

# How Russia and Ukraine remember the famine of 1932-33

*A study on challenges for Russian and Ukrainian views on  
Holodomor*

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# Master's thesis in Russian area studies

How Russia and Ukraine remember the famine of 1932-33. A study on challenges for Russian and Ukrainian views on Holodomor.

Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages.

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To Jan.

## Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to present an analysis on how the “red famine” (Applebaum 2018) that occurred in Soviet Ukraine between 1932 and 1933 is discussed in Russia and Ukraine. Both countries, rewriting history after the collapse of the Soviet Union, have not yet reached an agreement on what took place during those years. Ukraine was not the only country struck by the famine. Other areas of the Soviet Union, especially in Russia and in Kazakhstan, were hit by the tragic event. Many people starved to death and many others struggled to stay alive.

Even though Ukrainian and Russian accounts of the event can often be surprisingly similar, some discrepancies on the interpretation of the cause of the famine, can nevertheless lead discussions into completely different territories and kickstart fiery debates.

In Russia the famine is simply remembered as “голод” which means “famine”, while Ukraine has coined a more specific term which includes the nature and the cause of the famine. “Holodomor” which means “to kill people by starvation”. Furthermore, many Ukrainians claim that Holodomor is “геноцид” (genocide), a fully planned act of mass murder on ethnic Ukrainians. Most Russian and Ukrainian experts agree that the famine was man-made, but they are still divided on whether it was caused intentionally, or as a result of a chain of unfortunate events caused by Stalin’s failed collectivization and his total disregard for human life.

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# 1. Introduction

In 2013 at the Valdai forum, President Vladimir Putin referring to Russians and Ukrainians claimed that: “We have a common tradition, a common mentality, a common history, a common culture. We have very similar languages. In this sense, I want to repeat once again, we are one people”.<sup>1</sup> Yet disagreements on the interpretation of several historical events between Russia and Ukraine are causing a “war of memories”<sup>2</sup> between the two nations. The heritage of Kievan Rus and Hetman Mazepa are among such events, but Holodomor is perhaps the most crucial because it has been internationalized.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis will primarily discuss the following question: ***What is the Russian discourse on Holodomor and how do Russian academics, activists and the general public react to the Ukrainian discourse on Holodomor ?***

Arguing that several aspects of one historical event can be interpreted radically differently in the two countries, the question aims at presenting how significant these views are in the debate of the event. In order to clarify this, chapter 2 of this thesis lays out a presentation of the secondary and primary sources that I have been collecting and analyzing since spring 2019. Chapter 3 contains an explanation on the methodology and theory, and the methods I used to gather material for the thesis. Secondary and primary (mostly Russian) sources, books, articles, in-depth interviews with experts and brief conversations with Russian and Ukrainian non-students.

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<sup>1</sup> “У нас общая традиция, общая ментальность, общая история, общая культура. У нас очень близкие языки. В этом смысле, я еще раз хочу повторить, мой один народ”. Kremlin.ru, 2013. ‘Заседание международного дискуссионного клуба «Валдай»’. <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243>

<sup>2</sup> Kappeler, A. 2014. ‘Ukraine and Russia: Legacies of the Imperial past and Competing Memories’. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1016/j.euras.2014.05.005>

<sup>3</sup> Kappeler, A. 2014. ‘Ukraine and Russia: Legacies of the Imperial past and Competing Memories’. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1016/j.euras.2014.05.005>

This chapter also includes a description of three theories I resorted to and applied to the analysis of the discussion of the tragedy: “Trauma”, “Myths” and “History politics”. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the actual famine of 1932-33, its scope and prehistory, while chapter 5 introduces the discussion on how “famine” became “Holodomor”, an etymology of Holodomor. This in order to pinpoint several crucial terms and expressions related to the famine that are among the most debated issues of disagreements and agreements on the topic.

An analysis of the political usage of Holodomor in Russia and Ukraine will then follow. In order to demonstrate how divisive the issue has become, I have included how Presidents and other political actors responded to how the Holodomor term was forged, its role in Western literature and in the shifting political interpretations of the famine. In chapter 7 I discuss how Holodomor is interpreted in Ukrainian historiography, while chapter 8 introduces their Russian counterparts and how they relate to the Ukrainians’ versions of. I then conclude the thesis with chapter 9, summarizing all finds, hoping that these will constitute a useful proposition to anyone interested in further studies on the topic.

## 2. Literature review

For the writing of the thesis, I resorted to primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are mostly in Russian language and comprise books, interviews (some in English language) and internet websites. The secondary sources are based primarily on books, articles and journals written and published in the West.

In 2017, Anne Applebaum, who “...has been active as a political commentator highly critical of Russia and Putin’s regime”<sup>4</sup> published a 367-page book titled *Red Famine*.

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<sup>4</sup> Fitzpatrick, S. 25 Aug 2017. ‘Red Famine by Anne Applebaum review – did Stalin deliberately let Ukraine

*Stalin's War on Ukraine*. The book leaves the reader with no doubt as to the causes of the famine. It makes it perfectly clear that the famine was not caused by adverse climatic conditions. It is also a very well researched book as The New York Times describes on the blurb of the Penguin Edition. Applebaum is respectful of Robert Conquest's research method as Fitzpatrick notes, but of course with more material at her disposal. She did not call the book Holodomor and: "Though sympathetic to the sentiments behind it, she ultimately doesn't buy the Ukrainian argument that Holodomor was an act of genocide".<sup>5</sup>

One can surely wonder whether *Red* is perhaps an indication of who or what the perpetrator was. Not just Stalin, but the Soviet Communist party, and to some extent communism too. The color Red is in fact often associated with communism, but also with blood. References to blood are also found in the title of the book *Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (2011) by Timothy Snyder which is also one of my secondary sources together with *Stalin* (2015) by Oleg V. Khlevniuk.

The edition of Applebaum's book which I have read, portrays a knife on an empty bowl on the cover. The knife is laid on the bowl as if it was a spoon. To feed the missing food in an empty bowl with a knife, leaves very little doubt as to whether the famine was an accident or an intentional act of mass murder. The book focuses entirely on the famine in Ukraine, ignoring the other Soviet republics. It starts from the Ukrainian revolution of 1917 moving onto the famine of 1920 and through collectivization. It continues with the actual famine of 1932-33 and its causes and ends with the politicization of the famine, discussing the differences between Ukrainian and Russian understandings.

Snyder's book examines a much broader topic than Applebaum's. "In the book, Snyder examines the political, cultural and ideological context tied to a specific region

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starve?'<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/aug/25/red-famine-stalins-war-on-ukraine-anne-applebaum-review>

<sup>5</sup> Fitzpatrick, S. 25 Aug 2017. 'Red Famine by Anne Applebaum review – did Stalin deliberately let Ukraine

starve?'<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/aug/25/red-famine-stalins-war-on-ukraine-anne-applebaum-review>



of Central and Eastern Europe, where Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union and Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany committed mass killings of an estimated 14 million noncombatants between 1933 and 1945, the majority outside the death camps of the Holocaust. Snyder's thesis is that the bloodlands, a region that is now Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), northeastern Romania, and the westernmost fringes of Russia, is the area that the regimes of Stalin and Hitler, despite their conflicting goals, interacted to increase suffering and bloodshed many times worse than any seen in western history".<sup>6</sup>

Snyder has far less focus on the Ukrainian famine of 1932-33. Only chapter one (21-58) discusses the "Soviet Famines" where most of the attention is dedicated to Ukraine. But it also received stark and direct critique by Grover Furr, the author of *Blood Lies. The Evidence that Every Accusation Against Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union in Timothy Snyder's Bloodlands Is False* (2014).

Furr is an American professor of Medieval English literature at Monclair State University. The first two chapters of his book (41-118), are entirely reserved to the Ukrainian famine of 1932-33 where Furr attempts to prove that Snyder lacks research but nonetheless tries to promote a view on history that contradicts all the evidence of the best scholars. Furr's book proved to be interesting and worth mentioning during the writing of my thesis. Perhaps not as a particularly engaging secondary source, but more as a possible generator of extra information.

Writing my thesis, I also found a formidable asset in Oleg V. Khlevniuk's *Stalin. New Biography of a Dictator* (2015). Andrea Graziosi, a renowned expert on Stalinism and the Soviet Famines, describes Khlevniuk as "...incontestably the best Russian student of Soviet history...One leaves this book with a much more profound understanding of

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<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia. 'Bloodlands'. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloodlands>

*Europe's darkest decades*".<sup>7</sup> I found Chapter 3, *His Revolution* (100-149) particularly useful. The parts devoted to Stalin's war on the peasants and the famine proved to be an asset in writing my thesis. I also found *Stalin's Russia* (1993) by Chris Ward especially valuable. This is an older book published right after *perestroika* when western authors were eager to search ex-Soviet archives for the first time. Chapter 2, *Collectivization* (39-72) is where I focused the most for collecting information. Very useful and well descriptive information on the famine from a Western point of view, I retrieved from Robert W. Davies' and Stephen G. Wheatcroft's book *The Years of the Hunger* (2004-2009). I analysed chapter 6 (137-230), on grain collections from the harvest of 1932, mostly for comparison between their version and the above-mentioned authors' versions.

*Making Sense of Suffering. Holocaust and Holodomor in Ukrainian and Historical Culture* (2006) of Johan Dietsch, has provided me with formidable details on the history of the narrative on Holodomor. Chapter 4 (111-147) and 7 (198-226) were the parts I made most use of. In spring 2019 I contacted the expert on the famine, professor Andrea Graziosi. Graziosi sent me two of his articles on the famines in the USSR and China.<sup>8</sup> I found these very useful for getting acquainted with the topic.

While gathering and analyzing the secondary sources, I started to look for primary sources. At times, by looking at the secondary sources' reference list and at times by asking professors or by running searches on the internet. Primary sources introduced me to literature on the famine that extends beyond Western writers. Among them, I found particularly useful and worth mentioning here, the work in Russian language of

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<sup>7</sup> Khlevniuk, O. 2015, cover

<sup>8</sup> Graziosi, A. Summer 2017. 'Political Famine in the USSR and China'.

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/668158>

Graziosi, A. 2004-2005. 'The Soviet 1931-1933 Famines and the Ukrainian Holodomor: Is a New Interpretation Possible, and What Would Its Consequences Be?'

