet, by running away from it,' but I say the Russian peasants have won the collective farm battle with their bottoms, by sitting on them." Incidentally he also told me that 40% of the wheat harvest in Eastern Poland and a large part of the harvest in Roumania had been ruined by rust which had blown over from Russia. He was very emphatic that Russia could not export any grain this year and said he had just heard from friends that the Russian trade delegation in Greece had admitted that Russia would not export one shipload of wheat.)

When we said good night in Kiev, the Government guide said he was afraid my impressions were very bad as I had asked the peasants why they said they had very little bread. I told him that I had come to his country, not as a tourist, but to make a study of their agriculture, and that in order to make such a study it was very necessary that I should see good, bad and indifferent conditions; when peasants told me they were hungry what could be more natural than that I should ask why? I then added that I was pleased with the trip because I had seen that where the land was well cultivated they had a good crop, but I was dissatisfied because I felt that I had not been shown a representative picture. He assured me that the office had not told him what to show me; that he had planned the trip entirely by himself and that if I would stay another day he would take me to the other side of the Dnieper and show me farms which were not so good as the commune we had visited - the contrast would show me the great possibilities of good organisation and good management. They had made many mistakes in Russia and people who had been barbers or waiters in foreign countries had been brought here as industrial and agricultural specialists, but even they were better than many of their own people; he agreed with what I had said earlier in the day about their attempting to mechanize too rapidly; would I not agree with him that they were learning by their mistakes. I agreed to stay another day, but I did not see the farms he promised to show me.

Next day, June 22nd, I was taken to visit the Jewish National Kolhoz near Kiev. The president was a very cocky young communist who turned out to be much too inconsistent a liar and much too talkative for the comfort of my guide. The kolhoz had 180 families, 300 workers, 90 hectares all in vegetables, 185 cows (the best on the whole right side of the Ukraine; some gave 3,600 litres per year and one had given 32 litres in one day), and 100 pigs. When I was told that last year they paid 3 roubles per "worker day" and that the average income for the year was 900 roubles per worker, I expressed surprise and asked why they were allowed to make so much when other kolhozes made so little. The president said most of the members lived in town and they used

the money to pay for rent, light, clothes (only occasionally did they get co-operative tickets to buy clothes at fixed prices), etc. I asked what they paid the Government and he said that up to February last many of their products were contracted for, but now they sell them in the kolhoz bazaar and pay the Government a rent of 300 roubles per year instead. Later he told me that the members got their meals for 24 kopeks per day. I remarked that the farm seemed to be highly favoured and my interpreter said: "yes, of course it is, because it is populated entirely by Jews, and as a national minority they get many privileges," but the president said they had already paid the Government 3,000 roubles (he contended that my interpreter had made a mistake in saying 300 before) for rent this year and had subscribed 16,000 roubles to the latest Government loan, whereas their plan called for only 13,000. I argued that 3,000 roubles was nothing at all in view of their net income of 900 roubles per worker, as grain kolhozes had to give the Government from 25 to 30% of their gross production and therefore, if I were a member of a grain farm, I would leave and try to join a fine farm like his. He then told me that already in the month of June they had 1,500 applications for membership from peasants, but they had to refuse them all as they had taken in recently 100 Jewish speculators whom they were going to reform. Later when he told me they had sold 20,000 roubles worth of flowers to Moscow this year and had made 180,000 roubles out of tomato juice from over-ripe tomatoes last year, I said: "all you say goes to confirm my impression that you have a very fine agreement with the Government, and enjoy very many privileges." He replied that they had paid the Government 15,000 roubles as a tax in addition to 8,000 roubles rent. He admitted they were very well off, but it was because they worked hard and knew how to organize (on the way home my guide said they made so much money because they were speculating) whereas on several nearby vegetable farms the members were hungry because they did not know how to manage a collective farm. The difficulty with the grain collectives, he said, was that the Government's grain collecting plan was based on forecasting yields and when a farm did not sow as much as the plan called for, or if there was crop damage due to winter frosts, hail or drought, the Government still collected the full amount of the plan, and the peasants went hungry. He further volunteered the information that it was almost impossible to remain an individual peasant any longer, as the very high taxes were forcing the individuals into towns or the collectives. My guide, who had been getting increasingly nervous and restless because the young Jew had so much to say, spoke up and declared that what the president said was misleading as the real reason why so many individual peasants wanted to join the collectives just now was because the collectives were mecha-

nized and therefore more productive. I turned to the president and asked him why, in view of what my guide had said, there were only 63% of the peasants in collective farms in the Kiev oblast. He replied that the Government had no capital or machines left to equip collective farms, and that if they let the individual peasants into the existing collectives, they would immediately ask for bread, and because there was none for them they would make a row and cause trouble. What the Party wanted was peasants with livestock, not paupers. But my guide promised that by next year they would have 80% collectivisation, and 100% before the end of the second Five Year Plan. Being given further information by the president which indicated what a prosperous concern the farm was, I remarked that I had been all over Kiev and had seen practically no bread, milk, butter or meat for sale, but plenty of young vegetables and strawberries. I had therefore concluded that fruit and vegetable farms must be favoured by the Government at the expense of the grain and mixed farms. The president seemed to agree, but my guide would not. Later I was shown the farm's contract with the government and learned that whereas they had agreed to pay 135 roubles per hectare for the use of their land, the rent had been reduced to 97 because they had done such good work. The president explained that they practically lived on premiums and had just won a car and radio.

When we were leaving they asked for my impressions and I said it was a very fine farm, and that their cows were the best I had seen in Russia (the president said they produced from 8 to 9 litres per day on the average, as compared with only 3 to 5 on other collective farms), but taking the highest of the figures they had given me of their payments to the Government, they seemed to be very much favoured as compared with most of the farms I had been on, and that I was bound to say that I did not think the farm at all typical of the collectives in the Kiev district. My guide, who the night before had persuaded me to stay on an extra day to see representative farms, said if I would promise to stay a month in the Kiev oblast he would show me many farms as good and some much better. I asked about the one we had passed on the previous day where the peasants said they were hungry. The president of the Jewish kolhoz answered that he knew that district; the trouble was due to weak party discipline and kulak influence. He knew districts where party men had been shot recently by kulaks and in many districts the kulak influence was so strong that in some places kulaks were actually made presidents of collective farms.