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/41036863?casa\\_token=6ZtlU9pRqCoAAAAA:qHhn\\_9OqGhAd5ikEMGfdaT849f21xkzMyhkyKb4yYWU9xD90GGXCyRDuAo1tNSLbs0QqwUt6QWHom1z4zZ7mVtK12rCfrhacn8T5s84!OpNy3eyDnV8&seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/41036863?casa_token=6ZtlU9pRqCoAAAAA:qHhn_9OqGhAd5ikEMGfdaT849f21xkzMyhkyKb4yYWU9xD90GGXCyRDuAo1tNSLbs0QqwUt6QWHom1z4zZ7mVtK12rCfrhacn8T5s84!OpNy3eyDnV8&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

Stanislav Kulchytsky “Why did Stalin exterminate us? Stalin and the Ukrainian Holodomor” (Почему он нас уничтожил? Сталин и украинский голодомор)<sup>9</sup> and Viktor Kondrashin’s ‘Famine in the Russian Federation’ (Голод 1932 – 1933 гг. в Российской Федерации)<sup>10</sup> and one of his books, *The Famine of 1932-33: The Tragedy of the Russian Countryside* (Голод 1932-1933 годов: Трагедия Российской Деревни) (2008). Furthermore, it has been remarkably helpful to consult the following Russian books: *The “Holodomor” Myth* (Мифология “голодомора”) (2013)<sup>11</sup>, *Hysterical Women of Holodomor* (Кликуши Голодомора) (2009)<sup>12</sup> and *Holodomor in Russia* (Голодомор на Руси) (2008)<sup>13</sup>.

These books introduced me to views that according to my research, are shared by a large percentage of the Russian public opinion. They also proved to be valuable references for comparison with other Russian literature that I have been gathering and analyzing over the course of my extensive internet searches, especially while looking for possible discrepancies and different opinions in the Russian discourse on Holodomor. I also consulted Georgii Kasianov’s book *Ukraine and Neighbors : Political History* (Историческая Политика) (2019)<sup>14</sup> that helped me broaden my knowledge of the politicization of the famine in Ukraine’s politics. *Holodomor’s Territory and Nationalization* (Территория Голодомора- Национализация) are the two chapters that contributed the most to my thesis. Over the course of this research I also happened to briefly consult several books in Russian language that do not appear in the literature list.

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<sup>9</sup> Кульчицкий, С. 2007. ‘Почему он нас уничтожил? Сталин и украинский голодомор’. <https://www.libfox.ru/373431-2-stanislav-kulchitskiy-pochemu-on-nas-unichtozhal-stalin-i-ukrainskiy-golodomor.html#book>

<sup>10</sup> Кондрашин, В. 2010. *Голод 1932 – 1933 гг. в Российской Федерации (РСФСР)*. Журнал российских и восточноевропейских исторических исследований. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/golod-1932-1933-gg-v-rossiyskoy-federatsii-rsfsr>

<sup>11</sup> Прудникова, Е; Чигирин, И. 2013

<sup>12</sup> Мухин, Ю. 2009

<sup>13</sup> Миронин, С. 2008

<sup>14</sup> Касьянов, Г. 2019

### 3. Methodology and theory

Among non-Holodomor related literature, in order to write this chapter on methodology and theory, I analyzed Pål Kolstø's *Myths and Boundaries in South Eastern Europe* (2005). Chapter 1 (1-34) proved to be very practical in applying the phenomenon of "Myths" while discussing Holodomor and its interpretations. So, did the theme of "Trauma" discussed by Aleida Assmann in *Shadows of Trauma, Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity* (2016). Chapter 2 (45-94) was the area that interested me the most. Furthermore, continuing to clarify the research question, I found very useful material in Alexey Miller's internet articles on "History politics", especially 'The Ruinous Consequence of History Politics for the Country and Its Relations with Neighbors' (07 July 2010)<sup>15</sup> and 'The Labyrinths of Historical Policy' (22 June 2011)<sup>16</sup>. When it comes to other secondary sources, I was also given several articles by professor Pål Kolstø, professor Alexey Miller and Artemii Plekhanov. Furthermore, I conducted a series of in-depth interviews in both countries. I had the chance to interview activists, museum guides and professors. Between 1 and 4 November 2019 I conducted three different interviews in Kiev, the first with renowned historian and expert on Holodomor, Professor Stanislav Kulchytsky. This was followed by an interview prior to my tour of the Holodomor museum in Kiev with a guide who wished to maintain full anonymity. In the thesis, I will just refer to the guide as "Ljana". The last three interviews were with: Igor Yakubovskiy-deputy director of the Holodomor Research Institute, Nina Lapchinskaya, deputy director and director of the Holodomor Institute and professor and doctor of historical sciences Victor Brekhunenko. I got in touch with Igor Yakubovskiy through a brochure I found in the Holodomor museum. When it comes to Russian primary sources, I mostly utilized Yandex.ru and at times google.com, entering the research phrases/words in Russian language. I also carried out in-depth interviews in Russia. In the summer of 2019, I emailed Professor Alexey Miller, a researcher at the Institute of

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<sup>15</sup> Miller, A. 07 July 2010. 'The Ruinous Consequence of History Politics for the Country and Its Relations with Neighbors'. Russia in Global Affairs. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russia-politics-and-history/>

<sup>16</sup> Miller, A. 22 June 2011. 'The Labyrinths of Historical Policy'. Russia in Global Affairs. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/The-Labyrinths-of-Historical-Policy-15240>

Scientific Information for Social Sciences at the Russian Academy of Science and professor at Central European University in Budapest, whose recent work on “History memory” has drawn the attention of academics both in the West and in the East. He kindly replied and I was invited to meet him and join a 2 day conference at the European University of Saint Petersburg (11 and 12 November). The conference was followed on 13 November by a lecture given by professor Kasianov which I was invited to attend. At the conference I had the privilege to meet and talk to Artemii Plekhanov too, a young anthropologist working at Institute of Ethnology and Anthroposophy RAN of Moscow. Both Miller and Plekhanov were also recommended to me by professor Pål Kolstø at the University of Oslo.

In January 2020 I visited Kiev a second time for a direct talk with Georgii Kasianov of the Institute of History of Ukraine. Again, I paid a visit to the Holodomor museum and talked to a different guide.

Kasianov, Kulchytsky’s ex-pupil, is author of several articles and books on the politicization of Holodomor. At the St. Petersburg conference he introduced his latest book “Ukraine and neighbors. History Politics 1987-2018” (2019). In spring 2019 I got in touch with Viktor Kondrashin, perhaps the most renowned Russian researcher on the famine. I asked Professor Kondrashin whether we could meet to discuss the famine in October/November 2019. Professor Kondrashin was unfortunately not available. In the beginning of 2020, I also opened a discussion on a Ukrainian/Norwegian, a Ukrainian/Italian and a Russian/Italian Facebook page where I asked a few questions on Holodomor. No direct commentary or name from the discussion will be cited in the thesis. Over the course of the writing of this thesis, I also talked to ex-Soviet citizens I met in public places whenever the chance presented itself.

### 3.1 Application of theory

To clarify the research question, I discuss different theories. I argue that when explaining why the topic of Holodomor is highly debated, especially on a political level, three theories can be used to explain the disputed nature of Holodomor: “Trauma”, “Mythologization”, and “History politics”. These theories are not specific to the study of Holodomor. They can be and are used also elsewhere in relation to other contentious memories around the world. I analyze the notion of “Trauma” discussed by Aleida Assmann given the traumatic nature of Holodomor’s contended memory. Continuing onto “Mythologization” which, according to what emerged through my recent research, often appears in Russian historical discourse on Holodomor. I discuss “Mythologization” drawing from a book edited by Pål Kolstø on myths in South-Eastern Europe. Finally, I present “History politics” the way it has been recently discussed by Russian historian Alexey Miller.

### 3.2 Trauma

Aleida Assmann, a professor of English and Literary Studies at the University of Konstanz from 1993 to 2014, has since the 1990s been focusing on cultural anthropology, especially Cultural and Communicative Memory, two terms that she, together with her husband, coined and developed. Her work specifically focuses on the history of German memory since 1945, the role of generations in literature and society, and theories of memory.<sup>17</sup> In her book *Shadows of Trauma* (2016), she discusses the issue of “collective memories and trauma”. How to come to terms with the past, overcoming painful memories for the sake of a nation’s future, is a challenging question that constantly recurs between countries around the world regardless of their political system. Assmann argues that this question arises fundamentally from the relation between history and memory. The two main components of the past. According to

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<sup>17</sup> Wikipedia. ‘Aleida Assmann’. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleida\\_Assmann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleida_Assmann)

Assmann, “the past”, unlike we once imagined it as fixed and closed, is constantly changing and the future is heavily determined by it.<sup>18</sup> New constructions of the past arise all the time, changing the course of not only history, but of politics too.

“The past is not safely locked up in history books and stowed away in libraries but continually reclaimed as an important resource for power and identity politics. History is not only what comes *after* politics; it has also become the stuff and fuel of politics. This paradigmatic change alerts us to the entangled relationship between history and memory”.<sup>19</sup>

In her article “Transformation between History and Memory” (2008), Assmann argues that the relation between history and memory has itself a history that has evolved over time passing through three stages:

1. the identity between history and memory,
2. the polarization between history and memory,
3. the interaction between history and memory.

The first stage, marked by the *identity of history and memory*, sees the writing of history as a necessary tool to preserve a memory, a stage where history and memory were not clearly distinguished. History had the task to preserve the memory of institutions (dynasties, the church etc.) in order to legitimize them and ensure that these would live on and be provided with an honorable past. This way of writing history was adapted to the demands of the present. It justified and legitimized the authorities and controlled the future. Assmann argues that the link between history and memory shaped the past in a specific way, with it the selection of individuals and events to be memorized, a specific power that was itself legitimated, confirmed, justified and that enforced a collective identity, a reference for the identity between history and memory.

The second phase is what she calls *polarization between memory and history*, a

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<sup>18</sup> Assmann, A. Spring 2008. ‘Transformation Between History and Memory’  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/527984/pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Assmann, A. Spring 2008. ‘Transformation Between History and Memory’  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/527984/pdf>

process that began with Greek historiography and its intellectual and institutional evolution. This phase was characterized by a struggle for power between critical historiography and the authority's truth. Critical historiography questioned the truth of authority, declaring the new authority of historical truth as the unquestionable truth. In this period, Renaissance humanists employed their scholarship to challenge the power of institutions and traditions by exposing certain documents as forgery. Professional historiography was established as a discipline in universities in the nineteenth century. At this point, a systematic differentiation between memory (embodied by specific groups) and history (the universal memory of humanity) arose, defining its own principles of truth telling. History could for the first time constitute a problem for the collective memory construction of the nation and therefore, the social function of memory arose as a necessary mode of assessing the past.

After the period of polarization that helped memory and history become complementary elements to each other, a third phase, what Assmann describes as *interaction between memory and history*, was triggered by the political changes of the 1980s and 1990s. This was especially due to the opening of the archives and the thawing of frozen memories. Memory and history were suddenly projected into the public arena and the experience of living memories that were previously neglected, made pertinently clear that what had been presented as objective history, turned out to have been a construction of political memory. This period is characterized not only by the reconstruction of the events in the past and the reason why they took place, but also by the reconstruction of the symbolic practices with which events of the past were collectively remembered and experienced. Subsequently, an interest in modes of remembering as a form of social practice was triggered in historians and a new branch of historiography was developed, *Mnemohistory*.

“Mnemohistory is interested in the constructive as well as the distorting effects of memory; it takes into account the ambivalence of the past both as a conscious choice and as an unconscious burden tracking the involuntary paths of memory. While the task of traditional historical scholarship consists in separating memory (the mythical



elements) from history (the factual truth), it is the task of mnemohistory to analyze the mythical elements in tradition and discover their hidden agenda".<sup>20</sup>

Historians started to ask themselves about what is known of the past in the present, while analyzing the symbolic practices of their contemporary culture. They assumed an intellectual and ethical function with the task of filling in the lacunae of national memory. The main purpose of the historians' work became that of subverting the strategies of political power concentrating on what is forgotten with the creation of counter memories. The reason for this, Assmann argues, is that not only in totalitarian but in democratic nations too, there is a close alliance between the state and the history textbook that establishes a self-reinforcing relationship between history, memory and identity where political memory, identity and myth are also established. History becomes then "applied history" and serves the purpose of the nation-state mobilizing heroic and patriotic narratives, trying to restore the premodern state monopoly over history under modern means. Assmann discusses how totalitarian states and democratic states have the same application of collective participation in national memory stating that in the former, national memory is enforced through propaganda, while in the latter it is circulated by popular media and various forms of "liberal representation". Both methods succeed in finding massive support and in mobilizing because of their "selective" nature which manipulates certain bits of the national past and suppresses others.

In the case of Holodomor and other similar disputed memories, where two or several countries share a memory but their respective "national selective collective memory" hinders a fully non-selective exploration of the past, the issue of "contended memories" arises. The nations caught into it become incapable of establishing common goals for the future and consequently abandon any attempt to have their opposing perspectives reach the context of a common unifying framework. Assmann discusses the phenomena of contentious memories through the relation perpetrators/victims and

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<sup>20</sup> Assmann, A. 2008. (Citation: Assmann, J. *Moses the Egyptian. The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997;10)

victors/defeated and above all *trauma*, elements from which most disagreements spring out.

In the relations victors/defeated and perpetrators/victims, there is a substantial difference that distinguishes the two from each other. The former is characterized by a form of reciprocity, while the latter is not. Therefore, also the memory of the defeated and the memory of the victim differ from each other. The victim (both *victim* and *sacrifice*) according to a religious paradigm of Judeo-Christian worship, is subject to a certain aggressive deadly violence and becomes a *martyr*. This paradigm survived the religious context and its meaning entered the national discourse.

“Thus God, as the recipient of the sacrifice and its greatest advocate, came to be replaced by other absolute values, such as the fatherland”.<sup>21</sup>

When the *victim* is identified as a *martyr*, the easiness in remembering an act of violence is excluded, unlike in the heroic memory of the victim which is also often formulated in nationalist rhetoric. Yet, the memories of the *victim* can be both traumatic and heroic. The *martyr* is the heroic *victim* which implies faith in ideals, in nationhood and in God while for the *trauma victim* “It is extremely difficult to remember its suffering and shame because they cannot be integrated into a positive individual or collective self-image”.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, a traumatic experience gets socially recognized decades or even centuries after the historical event, when it can finally become part of a collective memory. But there is a condition for such recognition that sees the experience of victimization become a collective and cultural memory only if the affected group succeeds in organizing itself as a collective and initiate a form of commemoration that can be passed onto future generations. Depending on the recognition of other groups, the passive victim’s memory cannot remain within the affected group and therefore it calls for the outside reception of public recognition. This type of recognition is different from the *martyr* or *hero* recognition where dying for a cause can often be utilized as

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<sup>21</sup> Assmann, A. 2016; 55

<sup>22</sup> Assmann, A. 2016; 57

ground for politics, writes Assmann. It calls instead for a moral model of understanding the past that appeals to moral sensibility and to new ethical standards. But this type of recognition can become problematic. When moral sensibility and the ethical standards that *victim* calls upon, no longer become open to negotiation, "...a one-sided emphasis on suffering as the basis upon which collective demands are being made"<sup>23</sup> arises. This finally brings us to the notion of right and wrong. Assmann draws from the example of the Holocaust.

"The moral answer to such crimes against humanity is the establishment of a general and obligatory memory, to be borne by humanity as a whole. Crimes against humanity are destined to enter into the memory of humanity".<sup>24</sup>

The effects of traumatic historical experiences for the victim and the perpetrator create new determinants for the understanding of the national memory. The forgetting of dehumanization, exploitation and the killing of innocent people has no healing power, Assmann points out. It is the sharing and the preservation of the memory by the victim and the perpetrator that has such power. After the Holocaust a politics of identity that focuses on victims, brought to light other sufferings such as slavery, colonialism and more recent genocides within and outside Europe. With these, not history but *memory* of the groups can build a new identity and claim social recognition. These groups have connotations in common that must be separated from the grand sacrifice of the martyr. Passivity, innocence and purity. Yet groups cannot create these connotations by themselves. Such traits can only be acquired through recognition and this can at times be problematic and kickstart debates on victimhood in politics of recognition. Recognition can only take place through a "critical secondary witnessing", discusses Assmann.

In the process of restoring *dignity* in the victim from a universal perspective, the

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<sup>23</sup> Assmann, A. 2016; 59

<sup>24</sup> Assmann, A. 2016; 60

problematic development and formation of *honor* can arise. In this situation a group is capable of drawing to itself an image characterized by an overblown mythic sense of victimhood that leads to two main setbacks. The first is that this exaggerated myth blocks victimhood itself from the possibility of development and that secondly, the group can grow hardened to the traumatic experience of other victims.

“A politics of identity that is based on the semantics of victimhood proves to be part of the problem and not its solution or, more precisely, part of a post traumatic syndrome that is in no way an attempt to overcome that syndrome”.<sup>25</sup>

While one can talk about “Pride of suffering”, there is no equivalent for “pride about guilt”. Unlike the *victim* and its search of recognition, the *perpetrator* seeks no public acknowledgement. Perpetrators remain in the shade and avoid *guilt* that unlike *suffering* cannot strengthen a self-image, but rather destroys it. Perpetrators assume a strategy of survival, a sort of defense against guilt where pride and honor attempt to shut down the memory and its recognition of guilt. Perpetrators resort to either the element of silence which represents a form of self-protection and refuge, or to distance themselves from memory utilizing the formula of “collective guilt” as “completely meaningless” trying to gain the right of being the victims of an indefensible accusation of collective guilt. Assmann discusses that perpetrators are not traumatized but it is nevertheless *trauma* that involves the disturbing confrontation with their individual responsibility. This is what she calls the *perpetrator trauma* where a shift of awareness causes a traumatic experience for them. Awareness awakes in perpetrators who are reluctant to remember, only when favorable social and psychological conditions present themselves and tabooing through *silencing* is broken. But this does not only concern the *perpetrator*. *Silencing* is as a matter of fact an element embodied not only in perpetrators but in victims too. That is why all traumatic experiences are often approachable only many years after the event.

*Silencing* is found both in victims (psychological conditions) reluctant to recount painful

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<sup>25</sup> Assmann, A. 2016; 62

experiences, and perpetrators (social conditions) and their creation of taboos that hinder victims from recounting. These two conditions determine *silencing*.

### 3.3 Mythologization

Pål Kolstø edited a book titled *Myths and Boundaries in South Eastern Europe* (2005) which collects the work of several scholars and their discussion on *myth* and *boundaries* in the South Slav region. The book analyzes the relevance of mythmaking in politics and their utilization in raising boundaries. It continues to build upon a rather new discipline that studies boundary-creating effects of historical myths.

The use of *myth* recurs often in the discussion of Holodomor. In my research, this phenomenon appears especially in Russian literature claiming that Ukraine utilizes *myth* in the construction of boundaries and the maintenance of differentiation between the two countries. Kolstø argues that the use of historical myths arises in situations where two, or more than two countries share the same historical event and experiences, but they interpret these events differently. At this point such countries will relate to each other in antagonistic terms and resort to myths as substitutes for objectivity. Kolstø discusses that the use and abuse of historical myths take place in authoritarian and non-authoritarian states alike. Therefore, myths can help us better understand political processes in general. The validity and veracity of myths are certainly debatable and whether they are sources of hatred or not, has divided the community of researchers into two groups, “enlighteners” and “functionalists”. Kolstø argues that the study of myths is crucial in understanding the boundary-defining aspect they have on two groups belonging to the same collective, but that see each other as different. Myths about one’s neighbors help create order within a society that suppresses and denies evident similarities with its neighbors.

“Mythical stories about differences of origin, about how groups have interacted and fought each other in the past, and so on, can function as substitutes or as bolsters

for 'real' differences".<sup>26</sup>

This allows two groups to ignore their similarities and create the "other". A depository of differences. In addition to this, a delicate question about boundaries drawn by myths between those who belong to the community and those who do not, arises according to Kolstø. He argues that the myths of a myth-based community may turn out dysfunctional when interacting with groups beyond their boundaries. In a globalized world, this may be a major problem. Kolstø holds that community myths are not suitable to inter-group communication and it is exactly because of this that the tendency to draw demarcation lines between groups, where some individuals are placed on the inside and others on the outside, is not accidental of myth-making but "...it is in fact a *major driving force* behind the formation of historical group myths".<sup>27</sup>

Drawing from Fredrik Barth, an analyst who helped bring the concept of boundaries to the anthropological inquiry, Kolstø discusses that group identity is constructed by contrast and interaction with outsiders, with "the Other" and that without such interaction, identity formation would not be possible. Kolstø holds that prior to Fredrik Barth's book *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* edited in 1970, anthropologists had studied ethnic groups as a system of culture, a system that ignores the fact that cultural differences do not necessarily follow ethnic lines. Kolstø discusses an example from Scandinavia depicting the relationship between 'ethnic' Norwegians and Swedes. These two groups, two hundred years ago, shared a similar culture even if Norwegians were conscious of not being Swedes and vice versa. The peculiarity here is that the slight differences between the two groups were insignificant compared to the differences between the Norwegian culture of 1800 and today. The changes that Norway has undergone since 1800, have taken place in Sweden too yet, this has not closed the gap of the boundaries between them. Both groups have actively maintained these

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<sup>26</sup> Kolstø, P. 2005; 3

<sup>27</sup> Kolstø, P. 2005; 13-14

boundaries through decades.

“Boundaries are social constructs that require active maintenance. Barth calls the boundary markers that delineate groups ‘diacritica’. Such diacritica are selected from a group’s available fluctuating and diverse cultural repertoire...Boundary maintenance, then, is a matter of *power relations* and hence of politics. In the modern world leaders of putative political groups almost invariably justify their claims in terms of cultural and national difference”.<sup>28</sup>

Kolstø explains therefore that historical myths are used as boundary-defining mechanisms. He mentions John A. Armstrong, who inspired by Barth, linked the maintenance of group boundaries to the production of historical myths. Armstrong maintains that ethnic boundaries reflect group attitudes rather than geographical divisions. Myths, symbols and associated attitudinal factors are more persistent than material factors, and even if a national group may develop more than one sustaining myth with the result of myths contradicting each other, Armstrong believes that this does not weaken the national identity. On the contrary, it might even strengthen it. Kolstø distinguishes four clusters of myths that can be combined as reinforcing myths and counter-myths. The myth of being *sui generis*, the myth of being *antemurale*, *martyrium* and the myth of *antiquitas*.