I had intended going from Kiev to Odessa, but was persuaded by Narkomzem to visit the Dniepropetrovsk oblast first, where they said agricultural conditions were very good. I left Kiev early in the evening and arrived in Dniepropetrovsk late in the afternoon the next day of June

23rd. I got very little sleep during the night as at every station hundreds of peasants were fighting to get on to or into the roof, couplings and steps of the train.

I got up at dawn to watch the fields and all day was surprised to see so much good land which had obviously been in crop in recent years, now lying idle. The spring sown crops were everywhere very late and full of weeds, but all of good colour as the weather had been ideal. Where the land had been fairly well cultivated, the winter wheat was good to very good. A woman came into my compartment in the forenoon and whenever I would remark upon a field of good wheat we passed, she would say: yes, but there is very little of it. Every station we passed had its hundreds to thousands of miserable, hungry people and every train we passed was crowded inside and out with most unhappy-looking citizens. The same woman (her husband was in London and she worked in Batum) told me that she had waited four days for a ticket; that all the peasants around where she had been visiting were hungry; that the collective farms were cruel jokes; that black bread was 3 roubles per pound and white bread 24 roubles per kilo. I had not opened my food box since leaving Moscow and when I did I found my sandwiches were very bad, my butter rancid, and my loaf of white bread very mouldy. I threw the sandwiches out of the window and she asked me why I threw away food when I must be able to see that the thousands of miserable people we had passed all day were hungry. I agreed that they looked hungry, but I would not offer them putrid food. She said it did not matter. She took my very mouldy loaf, cut the mould off and gave the mouldy bits to the train conductor, and skimmed off the top of my rancid butter for him also; the rest of the bread and butter she kept for her two children and herself. She said she had tried to buy bread at four stations, but could not get any. I made some tea and asked the conductor to join us. He was as thin as a crow - he got only 60 roubles per month, 5 pounds of bread per day for his wife, 6 children and himself, 5 pounds of sugar per month, and nothing else. As we passed a very long train of cattle cars everyone of which was packed with people like sardines in a tin, I asked the woman why so many people were travelling back and forward. I got the answer I expected - they were all looking in vain for food. I spoke to some men and women who were riding on the steps of our car and they said they had left their kolhoz and were on their way to Rostov to look for work. As usual, all day I looked for cattle, but saw only fine grass going to waste.

As soon as I got my usual bron (G.P.U. or Government order) for a room I went to Insnab (restaurant for foreigners). By mistake I sat down at a big table with about 15 German specialists and watched them eating a fairly good dinner for only 1.8 roubles. Later I got a very much poorer

meal for 14 roubles.

In the evening I found the bazaar but it was already closed and all I saw was 3 poor hungry devils being arrested for stealing and many people being threatened with arrest for trying to sell after hours. While having a shoe shine a man came up and told me he worked in an office, was classed as a Third category worker, and got only 150 roubles per month and 200 grammes of black bread per day, absolutely nothing else except what he bought in the bazaar. He said he was glad he had no one dependent upon him, as he found it hard enough to get food for himself. Black bread was 6 roubles per kilo in the bazaar. He said second category workers in Dnepropetrovsk got 400 grammes of bread per day and first category workers (special type of factory workers) 800 grammes per day and 500 grammes of sugar per month. When I asked about meat, milk and butter he laughed and said all the cattle had been killed or died of starvation. Later while watching 35 men and women being herded down the street by six militiamen with drawn revolvers, I saw eggs being sold 10 for 6½ roubles, milk for 2 roubles per litre, and some skin and bones for 5 roubles per pound.

Next morning (June 24th) I called to see Narkomzem, but found the building closed as it was a free day. On the steps three komsomols (young communists) spoke to me. They asked me a lot of questions about prices in England and America and after examining my pen, pencil, watch, etc. they told me that they had many collective and state farms and tractors, but not much to eat (they could see the humorous side of it), that butter was 8 to 10 roubles per pound, and that there was no meat and very little bread; all because the peasants would not work. Later I got into the building by a back door and met the vice-president of Narkomzem. He phoned for over an hour to try and get a car but finally gave it up and promised to send one for me next morning. On the way back to my hotel I passed through a small bazaar where I saw bread for sale at 11 roubles per loaf, and very thin meat at 4 roubles per pound.

In the afternoon I went to the central bazaar. Wheat meal (offal left in) 150, millet 120 to 150, bran 50, middlings 70, and very poor oats at 50 roubles per pood, and many types of "meal" (similar to the enclosed samples) at fantastic prices. Butter was 8 roubles per pound, eggs 10 for 7 roubles, rice 2 roubles a very small glassful (about ½ cup) and bread 14 to 15 roubles per loaf. At the present official rate of exchange of 7 roubles to the pound sterling, wheat meal at 150 roubles per pood is equal to approximately 286 pounds sterling per quarter, yet during the first three or four months of last harvest season, Russia sold in England about one half of all the wheat she exported for from 20 to 25 shillings per quarter. I know it is ridiculous to translate roubles into pounds at the official rate of exchange. I only do it to show how ridiculous the rate

is and how stupid those people are who gather Russian five year plan rouble statistics and then return home to talk about phenomenal progress and the rapid rise in the real wages of Russian workers. But even taking the rouble at its purchasing power of 4 or 5 cents (or ½ to one tenth of its nominal value) the price of the wheat meal in the very heart of the Ukraine (where much wheat was confiscated last year for export) works out at from \$10 to \$12.50 per bushel of wheat or roughly from 20 to 25 times its present international value. If you bear in mind the low wages (even in paper roubles) of the Russian workers and the fact that they (especially the second and third category ones) get nothing like enough bread from the Government, and also keep in mind the great scarcity and fantastic prices of other food stuffs, you will have a good idea of some of the hardships the people in this country have to endure. As in practically every other bazaar I have been in, people gathered around to curse the Government, to say the peasants were too hungry to work and to sneer at the State and collective farms. On the way home I read, printed in English, on big red banners stretched across the entrance to the central park: "The World 'Spartakiad' is a militan holyday of the proletarian sportsmen of the world — holyday of the triumph of the successful fulfilment of the first Five Year Plan of the Soviet Union which is of international importance for the proletariat." (Note: Wrong spelling intentionally.) The following morning (they were expecting the English workers football team in the evening) I saw about 40 rag-clad hungry children (who make their living by begging) being herded down the main street by militia men.