The myth of *sui generis* is based on certain commonalities (traditional lifestyles, ethical codes etc.) that one group regards as part of their cultural heritage. Such commonalities are also found among their neighbors. This becomes an issue for nation-builders that often put great efforts into de-emphasizing or denying similarities between groups. A common way of doing this is through ethnogenesis that sees groups stem from ethnic roots different from its neighbors in which both parties may agree that they do not have anything in common or one party may ignore the similarities while the other may highlight them.

Myths of being *sui generis* are characterized by two dynamics, explains Kolstø. The first

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<sup>28</sup> Kolstø, P. 2005; 16

is that when the cultural distance between two self-differentiating groups is short. Then the myth-making nation builders will tend to highlight the putative differences. The second is seen when in an uneven power relationship between a strong and a weaker group, the latter will tend to highlight the differences between the two in opposition to the former's attempt to emphasize similarities in order to submit the weaker groups unto itself. The opposite of this phenomenon is the myth of *common descent* used by one dominant group as legitimation of amalgamation of a weaker group.

A very different myth from the myth of being *sui generis* is the myth of being *antemurale (christianitatis)* that abandons the "exclusivity" of the group in favor of embracing the group in a larger and "...superior cultural entity that enhances its status *vis-à-vis* other groups who do not belong".<sup>29</sup> This myth sees a *murus* or "wall" as metaphor, a line of defense of cosmos against the evil forces and chaos. In this myth the differences that distinguish the two groups are exaggeratedly enlarged while boundaries in other directions are de-emphasized. The *antemurale* myth stresses that the group is on the verge of true civilization. These myths may be symmetrical and asymmetrical.

"This means that we can find instances where both opposing groups agree that a civilizational wall separates them, but at the same time hold diametrically opposite views as to who represents the forces of cosmos and chaos, respectively".<sup>30</sup>

The *antemurale* myth negates the *sui generis myth* in a sort of claim that may resemble this phrase: "...we are not unique after all, instead, we are a small part of a larger whole".<sup>31</sup>

The myth of *martyrium*, however, focuses on the moral significance of identity boundary. These myths concentrate on the victimization of a group which is presented as target of

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<sup>29</sup> Kolstø, P. 2005; 20

<sup>30</sup> Kolstø, P. 2005; 20

<sup>31</sup> Kolstø, P. 2005; 20



oppression and discrimination. If the oppressor is one of the neighbors of the group, the function of the myth is that of boundary-defining myth. The weakness of the oppressed is asserted to be right and embodies the moral superiority of the group. Kolstø underlines the importance of this myth that oppression is often used as an instrument for identity formation.

“Stories about the wrongs inflicted upon the group in the past are simplified and ritualized, in order to eliminate all moral ambiguity. At the same time, atrocities committed on other occasions by members of the group against their neighbours, when the group themselves were the victors, are passed in silence”<sup>32</sup>.

The myth of *antiquitas* is based on the claim of one group’s control over certain territories due this group’s ability in proving that it got there first and therefore is the rightful owner of the land. There are two ways that can be set forth by claims of superior antiquity, Kolstø holds. Cultural archeological and political. In the former, the claim of antiquity is presented through pottery and relics found in the ground which are claimed to belong to the forebears of the group that set the claim forth. In the latter, it is asserted that an old state controlled the territory and that it was the national state of the group that presented the claim. Pre-modern states were not based on an ethnic or national principle, but on a dynastic one, yet this never did dissuade nationalists from appropriating previous state formations as their own. Kolstø holds that the discussion on archeological rights might often be seen as petty and consequently dismissed, while the state principle of historical myth making has a far more destabilizing political power based on hard-fact geographical borders and not just on a simpler question of cultural delimitation.

“Thus, the historical-state principle may easily provide fuel for irredenta claims, that is, demands for border revisions. No historical states had fixed borders throughout their existence: borders waxed and waned over the centuries. Myth-makers, however, will tend to focus on the period of the state’s greatest expansion, its ‘golden age’. The putative preincarnations of the various states existing today are almost certain to cover

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<sup>32</sup> Kolstø, P. 2005; 21

vast swathes of the same territories”.<sup>33</sup>

Myths are therefore produced in order to bolster specific group claims. In pre-modern times myths had the purpose of glorifying dynasties, while in the age of nationalism, the nation or the nation-state was strengthened by them. But it is also important to remember that historical myths can be employed by the detractors of a state in order to discredit it.

### 3.4 History politics

Alexei Miller is a renowned researcher at the Institute of Scientific Information for Social Sciences at the Russian Academy of Sciences. He is also professor at Central European University in Budapest. Lately, Miller has extensively researched the phenomena of “History politics”, (a term he borrowed from Polish historians, ‘polityka historyczna’) and its ruinous consequences on Russia. His studies focus primarily on Russia’s history politics, but they can certainly be applied to any country and their various ways of both promoting and resisting the phenomenon. Miller is the author of several articles on the subject. Miller makes a distinction between the term “History politics” and other terms. He holds that “History politics”:

“...correctly defines the relationship between politics that functions as the subject, and history that acts as a descriptive attribute. The term underlines that this is clearly a political phenomenon which should be studied-first and foremost- as part of politics. This sets it apart from ‘politicization of history’ and ‘politics of memory’... ”.<sup>34</sup>

In his article ‘Russia: Politics and History’ (7 July 2010), Miller discusses that in 2004 a group of Polish historians believed that Poland needed pursuing its own version of politics regarding history. To do so, they started their work by borrowing the term

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<sup>33</sup> Kolstø, P. 2005; 22

<sup>34</sup> Miller, A. 2010. ‘The Ruinous Consequence of History Politics for the Country and Its Relations with Neighbors’. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russia-politics-and-history/>

'polityka historyczna' from the 'German Geschichtspolitik', a term that during the 1980s had accompanied Chancellor Helmut Kohl on his political climb. Kohl had a degree in History and used history issues to augment his political success, Miller holds. Kohl appealed to German patriotism and looked upon this as an element with the potential to adjust the Social Democrats' line on the treatment of Germany's responsibility for the Nazi times. The Social Democrats had ruled from the 1960s throughout the 1970s. Kohl's use of history initiated the so-called Historikerstreit.

“...a dispute between historians over the reasons behind the emergence of Nazism and the measure of its responsibility for World War 2”.<sup>35</sup>

But “Geschichtspolitik” met resistance from most German historians that disagree with its claim of being “an interpretation of history by political motives, and an attempt to convince the public that this interpretation is the correct one”.<sup>36</sup> “Geschichtspolitik”, was never able to take firm root in Germany, but it eventually did so in Poland where it planted its roots and since 2004 has been the subject of debates. Polish supporters of history politics asserted that history politics contains a certain “healthy patriotism”, necessary for resisting the distortions of Polish history inside and outside the country. Miller makes clear that history politics is a common trait of several Eastern European countries, not just Poland. Its supporters argue that the legitimization of history politics has been practiced by all nations throughout all times. Miller claims that history politics is a phenomenon especially common in post-Communist societies that freed themselves from the rigid authoritarian ideology that ruled over them. History politics would in fact, not apply in non-pluralistic societies. Freedom of expression and competition between political actors and parties, are necessary conditions for the emergence of history politics, where the public sphere is pluralistic and outside state control, and where pluralism can enter education and all historians are given access to

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<sup>35</sup> Miller, A. 2010. 'The Ruinous Consequence of History Politics for the Country and Its Relations with Neighbors'. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russia-politics-and-history/>

<sup>36</sup> Miller, M. 2010. 'The Ruinous Consequence of History Politics for the Country and Its Relations with Neighbors'. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russia-politics-and-history/>

archives. It is also necessary that historical researches are financed by the tax-payers' budget so that the ruling party cannot make a claim to ideological monopoly. But there is still an issue with this, explains Miller. These conditions do not prevent the ruling party from making active use of propaganda that provides that certain interpretations of historical events will be dominant:

“...using administrative and financial resources of the state,...performs the ideological indoctrination of society with regard to historical consciousness and collective memory. (This primarily concerns controversial historical events or processes that arouse public debate)”<sup>37</sup>.

Miller points out that what is worth analysis, is not the ruling party's propaganda, but the new methods and mechanics used by its propaganda. Miller calls this 'institutionalization of history' and sees it as a rather common characteristic not only in ex-Communist countries. One of these methods can be the establishing of museums, institutes and similar organizations backed up by the ruling party that ignores its opponents. In Poland and Ukraine, the Institutes of National Remembrance were established, while in Hungary the 'House of Terror' (a museum located in Budapest that contains exhibits of the fascist and communist regimes and their victims) was set up. In Ukraine, President Yushchenko supported the opening of the 'Museum of Soviet Occupation' and an exhibition on Holodomor at several museums. Poland has also another example in the Warsaw Uprising Museum set up under the sponsorship of the Kaczynski brothers. Miller specifies that 'History politics' is also manifested in legislation. This happens when:

“...parliaments adopt laws that fix a certain interpretation of historical events as the only correct one. There are bills, proposed or even passed, that envision criminal punishment for those who challenge the prescribed interpretation, and this happens not only in Eastern Europe”<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Miller, M. 2010. 'The Ruinous Consequence of History Politics for the Country and Its Relations with Neighbors'. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russia-politics-and-history/>

<sup>38</sup> Miller, M. 2010. 'The Ruinous Consequence of History Politics for the Country and Its Relations with Neighbors'. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russia-politics-and-history/>

This phenomenon comes with its awkwardness, argues Miller. Russia is an example. Russia entered a time when withdrawing from confrontations caused by history politics with its neighbors, proved to be a rather difficult operation. As a matter of fact, Russia's strengthening of history politics was partly due to other countries' history politics. One example was easily identifiable in Russian-Ukrainian relations that changed in 2010 when Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich tried to please Russia by removing several elements of history politics that had the potential to provoke Russia, proving that Ukraine's historical views were not less affected by political changes. Russia welcomed the move towards an ease of tensions between the two countries. But an improvement of relations with Poland and reconciliation between the two, proved to be more complicated, especially around the discussion on the Katyn massacre and the Soviet-German treaty of 1939. Vladimir Putin and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk started a process of reconciliation. Putin wrote an article that was published by Gazeta Wyborcza, a Polish leading newspaper, titled "Pages of History: A Pretext for Reciprocal Claims or a Basis for Reconciliation and Partnership?" before his visit to Westerplatte on September 1, 2009 where he denounced the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact. While the opponents of history politics welcomed his speech, the supporters condemned it as Lech Kaczynski's group did, opposing the attempt to quiet the confrontational atmosphere.