On June 25th we visited farms. The first one was a co-operative sovhoz. It contained 700 people, 300 permanent workers, 300 cattle, 125 of which were milking and giving 8 litres per day (last year 80 out of 125 calves had died and this year only 3 out of 102 had died), 42 sows and 225 young pigs, 1,600 hectares of land (1,027 of which was suitable for cultivation) 880 in all grains, 168 winter wheat, 120 maize, 45 rye, 240 oats, and a large area of garden truck. The president explained that the root crops and garden stuff were full of weeds because they simply could not get enough workers, but on the previous day 85 shock workers from a factory in Dnepropetrovsk had weeded two hectares. They had 4 tractors and 120 (all extremely poor) horses. The president said they would easily fulfil their contract to deliver 900 tons of vegetables to the closed shops in Dnepropetrovsk and would sell the rest on the bazaar.

The next farm we visited was an artel called Shevchenko, after the famous Ukrainian poet. The farm had 267 families, 360 workers, 243 cows, 232 calves, 70 young cattle, 221 working horses and 21 young ones, 2,096 hectares, 1,740 in crops, 225 of winter wheat, 101 rye, 15

spring wheat, 148 maize for grain, 120 for ensilage and 72 for green feed, 806 potatoes and 20 in garden truck. The president said the cows (160 of them were not collectivised as they belonged to private members) were then giving 10 litres per day and that the average production per cow was 2,000 litres per year. Last year they had hail and got only 40 poods of winter wheat per hectare, but they expected 70 to 80 this year. Where the land had been well prepared the wheat was really quite good, but it would not average anything like the figure they quoted. They showed me, with great pride and joy, their enormous new concrete and brick stable. They took me first to the "cow kitchen" where units, consisting of three boxes each, moved in and out on a endless belt or sort of conveyor system, in front of the cows, on a track which was soon to be electrified. Each of the three boxes contained food; when the cow finished one course, but not until, the lid of the box containing the next course was automatically raised and the conveyor moved in front of her and so on. The next great sight was a most elaborate piece of mechanism in four parts; in compartment number one the dust was to be sucked off the cow by vacuum pumps, in compartment number two she was to get a warm and then cold shower bath, in number three she was to be dried and rubbed, and in compartment number four she must pass a doctor's examination before being allowed to go to the milking machines. I had a hard job keeping a straight face, especially when my Jewish interpreter (the manager of Intourist in Dniepropetrovsk) wanted to know if I did not agree that when Russian agriculture was thus fully mechanized, they would have surpassed America.

In the evening I overheard an interesting conversation between a German-American and a Russian-American in "Insab." The first said: "Why in hell do you give men important positions just because they are communists and then as soon as they gum up the works you kick them out and put a worse bunch of ignorant communists in their place. The foreign workers are the best friends the Russians have, yet they (the Russians) won't listen to them." The second said: "You remind me of the story about the British Ambassador who went to South America and when asked, on his return, what he thought of the people, he said they were an ignorant lot of swine because he had been there six months and they did not learn English." Later I spoke to them and the German-American (he had homesteaded twice in Western Canada) told me that he sat home at nights "and tried to think this here system out until he went plum bugs trying to dope out the inconsistencies." He had been out of work in the States so he paid his passage over here and got a job at 300 roubles a month instructing Russians how to operate and take care of locomotives. They had 10 big U.S. locomotives in the yards, recently imported, but all of them were now spoiled because the Russians were

all "norm crazy" and would not listen to him. They said they could not afford to wash out the locomotives every 1,000 kilometres, yet they were ruining them by not doing so. They insisted on using a mixture of anthracite and bituminous coal, although he had told them to send all the anthracite to the factories where it was sorely needed, to forget about their norms and to give the engines all the draft and soft coal they wanted. They saved coal by letting the steam pressure drop from 17 to 8 atmospheres when the train was running down a grade or on the level, then when it came to an upgrade the engine could not pull the train. The continual rapid contraction and expansion [*sic*], due to the sudden change of temperatures, were ruining the engines. When he first came they told him they could not afford to pay 200 roubles a month for an interpreter, but he discovered they were paying 468 roubles a month for his room so he raised particular hell with Moscow and finally they kicked out a lot of bureaucrats and put a lot of others in their place. My interpreter became very unhappy and said: "Why do you stay if you find so much to criticize? You are just trying to make money out of the country, whereas many foreigners come here and spend their own money to help Russia. I was a poor orphan boy only eight years old when the revolution started. My mother was very poor and as my father had been a worker, the Government educated me and now I have been sent here to open an office for Intourist." The German-American replied: "Like hell I am making money out of the country! Why I could not leave if I wanted to. I have been working very hard for 6 months, yet the Government won't give me a cent in foreign money to go to see my poor old mother who is dying in Berlin." The Russian-American told him he had nothing to grumble about; he said the grub in Insab was the best he had tasted in Russia and now he had to go to a rock-crushing plant 120 kilometres south where there was practically no food at all.

On the way home from the farm my guide (the chief agronom for the Dniepropetrovsk oblast) told me that the population of the city had doubled since the Revolution, having increased by more than 100,000 in the past two years, and was now nearly half a million. He also told me that between 4 and 5 next morning he would call for me to take me to a grain sovhoz. I got up next day (June 26th) at 4 a.m. and after fighting flies for five hours in my room went to Narkomzem to see what was the matter. I found them at a Party meeting. They 'phoned for a car and promised one would arrive in a few minutes. I waited until nearly 2 p.m. and then left for lunch. In the evening I met the vice-president of Narkomzem on his way home from a Party meeting. He was very surprised to hear that the agronom had not called to take me out to the country.