"All of this clearly showed that the advocates of a confrontational historical policy in both Russia and Poland actually played into each other's hands, using the provocative statements of their opponents".<sup>39</sup>

Miller also discusses the peculiar use of the word "genocide" in relation to the Katyn forest tragedy and its history politics effect. On the one hand, there was Lech Kaczynski's attempt to set the topic at the top of his political agenda, on the other hand, there was Donald Tusk's effort to reconcile with Russia. Another example of history politics is presented by Miller with the question on how to handle the wrongdoings

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<sup>39</sup> Miller, M. 2011. 'The Labyrinths of Historical Policy'.  
<https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/The-Labyrinths-of-Historical-Policy-15240>

committed by the communist regime in Russia. He writes that in 2011, an attempt to establish cooperation between the public, that sees legal assessment of the crimes of the communist regime necessary, and the establishment that tries to make the topic an element of its policy, took place. This resulted in some of the members of the Presidential Council for the Development of Civic Society and Human Rights and the Memorial human rights group drafting a:

“...proposal to implement a national state-public program for commemoration of victims of the totalitarian regime and work towards national reconciliation. Along with erecting monuments, opening museums and research centers, and appointing national commemorative dates, the authors have suggested holding a competition for a new history textbook and called on steps, such as juridical assessment and political condemnation of the crimes committed by the Communist regime. Furthermore, the project presupposes a ban on the denial and/or justification of these crimes”.<sup>40</sup>

Miller holds that the authors' attempt to write their own anti-Communist views, is a clear illustration of history politics. Due to the awkwardness of their views, the task of modernization that they wanted to bring into the president's political agenda and the draft they created, became easily targeted by their opponents.

Politicization of history cannot be avoided, writes Miller. Each historian, while researching, is inevitably conditioned by several factors such as the contemporary situation he or she is living, political views, national identification etc.

“In a certain sense, this association is the source of constant development and rewriting of history, because new times and situations, along with personal experience, encourage historians to seek new insights. Politicization of history also involves groups of historians who are similarly influenced by political factor”.<sup>41</sup>

Miller holds that it is imperative for the historian to reduce the influence of the effects that political preferences have on academics. Reflection, self-control and lucid presentation of various points of view are key for professional criticism. Objectivity

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<sup>40</sup> Miller, M. 2011. 'The Labyrinths of Historical Policy'. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/The-Labyrinths-of-Historical-Policy-15240>

<sup>41</sup> Miller, M. 2010. 'The Ruinous Consequence of History Politics for the Country and Its Relations with Neighbors'. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russia-politics-and-history/>

embraces different opinions even though history can't claim the status of an objective science, claims Miller. This in order to withstand the persistent History politics where politicians resort to historical arguments to sound convincing and governments regulate access to archives, practice control over historical education and over the funding of scientific researches.

“...there is no society, not even among the tribal ones, that would not regulate this sphere of public life”.<sup>42</sup>

History politics regulates collective memories. This involves “politics of forgetting” where certain events (considered painful) are replaced by forgetfulness which is also a form of “denying”, and “understanding” forgetfulness which shifts public attention away from an event after discussing responsibility.

“Modern Germany is aware of its Nazi past and neither denies it nor suppresses its memory; and since it admits responsibility, it may address the formerly taboo topic of the hardship German civilians suffered during and after World War II”.<sup>43</sup>

History politics can be a productive way in healing the trauma of the past and in overcoming ethnic conflicts when it is open to dialogue, but it can also create a distorted image of the past. There is a clear difference between the two: ideological justification. This can be individualized by noticing that in the latter, history and memory are presented as a place of political struggle where external and internal foes fight against each other and where historians do not have to follow professional ethics and must instead be supervised by more patriotic people. Ideological justification also feeds on the excuse that “all nations do it”. This leads to the breaching of democratic principles and the restriction of freedom of expression in order to defend the nation from external foes that assert interpretations of historical events which are harmful to the nation. This

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<sup>42</sup> Miller, M. 2010. ‘The Ruinous Consequence of History Politics for the Country and Its Relations with Neighbors’. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russia-politics-and-history/>

<sup>43</sup> Miller, M. 2010. ‘The Ruinous Consequence of History Politics for the Country and Its Relations with Neighbors’. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russia-politics-and-history/>

sets historians in a position where they must constantly defend the contrary argument of the “foes”. Lack of patriotism and the poor teaching of history are also claims that serve the purpose of the ideological justification. The supporters of history politics exploit these arguments to suspend pluralism of opinion on textbooks.

“In actual fact, national interests are just a cover, as there is always a party/political aspect to the true objectiveness. The ‘genuinely patriotic’ version of history invariably turns out to be advantageous to certain political forces. In reality history politics is a tool to campaign for the electorate and remove competitors within or outside of the framework of lustration laws”.<sup>44</sup>

## 4. The Famine, scope and prehistory

In order to present a history of the famine, I have drawn information from several sources. Due to the vastness of the topic and the material being so extensive, I decided to limit my research primarily to the work of Khlevniuk (2015), Applebaum (2018), Snyder (2001), Ward (1993), Furr (2014) and Russian Wikipedia.

In his book *Stalin's Russia* published in 1993, Chris Ward wrote that “Little is known about the 1932-33 famine, but it was without doubt the worst in Russia’s history”.<sup>45</sup> That was written in the 90s, when the debate on Holodomor had just opened and began reaching all spheres of public opinion for the first time. It does not mean though, that research on Holodomor had not taken place before he published his book. Extensive researches on Holodomor were already carried out in the eighties, raising both worldwide attention and skepticism alike. But perhaps discussions and disagreements on Holodomor had not yet intensified the way they have today, when a multitude of interpretations challenge each other. In a few sources, the famine is seen and examined as a chain of unlucky events, where no individuals are held responsible for the

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<sup>44</sup> Miller, M. 2010. ‘The Ruinous Consequence of History Politics for the Country and Its Relations with Neighbors’. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/russia-politics-and-history/>

<sup>45</sup> Ward, C. 1993; 48



catastrophe. Russian Wikipedia is an example of this. It writes:

“In 1931, five regions of the USSR — Western Siberia, Kazakhstan, the Urals, the Middle and Lower Volga — had a crop failure due to drought, which significantly reduced the country's grain resources. Situational and incompetent policy in agriculture and increased exports of grain harvest in 1931, made the situation critical. In 1932, an even greater decline in food production followed, primarily due to the main bread-producing regions of the USSR—the grain regions of the UkSSR and Kuban. By the early autumn of 1932, the country was experiencing difficulties in providing the urban population with food. By the early spring of 1933, the situation with food was severe throughout the country — food shortages were even in Moscow and Leningrad and in several military districts of the red army. Starvation was in Western Siberia, the Urals, the Middle and lower Volga and the Central black earth District. But the situation in Ukraine, the North Caucasus and Kazakhstan was the most difficult”.<sup>46</sup>

Unlike Russian Wikipedia, many western authors have no doubts about the cause behind the “situational and incompetent policy in agriculture”. They maintain that the famine was the result of the new Soviet industrial initiative set in motion by Joseph Stalin in 1928, the so-called Five-Year Plan that was combined with the collectivization plan. The industrial push was in fact backed by the collectivization of agriculture on an unprecedented scale which heavily weighed on farming. Ukraine together with North Caucasus (with its large ethnic Ukrainian population) were the areas which suffered the most<sup>47</sup> while the famine was causing massive damage to the entire country. The famine that ravaged through Ukraine's countryside cost the life of a large amount of people. The number of victims is still argued today by activists, politicians and experts. The figure spans three to ten million dead according to the sources at my disposal.

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<sup>46</sup> “В 1931 году в пяти регионах СССР — Западной Сибири, Казахстане, на Урале, на Средней и Нижней Волге — был неурожай вследствие засухи, что значительно сократило хлебные ресурсы страны. Ситуативная и некомпетентная политика в сельском хозяйстве, усиленный экспорт зерна урожая 1931 года сделали положение критическим. В 1932 году последовал ещё больший спад производства продуктов питания, прежде всего за счёт основных хлебопроизводящих районов СССР — зерновых районов УССР и Кубани. К началу осени 1932 года страна испытывала трудности с обеспечением городского населения продовольствием. К началу весны 1933 года в целом по стране ситуация с продовольствием была тяжёлой — перебои с продовольствием были даже в Москве и Ленинграде и в ряде военных округов РККА. Голодали Западная Сибирь, Урал, Средняя и Нижняя Волга, Центрально-Чернозёмный Округ. Но ситуация на Украине, Северном Кавказе и Казахстане была самой тяжёлой”. Википедия. ‘Голод на Украине’ (1932—1933). [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Голод\\_на\\_Украине\\_\(1932—1933\)](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Голод_на_Украине_(1932—1933))

<sup>47</sup> Khlevniuk, O. 2015; 119

To fulfill the industrialization plan, the purpose of the collectivization plan was “...thought to make sense only in the context of mechanization”.<sup>48</sup> Stalin considered Ukraine the breadbasket of Europe, but he also viewed it as “backwards”. Its backwardness, together with its location that made it a gateway to the west, raised concerns in him. Therefore, a program where industrialization and collectivization were amalgamated, was seen by Stalin as a way to correct Ukrainian backwardness and as an instrument for the creation of the infrastructures that would provide security from a threatening capitalistic West that Stalin believed was infiltrating the USSR through Poland’s espionage. Stalin was convinced that security for Ukraine and the Soviet Union was in fact depending on the collectivization and industrialization of Ukraine. He was very suspicious of Poland which had previously attacked the Bolsheviks and captured Belarus and Ukraine in 1919-20. Poland also had minorities of Belarusians and Ukrainians too “...whose plight under Polish rule proved an excellent propaganda for the Bolsheviks”.<sup>49</sup> This was one of the reasons why Moscow promoted Ukrainization in its “коренизация” (indigenization) plan which was to gain Ukrainian sympathy and placate malcontent among Ukrainians to avoid the risk of them siding with Poland. So, to display respect for Ukrainian sentiment was for Moscow a way to avoid giving rise to resentment among ethnic Ukrainians. After all, Ukrainian peasants had supported Ukrainian parties in 1917-18 and fought against the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, Stalin was very suspicious of Poland because he knew that:

“...many peasants in Soviet Ukraine, not only Poles and Germans, hoped for an invasion from abroad to release them from their agony. Until the middle of 1932, their greatest hope was Poland.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ward, C. 1993; 47

<sup>49</sup> Kuromiya, H. 2008. 'The Soviet Famine of 1932-1933 Reconsidered'.  
[https://www.jstor.org/stable/20451530?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/20451530?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

<sup>50</sup> Snyder, T. 2001; 55

But by 1932, Ukrainization would come to an end, Stalin would reverse his program and intensify the collectivization plan instead, while the agricultural conditions of Ukraine had been severely deteriorating to the point where the actual famine had already started.

#### 4.1 Industrialization and Collectivization

It was already in 1927, when the USSR was facing great economic difficulties, that Stalin suggested that the problems could be "...overcome by strengthening co-operatives and by fostering the voluntary pooling of land, agricultural implements and buildings -the kolkhoz or collective farm movement".<sup>51</sup> In Ukraine, the cities had grown before 1932 and absorbed peasants from the countryside. The cities were the only hope of nourishment with their breadlines. But the families of emigrated peasants that had become city workers, were left with nothing in the country.<sup>52</sup>

Both industrialization and collectivization had their problems, and the implementation of the plan was not as successful as the plan ideology itself. Stalin's Five-Year Plan, which was declared fulfilled ahead of schedule by Stalin himself, established a ruinously inefficient approach to industrialization.