Next day (June 27th), having many unkind things to say to the



agronom, I went to get my interpreter. I found him very upset because he had received a letter from the director of Intourist calling him a bureaucrat. He said he would like to go back to his factory as there he could see what he produced, but if he asked to go back, the union would put him on the black list for being afraid of his present job. I took him with me, and being as angry as I was, he translated all the unkind things I said to the government agronom. The more I said, the whiter and more frightened the agronom became so that when at last he pressed me to take a document to Moscow saying that it was not his fault, I felt sorrow for him and said there was no use crying over spilt milk. He tried to persuade me to stay two more days, saying the president would get a car from the G.P.U. and take me to the country. But I told him I had promised to meet Dr. Schiller the next day in the Crimea. (I am very sorry now that I did not stay, as I learned on 11th July that Schiller stayed in a town near Dniepropetrovsk for a week waiting for me to answer his telegrams telling me to meet him in Odessa, and I stayed in Simferopol several days longer than necessary waiting for Schiller to answer my telegrams. Needless to say neither of us received each others telegrams.)

But to get on with my story about the agronom. He was so anxious to please me that he called in the heads of six departments and I had a five hour session with them. As usual I asked a lot of questions about the crops and socialist organisation, before coming to the always delicate subject of livestock population. They said that 90.6% of the land and 85% of the peasants in the oblast were collectivised; they had 92 machine- tractor stations; 3,800 collective farms containing 400,600 families; there were 4,300,000 people in the district and 553,600 families. The following figures which they supplied are interesting in that they show a decided planned shift from grain to technical and grass crops:

	Planned sown area in 1932	Planned sown area in 1937
(in thousands of hectares)		
Winter Wheat	1809	2150
Spring Wheat	592	128
Winter Rye	436	200
Barley	669	321
Oats	165	110
Millet	46	10
Maize	506	800
Peas and Beans	7.5	15

They told me they had just completed a special survey of the grain crops and that they expected an average yield of 11 centners per hectare as compared with 8.9 in 1913 and 9.5 in 1928; they expected 11.7 centners per hectare of winter wheat and rye with year as compared with 10.3 in 1913 and 10.5 in 1928; and for spring sown crops (wheat, oats, barley, maize, peas, etc.) they expected this year 10.2 compared with 7.5 in 1913, and 8.6 in 1928. They, of course, attributed the increased average expected yields to socialist organisation, good agricultural technique, etc. Last year they had 9.2 centners per hectare for eight grains. The figures for this year are ridiculous; I give them only to show what optimists the communists are. Next I came to the problem of livestock. To my surprise I got the following data, which I am sure are reliable because I copied them down from the president's tables:

	1931	1928	1913	1937 (planned)
(All figures in thousands of head and for the end of year)				
Horses	555	1301	951	614
All cattle	648	2163	949	1019
Milking Cows	389	937	451	840
All swine	354	1463	1346	2597
Sows	73	-	-	909
All sheep	261	1940	596	499
Breeding ewes	151	-	-	360
Rabbits	385	3	2	1386
Chickens	2115	2937	1960	25000
Bees (hives)	63	-	-	236

The above table illustrates very clearly the colossal price - in terms of one of the most valuable assets of the country, livestock - of the collectivisation of agriculture in the very heart of the Ukraine. The planned figures for 1937 illustrate the incurable optimism of the communists who, having caused terrific destruction in all branches of agriculture, are busy, also too often on paper only, with the "socialistic reconstruction of agriculture." Taking the figures for the end of 1928 to represent 100 per cent, the central oblast of the Ukraine (and I know of no reason to believe that it is not at least typical of the Ukraine as a whole; in all probability the Kiev oblast is much worse) lost in three years 57 per cent of the horses, 70 per cent of the cattle, 76 per cent of the pigs and 87 per cent of the sheep. It is doubtful if at the present moment the livestock population is appreciably greater than it was at the end of 1931, as the heavy losses during January to May of this year would certainly affect the greater part, if not all, of the gains due to the natural increase

of young stock in the spring. But so effective is the Russian propaganda that Mordecai Ezekiel, the assistant chief economist of the U.S. Federal Farm Board, in a formal paper at the last annual meeting (Dec. 1931) of the American Farm Economic Association, stated in part as follows: "Even with the smaller grain harvest, other foods may be more abundant in Russia this winter than last, for livestock of all kinds is increasing rapidly, and in many regions the production of fruit and vegetables for canning has been expanding rapidly. It was experiences such as this" (a few weeks in Russia as a tourist in the winter of 1930-31) "reflecting the increasing diversity of Russian agriculture, that made me feel that some day the food standards of Soviet Russia would be far above what they had been under the Czars." In a private letter recently to my friend Dr. Black (the head of the Department of Agricultural Economics at Harvard University and also the chief economist of the Farm Board), I mentioned that I did not think much of Ezekiel's analysis of Russian agriculture and got the reply that perhaps Ezekiel's zeal for reform had led him astray. I too believe in the need for many reforms but I do not like to see people like Ezekiel completely fooled by communist propaganda and guided tours, and my faith in one of my favourite papers is shaken when I read such comments as the following: "Every Liberal will be with Mr. Wells when he cries for a movement which can 'do for Liberalism what the Communist Party has done for the Communist idea in Russia. If the same faith and energy and devotion which the Communists have awakened for the Five Year Plan can be mobilized in this country to support the changes which Mr. H. G. Wells outlines it will be well with us" - from editorial in Manchester Guardian of August 1st, 1932.

At the present time they have 92 machine-tractor stations with 3,900 tractors (2,137 imported), but in 1933 they plan to have 144 machine-tractor stations with 5,400 tractors, and in 1937 21,500 tractors. They do not expect the tractors to last more than four years, as they work from 2,400 to 2,500 hours per year and the life of tractors in Russia is 10,000 to 12,000 working hours as compared with only 7,500 in the U.S. So far they had only 159 combines, but the number would be rapidly increased.

The area sown of the principal crops, for the 1932 harvest, in the oblast by "sectors" follows:-

	Sovhozes	Kolhozes	Individual peasants
(In thousands of hectares)			
Winter wheat	128	1600	88
Spring wheat	58	266	7

Winter rye	9	367	65
Oats	38	146	2
Maize	35	252	26
Peas	2	19	7
Potatoes	8	50	29
Sugar beets	5	11	

(Note; The manufacture and sale of sugar is a Government monopoly; collection prices (recently doubled) are very low so individual peasants will not plant.)

I left Dniepropetrovsk at 4 p.m. on June 27th for Simferopol, the capital of the Crimea. Watching the crops until it got dark I saw what I expected and what I had seen in all other parts of the Ukraine I visited - good winter wheat where the land was moderately well cultivated, all spring crops late and very weedy, much land recently in cultivation now idle, much good grass but no livestock, practically no hay made, virtually no summer fallow, and everywhere a magnificent crop of weeds.

Nearly all the people in my carriage were important government employees as they all seemed to have ticket books. A very cocky skilled worker opposite me pointed to a small group of cattle out of the window and said "those are collectivised." I agreed that they were probably collectivised, but said I had seen very few cattle all day. He said they had many cattle, but they were all in the communes and collectives away from the railroad, so I asked him why butter cost from 8 to 10 roubles per pound in the bazaar. He replied that butter was only 1 rouble per pound to him and when I asked him how much he got, he said his body was quite strong and the others laughed. He asked the price of my clothes and thought they were very expensive as he had paid only 30 roubles for his suit, 12 for his boots and only 2 for his underwear in the closed workers shops. I tried as best I could to explain to him that he might just as well try to tell me the people in the U.S. were all happy because Henry Ford had a lot of money, as to expect me to believe that the Russian people (especially the peasants who still made up about 70 per cent of the population, despite the feverish rate of urban population growth) were enjoying life just because a handful of skilled workers were comparatively well-to-do. He was too stupid to see the point but a high official of the central transport department sitting next to me could see it, but he would not agree with my next argument that in recent years the number and productivity of people producing food in Russia had been declining very rapidly (without as yet any appreciable measure of success in substituting machine production), that the number of people wanting to consume food had increased very rapidly and, therefore, that an even worse food crisis than the present one was

not only possible but probable, and that another drought would bring a serious famine. Later when he was telling me they must export grain this year to pay for machinery, I said that they could not expect their workers to work if they exported their food, and that I had heard that the miners in the Don Basin were working very badly because they were all hungry. To my surprise, he replied that what I said was only 50 per cent true. The skilled worker (who, a short time before, said he would give his shirt and pants to make Volgostroy the success that Dnieprostroy was) to my great surprise fully agreed with what I said and told the transport official that it was a big mistake to export food...<sup>14</sup>

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14 Ibid., 104-129

## SEED FROM STATE GRAIN RESERVE

**Sir Esmond Ovey to Sir John Simon**  
**27 February 1933**

...In a decree of the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars dated the 25th February it is now stated that in view of the loss of a part of the harvest in the steppe zone of the Ukraine and in the Kuban region of the North Caucasus owing to unfavourable climatic conditions, it has been found necessary to provide seed for those areas from the State grain reserve, to the amount of about 20 million poods for the Ukraine and about 15 million poods for the North Caucasus. These are, of course, the regions where the food situation is worst and where the most violent measures have been taken to secure the execution of the grain-collection plan. In spite of what the decree says, it would not appear to be the climatic conditions which played the decisive role in bringing these regions to their present sorry pass.<sup>15</sup>

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15 Ibid., 214.

## CONDITIONS AMONG POPULATION OF SOVIET UNION

### William Strang (Moscow) to Sir John Simon 9 April 1933

(4.) ...Letters have been addressed to the Embassy begging for England's help against the present regime. One of these, from the 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!"<sup>16</sup>

(8) ...Reports indicate that nowhere is the situation worse than in the 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.<sup>17</sup>

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16 Ibid., 224.

17 Ibid., 225.

## SITUATION IN SOVIET UNION

### William Strang (Moscow) to Sir John Simon 1 June 1933

(3.) ...Another caller, who appeared at the Embassy a week ago with a large portfolio full of documents, which he wished to deliver began abruptly by saying that the information he had to offer would be interesting to the Embassy in view of the deterioration of Anglo-Soviet relations. His materials related to the widespread famine which affected certain districts from which he had just returned, and regarding which the world was in utter ignorance. He was then told that the Embassy was not in the want of further information, and left with reluctance.<sup>18</sup>

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18 Ibid., 232.

## COMMENT BY SOVIET CITIZENS ON SITUATION IN SOVIET UNION

**To British Embassy, Moscow, to the Northern Department of the Foreign Office  
19 June 1933**

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, Our whole Soviet press comments at all times very truthfully, and in great detail, upon all circumstances of current Soviet life, but probably owing to lack of space has not mentioned certain small details of everyday life. For example it has not mentioned that in the Ukraine millions of the population have died from hunger. The population would be glad to eat carrion but there is none to be found. People are eating frogs. They are digging up horses that have died from glanders, and are also eating them and finally they have not only invented the method of killing and eating each other but also dig up dead bodies and eat them. These are all of course details, but in so far as history has not known such details they are worthy of some attention on the part of the decaying west, and of humanity in general. (*Unsigned*)<sup>19</sup>