"Stalin's Five-Year Plan, completed in 1932, brought industrial development at the price of popular misery...the mass starvation of 1933 was the result of Stalin's Five-Year plan implemented between 1928 and 1933".<sup>53</sup>

Stalin's plan of full and hasty industrialization led to the production of goods that were of poor quality and unusable. Also, a number of construction projects were never completed. In addition to this, Khlevniuk argues that the disaster struck "In a time of peace and relatively normal weather..." and that "...the famine was the inevitable result of industrialization and collectivization".<sup>54</sup> Collectivization was the phenomenon that,

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<sup>51</sup> Ward, C. 1993; 40

<sup>52</sup> Snyder, T. 2011; 22

<sup>53</sup> Snyder, T. 2011; 23

<sup>54</sup> Khlevniuk, O. 2015; 117

along with Stalin's Great leap forward (driven by quick and ruthless industrialization), made the famine so devastating. A finalized plan was adopted in early 1930, writes Khlevniuk. While the kolkhozes (collective farms) helped the state get a hold of the countryside's produce and easily draw resources from it, the peasants had to face hard living conditions and survive the harsh demands imposed by a state that would take almost everything they produced. The exploitation of the peasants, heavily weakened by the harsh demands imposed on them and deprived of their incentive to work, would later on pave the way to general despondency.

The collectivization plan was laid out in the early 1930 and already in the beginning of that year "...was proceeding at a blinding pace in Soviet Ukraine and throughout the Soviet Union...The Ukrainian leadership promised to collectivize the entire republic in one year".<sup>55</sup> Ukraine joined collective farms in September 1931. Stalin planned to export grain grown in Ukraine to Moscow. From Moscow he would stockpile some and sell the rest to the West at increased prices.<sup>56</sup> The peasants would have to pay the highest price for collectivization. As Khlevniuk notes, "The Bolsheviks did not like the peasantry- they considered it a dying class..."<sup>57</sup> and soon a war on the peasants would start and eventually turn into a class war. Stalin feared resistance to collectivization especially from the "kulaks" (affluent peasants) and he looked upon them as enemies of the people and of the entire kolkhoz project. Procedures were made in order to settle the question about the kulaks, seen as "враги народа" (enemies of the people). Plans for the repression of 'rebel kulaks' only were initially laid out. The rest of the kulaks were to be integrated into the kolkhoz. Repression had to be limited and reserved only for those who resisted collectivization. Furthermore, several members of the Central Committee suggested that kolkhoz workers should be allowed to keep small plots for their use

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<sup>55</sup> Snyder, T. 2011; 28

<sup>56</sup> Vsetecka, J. 2014. 'Politics of Perseverance: Ukrainian Memories of Them and the Other in Holodomor Survivor Testimony, 1986-1988'.

[https://www.academia.edu/10354126/Politics\\_of\\_Perseverance\\_Ukrainian\\_Memories\\_of\\_Them\\_and\\_the\\_Other\\_in\\_Holodomor\\_Survivor\\_Testimony\\_1986-1988\\_email\\_work\\_card=view-paper](https://www.academia.edu/10354126/Politics_of_Perseverance_Ukrainian_Memories_of_Them_and_the_Other_in_Holodomor_Survivor_Testimony_1986-1988_email_work_card=view-paper)

<sup>57</sup> Khlevniuk, 2015; 110

instead of being submitted to total confiscation of the property. But Stalin decided against these proposals. With collectivization came also the confrontation between the peasantry, the Soviet state and the OGPU (secret police).

“Anticipating this struggle, Stalin had ordered in 1929 the most massive deployment of state power in Soviet history...that December he announced that ‘kulaks’ would be ‘liquidated as a class’”.<sup>58</sup>

The idea of integrating the kulaks into the kolkhoz was rejected and the kulaks were deported (dekulakization) with their families to remote areas of the USSR, arrested or shot.<sup>59</sup> The kolkhoz workers were not to keep their share of land. They had to be turned into slaves of the state. Applebaum argues that collectivization and dekulakization combined socially rewound the country back to serfdom, where common peasants along with the kulaks, suffered the most, not only economically, but on a social and moral level too. The peasants “...lost their ability to make decisions about their lives...to govern themselves too...”.<sup>60</sup> In 1930 the politburo authorized the state police to apply “proper” measures for the “liquidation of the kulaks”. This resulted in the formation of the “troikas”, a group of three people who would decide the fate of peasants. A “troika” was composed by a member of the state police, a procurator and a party leader. Mass deportation and executions followed together with the creation of the *gulag*, a system of concentration camps that:

“...began alongside the collectivization of agriculture and depended upon it. It would eventually include 476 camp complexes, to which some eight million people would be sentenced, of whom between a million and a half and three million would die during their periods on incarceration”.<sup>61</sup>

After February 1930 a full-scale assault was launched against the countryside.

“Over the next two or three weeks more than a quarter of a million volunteers and conscripts (OGPU units, Red Army personnel, party members and about 25.000

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<sup>58</sup> Snyder, T. 2011; 25

<sup>59</sup> Khlevniuk, O. 2015; 112

<sup>60</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 163

<sup>61</sup> Snyder, T. 2011; 27

workers organized into 'collectivization brigades') tried to bludgeon twenty-five million families-seredniaki and bedniaki as opposed to kulaks- into collective farms".<sup>62</sup>

On 2 March 1930 an article titled 'Dizzy With Success' written by Stalin, was published in the magazine *Pravda*. In this article Stalin declared that the collectivization plan was proceeding far better and more quickly than expected and that the USSR had fulfilled the Five-Year Plan. But he also mentioned that not every region of the USSR would be able to collectivize at the same pace. Furthermore, he expressed his fears about local party members who forgot these principles and let themselves get carried away by "dizziness" due to the success of collectivization. Stalin was of course sensing the potential disastrous consequences of a chaotic collectivization and prepared for future blames on party members who had lost clearness of mind and got inebriated by success.<sup>63</sup>

By the summer and the autumn of 1931,

"...a flurry of letters and directives circulated in Moscow and Kharkiv, all expressing the fear that grain collection would go badly, especially in Ukraine- or even that Ukrainian peasants would not sow at all. On 17 June, Stalin and Molotov sent out an order, jointly signed, demanding that the Ukrainian leadership ensure that 'unsown fields be sown', and bluntly calling on the Ukrainian Communist Party to mobilize all existing resources: 'Please inform us of the result by June 25<sup>th</sup>'".<sup>64</sup>

Across the USSR, grain collection would fall short of the target set on 83 million plus tonnes. The harvest total for 1931-32 came to 69.5 million tonnes.<sup>65</sup> Collectivization was at some level the source of shortages, writes Applebaum. Stalin had received reports about what was wrong with collectivization. State's demands for grain were too high and Ukraine could not meet its grain quotas. Stalin started to look for scapegoats, notes Applebaum. Subsequently, hungry peasants became 'rebel' peasants.

"...in December 1931, Stalin and Molotov made coercion the policy: collective farms that had not met their grain quotas would have to repay any outstanding loans,

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<sup>62</sup> Ward, C. 1993; 43 reporting R. W Davies' estimates

<sup>63</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 147-148

<sup>64</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 167-168

<sup>65</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 168

and return any tractors or other equipment that had been leased to them from the machine tractor station. Their spare cash- including that intended to buy seeds-would be confiscated”.<sup>66</sup>

This sort of abuse resulted in resistance to collectivization and rebellions. In 1930 at least 3.4 million peasants took part in acts of rebellion. Ukraine witnessed a large number of uprisings.<sup>67</sup> Peasants destroyed the collective farms and restored abolished property lines. The harvest of 1932 turned into a disaster. The countryside was devastated in several parts of the USSR, but the most afflicted areas were the North Caucasus and Ukraine. Stalin was quick to recognize that Poland could have exploited the situation caused by the uprisings, and he began suspecting the Ukrainian peasants being part of a bigger plot. Khlevniuk, citing historian Hiroaki Kuromiya and author of *Stalin* (2005), writes: “Hiroaki Kuromiya points out, Stalin was suspicious of all peasants and for being Ukrainians”.<sup>68</sup> Stalin believed that the peasants were ‘organized saboteurs’ and were declaring a war of starvation against the Soviet Union, so he decided to apply stiff policies of grain requisition and terror. In my interview with Stanislav Kulchytsky, he explained that the peasants were never organized.<sup>69</sup> The combination of a partly failed harsh industrialization and a brutal collectivization, was a significant factor in magnifying the famine. Stalin’s Great Leap Forward brought its damage.

There are other versions on the cause of the famine similar to Russian Wikipedia’s, though. Grover Furr in *Blood lies* (2014), argues that the main causes of the famine were environmental factors. Among them: drought, heavy rainfall, serious infestation of the crop, diseases, rust and smut, plagues of pests, Asian locusts, beet weevils, meadow moths, caterpillars and mice infestations. Furr also argues that the interaction of human agency was a contributing factor such as shortage of labor to weed the field

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<sup>66</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 171

<sup>67</sup> Khlevniuk, O. 2015; 114

<sup>68</sup> Khlevniuk, O. 2015; 120

<sup>69</sup> Kulchytsky, S; Interview. Kiev, 01.10.2019

and large areas of unplanted or unharvested land due to labor shortages caused by peasants moving to cities or dying by starvation.<sup>70</sup> Kuromiya also approaches the famine from different angles. He points out that the threat of Japan and Stalin's concerns with defending the eastern part of the Soviet Union (especially Siberia that according to Kuromiya was part of a Japanese plan of invasion), forced him to concentrate the grain resources to the east in order to strengthen the army. It is true, Kuromiya points out, that Japan had concrete plans of attacking the Soviet Union. Kuromiya notes that the Soviet Secret police had intercepted a memorandum sent by the Japanese Ambassador Koki Hirota on 19 December 1931 where he stated the following:

“On the following of whether Japan should declare war on the Soviet Union- I deem it necessary that Japan be ready to declare war at any moment and adopt a tough policy towards the Soviet Union. The cardinal objective of this war must lie not so much in protecting Japan from Communism as in seizing the Soviet Far East and Eastern Siberia”.<sup>71</sup>

Kuromiya argues that Japan had invaded Manchuria in 1931 and set up the puppet government of Manchukuo in 1932. Stalin's concerns increased, especially after Japan rejected his offer towards a non-aggression treaty. In addition to this, Stalin's fears escalated when in 1931 in the Chinese Muslim province of Xingjian, numerous rebellions by disgruntled peasants took place against the Chinese government. Stalin believed that Japanese and British influence was propelling the rebellions and decided to help the Chinese government by providing weapons, aircrafts and by dispatching military forces to Xinjiang. China was not an isolated case of unrest that startled Stalin. Rebellions were also taking place in Mongolia where priests and landholders were rising against the Soviet supported government in 1932. It was around this time that Stalin feared a Japanese-Polish attack. Kuromiya comes to such conclusion:

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<sup>70</sup> Furr, G. 2014; 64

<sup>71</sup> Kuromiya, H. 2008; 670. 'The Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Reconsidered'.  
[https://www.jstor.org/stable/20451530?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/20451530?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)



“It is possible that Stalin sacrificed starving people within the Soviet Union because he was concerned about an external threat: he had to feed the soldiers first and build up the military, particularly in the Far East...One might argue that in such a tense international environment Stalin would not have intentionally caused a large-scale famine which would politically de-stabilise the country”.<sup>72</sup>

Across the USSR, grain collection would fall short of the target set on 83 million plus tonnes. The harvest total for 1931-32 came to 69.5 million tonnes.<sup>73</sup> Collectivization was at some level the source of shortages, writes Applebaum. But Stalin continued to look for scapegoats according to Applebaum. However, it was true that peasants tried to keep stores to feed themselves and this resulted in a sort of sabotage, writes Khlevniuk.<sup>74</sup> This was interpreted by Stalin as “war against the Soviet Government”.