## SOVIET AGRICULTURE

**William Strang (Moscow) to Sir John Simon  
4 July 1933**

(9.) An interesting commentary on the present tendency to stake the fate of the harvest on the success of the party's mission in the sphere of agriculture is provided by a speech of Postyshev at a session of the Central Committee of the Communist party of the Ukraine on the 10th June. Postyshev, who is supposed to be a close adherent of Stalin, was transferred from Moscow to the Ukraine last year, apparently to carry out reforms or reorganisation on the lines desired by the "Centre." His long speech of the 10th June is a review of his conclusions after a year's activity, moulded into an appropriately optimistic ideological form. Partly, perhaps, in a spirit of "self-criticism," he attributes the reverses suffered in the class war in the Ukraine during the last year to lack of alertness in the party, but it is probable that he adopts this line for the further reason that deficiencies in the party are held to be remediable, and it is by remedying them that eventual agricultural triumphs are presumed to be finally assured. Postyshev stated that it was the failings of the Ukrainian Communist party which had enabled "wrecking and counter-revolutionary elements to find the widest base for their activities in the Ukraine." He represented the whole Ukraine as having been honeycombed with wrecking organisations during the last year, and made numerous references to spies, "Petliurists," and "agents of foreign counter-intelligence services," whose "bourgeois nationalist activities" were most noticeable on the cultural front but were equally pernicious elsewhere. He alleged that separatist organisations existed in league with foreign capitalist circles, and stated that "the absence of Bolshevik watchfulness had led to the party organisation in the Ukraine showing themselves to be fouled with Petliurist, White Guard, spying and anti-Soviet elements." Several columns of such abuse in the published text of Postyshev's speech were merely a prelude to a more lengthy catalogue of the failings of the party in its agricultural mission. Postyshev gave a series of examples of deviations in the party line in guiding the course of last year's grain deliveries and in interpreting the Government's agricultural policy, which were, he implied, as responsible for the failures of the grain delivery plans as the wrecking which had jeopardised the success of the sowings. Some of the instances quoted by Postyshev showed "Left" tendencies - such as the instructions given in one area that the whole year's delivery plan should be completed in one month; other examples showed evidence of encouraging "the consumer

tendencies of collective farmers, which are used by the class enemy in his struggle against the interests of the proletarian State.” Postyshev’s speech concluded with an enumeration of the chief differences between this year’s grain campaign and the campaigns which have preceded it. In the first place there was the system of a fixed tax instead of contractual obligations; secondly, there was the influence of the newly-created political departments; thirdly, there was the increase of mechanisation in Ukrainian agriculture; fourthly, there was the increased interest of the collective farmer in concluding the agricultural year as soon as possible, since in accordance with the new system of grain deliveries he would then be free to dispose of his produce. The fifth peculiarity of this year’s grain campaign was, according to Postyshev, the fact that a decisive blow had now been dealt to the class enemy owing to the exposure of “a number of counter-revolutionary wrecking organisations.”<sup>20</sup>

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20 Ibid., 250-251.

## CONDITIONS IN THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

**William Strang (Moscow) to Sir John Simon  
17 July 1933**

Unauthorised estimates of the number of people who have died, either directly or indirectly, from malnutrition in the past year vary up to as much as the fantastic figure of 10 million. It is, I think, quite impossible to guess what the figure may be. I am told by a member of the German Embassy that in the German Agricultural Concession in the North Caucasus, five men have been employed in gathering and burying the corpses of peasants who have come in from outside this oasis of plenty in search of food and have died. One of the erectors employed by Metropolitan-Vickers in the Ukraine says that people died of starvation in the block of apartments in which he lived, one of them outside his door. He says that he refused to believe the stories he heard of conditions in the villages outside and walked out to see for himself; he found, as he had been told, that some villages were completely deserted, the population having died or fled, and that corpses were lying about the houses and streets. His Majesty’s consul in Moscow occasionally visited by Canadians of Russian origin settled in the Ukraine who tell him the same dreary, if less lurid, story of want, hopelessness and desolation.<sup>21</sup>

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21 Ibid., 255

## HARVEST IN THE UKRAINE

**William Strang (Moscow) to Sir John Simon  
15 August 1933**

1. ...I have the honour to report that the progress of the harvest in the Ukraine is being criticised in the press as most unsatisfactory. The plan of grain collections in July for individual and collective farms was only completed to the extent of 84.6 per cent., and, instead of there being any sign that this leeway was being made up in the first five-day period of August, the general rate of collections during this period still further declined, their average extent among collective farms in the Ukraine being only 12.5 per cent, of the August plan. The most backward district was Vinnitsa, where the collective farms only fulfilled 5.2 per cent, of the plan. The individual farms in the Ukraine are still more backward and grain deliveries in the first five- day period of August are stated to have amounted on an average to only 2.6 per cent, of the monthly plan. The progress of reaping in the Ukraine, apart from the further process of grain deliveries, is also criticised as backward. Somewhat more than half of the standing crops had been reaped by the 6th August, but the rate of reaping is reported to be gradually falling off.

2. The backwardness of grain deliveries in the Ukraine is strongly condemned in a recent decree of the Central Committee of the Ukraine Communist party, which compares the position in the Ukraine unfavourably with that in such districts as the Northern Caucasus, Middle and Lower Volga, and Crimea, where the July plan for grain deliveries was completed in full. The decree singles out the Odessa, Dniepropetrovsk and Vinnitsa districts as the most backward, and points out that in the latter district individual farms only fulfilled 1 per cent, of the August plan of grain deliveries during the first five days of August. The State farms in certain districts, it adds, namely, Vinnitsa, Kharkov and Donetz, have actually not yet started their grain deliveries, "while payments in kind for the work of machine-tractor stations have been practically nil." The Central Committee of the Ukraine Communist party reproaches the local party organisations and the political departments in the State farms and machine-tractor stations as responsible for the unsatisfactory course of the harvest in the Ukraine, and it warns these organisations that, if the situation is not quickly remedied, disciplinary measures will be applied to them. These threats are to apply in particular to the party committees and political departments in the Odessa, Dniepropetrovsk and Vinnitsa districts. Certain officials of particular State farms and local branches of the grain trusts are likewise

reprimanded and warned in the course of the same decree.

3. As reported in paragraph 2 of my despatch No. 401 of the 17th July, the final quotas of grain deliveries by Ukraine State farms are to be increased, in spite of the unsatisfactory progress of harvesting and grain collections in these farms, to which the official criticism reported in my present despatch bears witness. A further decree of the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of the party of the 10th August provides for similar increases in the quotas of grain to be provided by State farms in the central and eastern areas of the Union, and it would therefore appear that the Government have decided that, on the whole, conditions are favourable for a more than average harvest and that any deficiency in returns, at any rate on the part of State farms who are supposed to lack nothing in equipment and organisation necessary for a successful harvest, must be due to deliberate opposition to the Government's plans. There is as yet, however, no sign that the quotations for grain deliveries by individual and collective farms, which were based at the beginning of the year on the estimate of an average harvest, are to be increased. Indeed, a decree of the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of the Communist party issued on the 2nd August once more draws attention to the fact that "no counter-plans regarding grain deliveries can be permitted, and those guilty of permitting counter-plans will be prosecuted under the Criminal Code." This warning is probably largely directed against counter-plans below the plans fixed by the State, but it is also clearly intended to prohibit those in excess of the plans sanctioned by the Central Government. The specific purpose of the decree is to define the obligations which have to be met by collective farms before distributing the surplus produce to their members. It observes that "certain collective farms have already fulfilled their annual plan for deliveries of grain to the State" and it enumerates the following further obligations which have then to be fulfilled. These are the delivery of grain under the regulations for payment in kind to machine-tractor stations for work undertaken by them, the collection of excess funds for winter and spring sowing, the creation of insurance seed funds (amounting to 10-15 per cent, of the annual consumption of seed and the creation of forage funds to the amount of the annual consumption of forage by socialised cattle. Over and above such appropriations, states the decree, no further funds are to be created and the amount remaining is to be distributed in entirety between collective farmers "in accordance with the number of labour days worked by them."

4. In connexion with the perpetual warfare between the Central Government and Soviet grain producers, an article by Vyshinsky, entitled "The Prosecutor's Department and the Struggle for the Harvest,"

which appeared in the *Izvestiya* of the 3rd August is of some interest. Vyshinsky draws attention to the importance of the establishment of the Prosecutor's Department of the U.S.S.R. on the 21st June in the "struggle for the harvest," and observes that "the process of transforming collective farms into truly Bolshevik organisations" is meeting with "fierce opposition by the class enemy," who is now carrying on "an underground struggle" and is utilising all "legal methods." It is therefore the particular duty of the Prosecutor's Department "to tear off the mask" from the class enemy, and Vyshinsky admonishes the Prosecutor's Department and Soviet judicial authorities in general for the deficiencies in their work in this respect during the present harvest season. In the R.S.F.S.R., he says, "there are over 700,000 persons working in the departments of justice," and "this powerful army" must be drawn into the struggle for the protection of the harvest. Vyshinsky describes as two of the main dangers pilferage of grain and the tendency to postpone the threshing until August and September in face of strict instructions from the Central Government that it is to begin almost immediately after reaping. This tendency, he says, is being manifested in the Ukraine. In the struggle for the harvest the Procurator's Department must "co-ordinate their work more closely with that of the political departments, with the press, with the komsomol Tight cavalry,' with branches of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, with party control commissions, &c.," and Vyshinsky recommends the organisation of a regular military paraphernalia, including "signalling posts, control posts and supporting detachments."

...William Strang

### Minutes

A tremendous effort is being made to speed up the harvesting [.....]  
R. L. Speaight. 21/8.

## TOUR BY MR W DURANTY<sup>22</sup> IN NORTH CAUCASUS AND THE UKRAINE

**William Strang (Moscow) to Sir John Simon  
26 September 1933**

(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 the Ukraine by 4-5 million. Estimates that he had heard from other foreigners living in the Ukraine were that approximately half the population had moved either into towns or into more prosperous districts.<sup>23</sup>

(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 proportion 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 towns had died off like flies.<sup>24</sup>

(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.<sup>25</sup>

(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.<sup>26</sup>

22 Walter Duranty, journalist for the New York Times, notorious for being a Soviet apologist and for his articles denying that people were dying of starvation.

23 Carynnyk, Luciuk and Kordan, ed., *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, (Limestone, 1988), 310-311.

24 *Ibid.*, 310-311.

25 *Ibid.*, 312-313.

26 *Ibid.*, 313.



## NOTES

TOUR OF UKRAINE  
BY MR WILLIAM HENRY CHAMBERLIN<sup>27</sup>

**William Strang (Moscow) to Sir John Simon  
14 October 1933**

(7) In the Ukraine he [Chamberlin] had the impression that the population could find nothing better to do than to die as a protest.<sup>28</sup>

## FAMINE CONDITIONS IN THE SOVIET UNION

**Foreign Office notes of Laurence Collier for a reply to a Parliamentary Question made by Sir Waldron Smithers  
30 June 1934**

The truth of the matter is, of course, that we have a certain amount of information about famine conditions... and there is no obligation on us to make it public. We do not want to make it public, however, because the Soviet Government would resent it and our relations with them would be prejudiced.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, deemed in Foreign Office comments at the end of the report to have the reputation of being somewhat pro-Soviet, but much less so than W. Duranty.

<sup>28</sup> Carynnyk, Luciuk and Kordan, ed., *The Foreign Office and the Famine*, (Limestone, 1988), 334.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

## FAMINE CONDITIONS IN THE SOVIET UNION

**Notes by J.M.K. Vyvyan for a Reply to Lord Charnwood in the House of Lords, 25 July 1934**

Parliamentary Question

The Lord Charnwood - To call attention to information circulated in this country upon apparently good authority according to which the systematic policy of the Russian Government has recently caused widespread starvation among the population of grain producing areas in Russia, and is likely to do so this year through the measures taken for the rapid introduction of collectivist cultivation and the enforcement of a law transferring property in the produce of agriculture to the State, and through the removal by the Government of grain for purposes of exportation, and for the supply of the Army, without regard to the needs of subsistence of the cultivators of the grain; To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have information which tends to confute this allegation against the Russian Government; and to move for Papers.