“He undoubtedly considered the peasantry of Ukraine and the North Caucasus to be at the forefront of this peasant army battling the Soviet government”.<sup>75</sup>

Stalin held “enemies” and “kulaks” as the main cause behind the “food difficulties”. In May 1933, according to Khlevniuk, Stalin admitted to Colonel Raymond Robins, an American sympathizer of the Soviet Union and member of the Red Cross mission to Russia in 1917-18, who had previously met Lenin, that “some peasants are currently starving” because of the famine of 1932. He argued that parasitically inclined peasants were not earning anything through the kolkhozes because they joined them too late, or because they were not living on their own plots and stole grain from the kolkhozes. Applebaum and other authors, point out that Stalin looked upon starving peasants as potential nationalists, especially in Ukraine. This combined with a possible loss of control over Ukrainian authorities, made Stalin see “...a clear connection between the grain collection problem in Ukraine and the threat of nationalism in the republic”.<sup>76</sup> In the summer of 1932, Stalin received alarming documents from the Ukrainian secret

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<sup>72</sup> Kuromiya, H. 2008; 671. ‘The Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Reconsidered’.  
[https://www.jstor.org/stable/20451530?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/20451530?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

<sup>73</sup> Applebaum, A. 2011; 168 (Citation: A.V Bashkin, ‘Urozhai tridtsatykh ili ukhradennye dostizheniia’)

<sup>74</sup> Khlevniuk, O. 2015, 117

<sup>75</sup> Khlevniuk, O. 2015; 119

<sup>76</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 187

police, a straightforward set of quotations with commentary collected from informers and attributed to party members that were bitterly opposed to the grain requisition campaign.

<sup>77</sup> Stalin then reorganized the Ukrainian Communist Party. He wanted Lazar Kaganovich to take full responsibility over the Ukrainian Communist Party.

“Give yourself the task of quickly transforming Ukraine into a true fortress of the USSR, a truly model republic. We won’t spare money on this task”.<sup>78</sup> It was also necessary to do this quickly.

“Without these and similar measures (ideological and political work in Ukraine, above all in her border district and so forth) I repeat - we could lose Ukraine”.<sup>79</sup>

#### 4.1 Borders, Blacklists, Requisitions and the death of Stalin’s wife

What happened next is what Applebaum defines as the famine in the famine.

Stalin’s wife, Nadezhda Sergeevna Alliluyeva, committed suicide. Both Snyder (2011), and Applebaum (2018) agree that her death took its toll on Stalin. Snyder states that Stalin was found by Kaganovich as a “changed man”.<sup>80</sup> Applebaum writes that Nadezhda’s death was one of the reasons behind Stalin’s growing paranoia of the autumn of 1932.<sup>81</sup> Added to Stalin’s mental situation, the two authors pinpoint three crucial factors that reveal Stalin’s contribution to the famine in Ukraine, three directives issued by Stalin that according to them, clearly indicate that the famine was a disaster specifically targeted at Ukraine and Ukrainians. Blockades, blacklisted villages and farms, and requisitions. These three directives were also explained to me by Professor Kulchytsky, but Snyder argues that there were more than three directives eventually. He discusses seven specific directives or actions taken by Stalin that altogether struck a final knockout blow to Ukraine.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 187

<sup>78</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 188 (Citation: Shapoval, ‘Vsevolod Balickij, bourreau et victime’, 369-99)

<sup>79</sup> Applebaum, A. 2017; 188 (Citation: RTsKhIDNI 82/2/139 (1932), 145-51, trans. and repr. In Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 298 [emphasis in the original]).

<sup>80</sup> Snyder, T. 2011; 40

<sup>81</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 192

<sup>82</sup> Snyder, T. 2011; 42-46

Firstly, on 18 November 1932, the peasants were literally deprived of the little surplus that they previously earned. They were to return grain advances by meeting grain requisition targets. Secondly, two days later, a meat penalty was introduced. This was a tax to be paid by all peasants that had failed to make grain quotas. The penalty forced them to deliver all the livestock in their possession. Eventually, the payment of the meat tax would not guarantee exemption from the original grain quotas that had to be paid anyway, even after the meat tax had been paid. The third directive was adopted on 28 November 1932, Snyder notes. The “черные доски” (blacklists) were introduced. Farms that had failed to meet grain targets would be reported on a blacklist and had to deliver fifteen times the amount of grain that was normally due in a month. No village could meet the quota, and consequently entire communities lost all they had. In addition to this, farms and communities on the blacklists were not allowed to trade or receive deliveries from the rest of the country. As for the fourth policy, Snyder points out that on 14 December 1932, Moscow authorized the deportation of local Ukrainian communists to the gulags. These individuals were suspected of spreading Ukrainian nationalism. Stalin had, on 15 and 24 December 1932, also received reports from Vsevolod Balytsky (security chief for Ukraine) where he claimed that Ukrainian nationalism was the reason for the famine. On 20 December 1932, the politburo agreed on what Stalin the next day would announce as the annual grain requisition quota to be met for Soviet Ukraine. Previously, on 27 November, the politburo had assigned Ukraine a full third of the remaining collections for the entire Soviet Union. This was the fifth directive. For many Ukrainians it meant the death sentence. Snyder estimates the figure to be around three million people. The sixth order took form in the sealing of the borders of the republic so that peasants could not flee. The cities were closed too in order to prevent peasants from begging. City dwellers were provided with passports. Peasants were not. They were also denied the possibility to purchase long distance train tickets. The directive was issued by Stalin in the beginning of 1933. He himself claimed that this was a necessary measure to prevent peasant refugees from engaging in a counterrevolutionary plot under the cover of begging for bread. The seventh policy was

the indirect result of the continuation of grain collection after the annual requisition target of 1932 was met. It left farms with nothing to sow for the following fall when:

“Seed grain for the spring sowing might have been drawn from the trainload bounds at that very moment for export, or taken from the three million tons that the Soviet Union had stored as a reserve. Instead it was seized from what little the peasants needed to survive until the spring harvest”.<sup>83</sup>

To aggravate the situation of the Ukrainian countryside, a “deukrainizaton” policy indirectly started between 14 and 15 December 1932 when two secret decrees were issued. They blamed Ukrainization for the requisition failure.<sup>84</sup> Ukrainization had allowed:

“...bourgeois-nationalist elements, Petliurites and others to create secret counter-revolutionary cells within the state apparatus”.<sup>85</sup>

Ukrainization had also strengthened the Kulaks, former White officers, Cossacks and members of the Kuban Rada. The Cossacks during the civil war had fought for an independent Cossack state in Kuban. Ukrainization provided these “enemies of the Soviet power” with an efficient cover.<sup>86</sup> These groups were all linked to Ukrainian nationalists that largely benefited from Ukrainization. Not only Ukraine but other regions of the USSR, deemed to have been infected with Ukrainization (Far East, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, the Central Black Earth province), were to stop printing Ukrainian newspapers and books. Russia was to be the main language in the schools.<sup>87</sup> The decrees provided an explanation for the grain crisis and they were followed by a mass purge of Ukrainian Communist Party officials. Moreover, all Ukrainian cultural institutions were either shut down or transformed. Applebaum states that the decrees were an assault on Ukrainian national identity. Director of the Holodomor museum Viktor

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<sup>83</sup> Snyder, T. 2011; 45

<sup>84</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 209

<sup>85</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 210-211

<sup>86</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 21

<sup>87</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 211. (Citing Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 303 citing RTsKhIDNI 17/3/910 [1932])

Brekhunenko, shared Applebaum's view during the interview.

"...here, diplomats, consuls, Germans, Italians, in Kharkov, in Odessa, they wrote their reports which are published now ... they emphasized that it was organized in order to destroy the country's part of the carriers of Ukrainian identities. They wrote,... they did not consider this problem as a food problem, but as a policy, directed by Moscow to destroy most of the carriers of Ukrainian identity in order for the remaining ones to be assimilated and in that way solve the Ukrainian issue"<sup>88</sup>.

## 4.2 Residence, identity and death toll

Over the course of my first visit to Kiev's Holodomor Museum, "Ljana" the guide, allowed me to ask her some questions regarding the peasantry in Ukraine and the effects of Stalin's policies on them in order to find out why Ukraine apparently suffered the most. I put forward the following statement:

"I do not exactly understand one thing. There are historians and activists that claim that Holodomor was a form of punishment inflicted on the Ukrainian people. There are also those who say that it was a punishment against the peasants...because in Ukraine, there were many peasants..."<sup>89</sup>.

Ljana replied to this statement asserting that specific measures were exclusively taken in Ukraine where most of the Ukrainians lived in the country and were in fact peasants.

"You're right. A lot of peasants. And in the cities, there were very few Ukrainians. Indeed, Ukrainians lived in villages. And they were peasants...but the famine was all over the Soviet Union. We don't say it didn't happen. It was but ...in no other place this decision of blacklists was taken, and from these places people were allowed to look for food while in Ukraine they were not allowed to do so..."<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>88</sup> "... вот дипломаты и консулы, Немецкие, Итальянские, в Хорьковые, в Одессе, они писали своих донесениях, которые опубликованны уже сейчас...они подчёркивали, что это организовано с целью уничтожить страну, часть носителей украинской идентичности. Они писали, они рассматривали эту проблему не как проблему продовольствия, а как политику целенаправленную Москвы по уничтожению большей части носители Украинской идентичности для того, чтобы оставшиеся ассимилировать и тем самым решить Украинский вопрос". Yakubovskiy, I; Lapchinskaya, N; Brekhunenko, V. Interview. Kiev, 03.10.2019

<sup>89</sup> "Я плохо понимаю. Есть историки или активисты, которые скажут, что Голодомор наказания против Украинского народа? Но есть тоже они, которые говорят, что это наказания против крестьян...потому что в Украине было много крестьян...". Ljana. Interview. Kiev, 02.10.2018

<sup>90</sup> "Вы верно говорите. Очень много крестьян, и в городах, очень мало Украинцев было. Действительно, Украинцы жили на деревне, сёлах. И это были крестьяне...но голод был по всем

Applebaum also shares this idea. She writes:

“Although they were used to some degree in all the other grain-producing regions of the USSR, blacklists were applied earlier, more widely and more rigorously in Ukraine”.<sup>91</sup>

As Ljana points out, Ukraine had many peasants that lived in the countryside. Hiroaki Kuromiya argues that Stalin’s priority was that of feeding the workers in the cities and soldiers. That is why the grain was exported from the countryside to the cities. Kuromiya states:

“Had Moscow stopped all grain exports and released all strategic grain reserves, the available 2.6 million tons of grain, under optimal conditions of distribution, might have saved up to 7.8 million lives, which was the approximate number of actual deaths from the 1932-1933 famine. Of course, Moscow did not release the grain reserves, even in the face of mass starvation”.<sup>92</sup>

But Furr refutes this view.