17 July 1934

I understand from an informant, Mr. Muggerridge, whom Lord Charnwood is seeing next week in order to acquire further material for use in putting his motion, that the motion is the result of information supplied by Dr. Amende, a representative of the [I]nterdenominational Relief Association at Geneva, who is conducting an anti-Soviet campaign in this country.

The motion tends to put His Majesty's Government in the position of either defending the internal policy of the Soviet Government, which we have no reasons for doing, or making unfavourable statements about conditions in the Soviet Union which are also open to objection, however richly they are deserved. It therefore seems desirable, in replying to Lord Charnwood to indicate, if possible, that it is not His Majesty's Government's business to comment on the internal affairs of another country, and that the information at their disposal is not accumulated for this purpose, so that there are no papers suitable for laying. (Sir W. Smithers was informed in reply to a question in the House of Commons on July 2 that there was no suitable information on similar points.)

It is of course possible to criticise Lord Charnwood's judgments

of cause and effect in Soviet policy and conditions, but it may be felt that to do so would be gratuitously making out a case for the Soviet Government,

and it seems preferable to deal with the facts behind Lord Charnwood's arguments as little as possible. The measures and laws to which he refers are not very well chosen, e.g. the "rapid introduction of collectivist cultivation" is now an event of three to four years ago, and by the "law transferring the produce of agriculture to the State," he seems to be referring to a law of August, 1932, making collective farm property count as State property and to various other legislation emphasising the State's interest both in the production and disposal of

agricultural produce which have no direct bearing on the creation of famine. Nevertheless it is true that (1) the policy of the Soviet Government has for some time past had a deplorable effect on conditions in the agricultural part of the Soviet Union by dislocating the former system of production and (2) grain has been collected for export from the Soviet Union when starvation existed in grain producing areas, and there seems no reason for implying a denial of these facts.

I submit a list of points that might be used in dealing with Lord Charnwood's motion.

M. Vyvyan  
6/7

Mr. Vyvyan's notes should prove useful for dealing with specific points in Lord Charnwood's speech.

The main facts, however, cannot be disputed - that there has been general, and forcible, "collectivisation," and that there is now a condition of acute distress, amounting practically to famine in many cases, in the chief grain-growing regions of the Soviet Union. Lord Charnwood can judge for himself whether these two facts are cause and effect.

L. Collier  
July 6th

I certainly think that we sd. walk delicately - especially at the present moment after M. Maiski's talk with Sir R. Vansittart etc. I agree in the notes.

L. O.  
7 July

The moment wd. be ill-chosen for giving offence in Russia. But in no case wd. it do for HMG to appear to palliate Soviet policy and its disastrous consequences in this respect. The least said the soonest mended; but what is said must be in accordance with the facts. Mr.

Vyvyan's notes appear to provide as good material as is possible in these delicate circumstances.

R  
July 8

I hope that Lord S will avoid anything which palliates without real justification. I agree that the passage noted by Sir R. Vansittart should not be used; my inference is that the dictators of Moscow have starved the country districts for ulterior purposes. There are passages in Moscow in Winter - apparently a sober account & well worth reading - which imply this. 102 Lord Charnwood will presumably base his case partly on this book. I like the reply that we have no independent information to contradict such allegations.

[illeg.] July 16

#### Note of points for use in reply to Lord Charnwood

1. It is not His Majesty's Government's business to enter into controversy on the subject of the internal affairs of foreign countries; their information is not collected for this purpose and there are, therefore, no papers suitable for laying which bear on Lord Charnwood's arguments on the subject of living conditions and food supplies in the Soviet Union.

2. His Majesty's Government are familiar with the information published about food supplies and conditions in the agricultural districts of the Soviet Union which have doubtless given rise to Lord Charnwood's question. As regards matters of fact, His Majesty's Government have no material for contradicting this information except what has been published through Soviet official sources which is generally available and upon which people can form their own opinions.

3. If it is unavoidable to enter into the substance of Lord Charnwood's allegations, it might be pointed out that apart from facts, Lord Charnwood has made judgments of cause and effect. His Majesty's Government have no reasons to defend Soviet economic policy, which, as a policy of control and planning, is presumably more responsible than any other Government's policy for conditions in the country in which it is practised, whatever people's judgment of those conditions may be. But there is no information to support Lord Charnwood's apparent suggestion that the Soviet Government have pursued a policy of deliberate impoverishment of agricultural districts of their country, whether or not their policy is considered to have had that effect.

4. The diversion of supplies from the countryside for whatever purpose naturally leaves less available for the producers, but His

Majesty's Government have no information to bear out the argument of Lord Charnwood in which he emphasised the effect of particular measures in this respect.

i. The period of especially rapid collectivisation to which Lord Charnwood refers was some three or four years ago. If it is considered that collectivisation was responsible for the conditions which Lord Charnwood deploras, it would be rather the continued system of collectivisation (which His Majesty's Government have no cause to defend) than the process, which would cause impoverishment at present.

ii. As regards various legislation increasing State control of the production and distribution of agricultural produce, (not merely one law is involved), no recent legislation appears to be responsible for any change

of policy or practice in this respect which could affect the situation in the present year.

iii. As regards diversion of grain from the producer in the specific directions mentioned by Lord Charnwood, the Soviet army is a large one and naturally has vast requirements. There is no information, however, to show that requirements are particularly great this year and will have a correspondingly more serious effect on the amount of grain available for agricultural districts.

iv. As regards grain exports, shipments during the present quarter of this year showed a slight increase over those of 1933, but were far less than in corresponding quarters of 1932 and 1931. Grain shipments have, in general, declined during the last two years[ .... ]<sup>30</sup>

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**In the early 1930s Joseph Stalin weaponised food to starve millions of Ukrainians to death deliberately and systematically. This atrocity is known as the Holodomor, meaning “death by hunger”. Some of the survivors of the Holodomor settled in the UK after the war and their experiences are being published here for the first time, supported by excerpts of documents of the Foreign Office from that terrible period and how the British Government at the time recorded and dealt with what it was hearing. The book includes details of local authorities in the UK that have recognised the Holodomor as genocide and locations of Holodomor memorials in the UK.**



Association of Ukrainians  
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