“The Soviet government was faced with a situation where there was simply not enough food to feed the whole population even if all exports had been stopped instead of just drastically curtailed as they were”.<sup>93</sup>

However, some experts argue that the fact that Stalin’s ruthless directives were taken and applied on Ukraine soil, especially in the Ukrainian countryside, does not indicate that such orders were specifically directed at ethnic Ukrainians. The tragedy struck at the peasantry in general, indiscriminately. Hiroaki Kuromiya affirms that:

“...both ethnic Ukrainians and Russians lived on either side of the border, and the border guards could not have distinguished between them since peasants did not carry passports”.<sup>94</sup>

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Советским Союзом. Мы это не будем случилось не говорим, что его не было. Это было, но ...там негде было вот это решение чёрной досок и оттуда выпускали людей искать еду, а с Украины не выпускали...”. “Ljana”. Interview, Kiev, 02.10.2019

<sup>91</sup> Applebaum, A. 2017; 197

<sup>92</sup> Kuromiya, A. 2008; 665. ‘The Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Reconsidered’. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/20451530?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/20451530?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

<sup>93</sup> Furr, G. 2014; 69

<sup>94</sup> Kuromiya, H. 2008; 668. ‘The Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Reconsidered’. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/20451530?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/20451530?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

Besides Soviet Ukraine was a multinational republic even if "...Stalin, Kaganovich, and Balytsky explained the repression in Soviet Ukraine as a response to Ukrainian nationalism".<sup>95</sup> Professor Georgy Kasianov, while discussing the way researches were conducted by western authors, pointed out as follows:

"That is, real losses, direct losses from hunger is 3.9 million. This is the last digit. But there is still need of further work, because they alluded to the fact that books from the registry offices were allegedly destroyed. But this is not true, they were not destroyed. Because acts of destruction were persecuted by law. Therefore, they are all there, you just need to research them, and it takes a lot of years or work, because there are a lot of these books."<sup>96</sup>

## 5. The birth of Holodomor

The commemoration of the famine did not start before 1948, when Ukrainians in Germany marked the fifteenth anniversary of the famine.<sup>97</sup> In Stalin's Soviet Union, to discuss or research the famine, was prohibited. The topic was shrouded in silence and one could risk a gulag sentence for discussing the event in public, as professor Kulchytsky explained to me. One can look at this through the definition of *Silencing of Assmann*, in which a perpetrator is reluctant to remember and creates taboos in order to stop victims from recounting. Russian Wikipedia holds that, before the birth of a proper narrative or any commemoration of the famine, news on the catastrophe had eventually appeared in western press already in 1933.

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<sup>95</sup> Snyder, T. 2011; 55

<sup>96</sup> "То есть, реальные потери, прямые потери от голода это 3,9 миллионов. Это последняя цифра. Но тут ещё нужно дальше работать, потому что ссылались на то, что книги из ЗАГСов, что они якобы уничтожались. Но, это не правда, они не уничтожались. За уничтожение полагалось уголовное наказание. Поэтому, все они есть, просто надо с ними работать, а это очень много лет нужно работать, потому что очень много этих книжек". Kasianov, G. Interview. Kiev, 16.01.2020.

<sup>97</sup> Applebaum, A. 2017; 337. (Citation: 'Zum 15. Jahrestag Der Furchtbaren, Durch Das blutdurstige Kommunistische Moskau Organisikhten Hungersnot in der Ukraine', Oseredok Project, Holodomor Research and Education Consortium. Flyers in Ukrainian, English and German, distributed by Ukrainian participants at an 11 April 1948 demonstration in Hanover, Germany, on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Famine of 1932-33 in Ukraine. Original, typed, <http://holodomor.ca/oseredok-project>)

“In the early spring of 1933, several newspapers in Western countries published a number of reports on the situation in the USSR ‘about ‘serious food difficulties and even worse conditions in Ukraine, the North Caucasus, the Lower Volga and several other regions’ (New York Times ) reported by the Soviet leadership”.<sup>98</sup>

But the fact that the news was published in the West and not in the Soviet Union, gave the topic a more propagandistic character than a historical one. With the rise of the new authoritarian fascist and Nazi regimes, the topic of the famine was quickly adopted by the anti-Communist extreme right.

“The theme of a deliberately organized hunger continued to be used by both pro-fascist circles in the USA and Nazi Germany”.<sup>99</sup>

In the beginning of the 40s with the breakout of World War II, the elucidation of what really took place in 1932-33 did not improve remaining subject of exploitations, according to Russian Wikipedia.

“The theme of the deliberately organized famine by the ‘Moscow Jewish Communist regime against Ukrainians’ was used in the propaganda and publications of the OUN (b) and OUN (m) in the first months of the German occupation of the Ukrainian SSR in 1941. Since 1942, after purges in both OUN, ‘Eastern Ukrainians’ were also involved in the publication company”.<sup>100</sup>

The nature of the famine’s debate would since then (the 30s and 40s) become subject

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<sup>98</sup> “В начале весны 1933 года в нескольких газетах западных стран публикуется ряд сообщений о ситуации в СССР — от признаваемых советским руководством ‘серьезных продовольственных затруднений и ещё более худшей ситуации на Украине, Северном Кавказе, Нижней Волге и ряде других регионов’ (Нью-Йорк Таймс) до ‘повального голода в СССР””. Википедия. ‘Голодомор в политике’.

[https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%80\\_%D0%B2\\_%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B5](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%80_%D0%B2_%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B5)

<sup>99</sup> “Тема намеренно-организованного голода продолжала использоваться как профашистскими кругами в США так и собственно нацистской Германией”. Википедия. ‘Голодомор в политике’.

[https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%80\\_%D0%B2\\_%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B5](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%80_%D0%B2_%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B5)

<sup>100</sup> “Тема намеренно организованного голода ‘московским жидо-коммунистическим режимом против украинцев’ использовалась в пропаганде и публикациях ОУН(б) и ОУН(м) в первые месяцы немецкой оккупации УССР в 1941 году. С 1942 года, после чисток в обеих ОУН, к компании публикации были привлечены и ‘восточные украинцы””. Википедия. ‘Голодомор в политике’.

[https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%80\\_%D0%B2\\_%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B5](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%80_%D0%B2_%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B5)



to propaganda. Like the news, the birth of a proper narrative on the event after World War II, would be highly divisive and a source of disagreements. Again, this narrative, like the newspaper reports of the previous decades, did not start in the Soviet Union, but abroad within the Ukrainian diaspora, especially in Canada and in the USA. Ukrainian immigrants had settled in Canada and in the USA during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Most of them took up jobs as peasants in Canada and coal miners and factory workers in the USA. The majority came from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, from the provinces of Bukovyna, Galicia and Carpatho-Ukraine.<sup>101</sup> Eventually a second wave of more nationally conscious immigrants, mostly composed by labor workers from rural areas, would emerge between the two world wars. These were educated and politically more aware than the previous wave and “...they had taken part in various attempts to achieve Ukrainian independence in the wake of the Bolsheviks revolution in the Russian empire”.<sup>102</sup> It was this wave of immigrants and their publications that managed to introduce Ukrainian national aspiration in the West. Yet the glorification of the Ukrainian nation and the fact that some of them, the “...so called integral nationalists flirted with various fascist ideology”<sup>103</sup>, would subsequently, draw harsh criticism especially from Russian historians. This continues down to these days.

In 1953 in Canada, Semen Pidhainy, a Ukrainian émigré founded the Ukrainian Association of Victims of Russian Communist Terror, where he encouraged other émigré groups to write not only their accounts of the famine, but also about life in the USSR. This resulted in a two-volume book titled *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin* published in 1953.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, Raphael Lemkin the Polish author of the term “genocide”, in 1953 was firm in indicating the gravity of the event and the perpetrator.

“A recently discovered 1953 speech by Raphael Lemkin, the Jewish-Polish scholar who coined the term genocide, contributed to the shift in the debate; Stalin's

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<sup>101</sup> Deitsch, J. 2006; 114-115

<sup>102</sup> Deitsch, J. 2006; 115

<sup>103</sup> Deitsch, J. 2006; 115

<sup>104</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 337-338

famine, he said, was "not simply a case of mass murder" but "a case of genocide, of destruction, not of individuals only, but of a culture and a nation."<sup>105</sup>

But in these years, the language of the Ukrainian diaspora still bore a political and dubious ring for western historians. Besides, the idea that such a large catastrophe was missing from Soviet history books, was quite unthinkable for many western historians. It was only in the 60s, during Nikita Khrushchev's post Stalinist thaw, that the famine got "...through the barrier of censorship in the Soviet Union".<sup>106</sup> Ukrainian dissidents mobilized themselves by using poetry and political writing, working for the democratization of the Soviet Union. However, they did not turn against the values of the Soviet society and continued to look upon socialism with loyalty. Among Ukrainian dissidents, the most prominent was Ivan Dzyuba, author of a book called "...Internationalism or Russification? ...the credo of the generation of the sixties".<sup>107</sup> In his book, Dzyuba made clear references to the famine affirming that this was part of Stalin's bigger plan of eradicating the Ukrainian nationality.

"...several million peasants were wiped out in the artificial famine of 1933".<sup>108</sup>

But in the sixties, arrests of dissidents were still common practice in the USSR. The Soviet government in Moscow was suspicious of any attempts to revive Ukrainian national identity.

"These muted attempts to resurrect the shadow of a national identity alarmed Moscow. In 1961 seven Ukrainian academics were arrested and tried in Lviv, among them Stepan Virun, who had helped write a pamphlet criticizing 'unjustified repressions accompanied by accusation of nationalism and the annihilation of hundreds of Party and cultural personalities'".<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Motyl, A. 2010. 'Deleting the Holodomor: Ukraine Unmakes Itself'.  
[https://www.jstor.org/stable/27870299?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/27870299?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

<sup>106</sup> Dietsch, J. 2006; 200

<sup>107</sup> Dietsch, J. 2006; 201

<sup>108</sup> Dietsch, J. 2006; 201. (Citation: Ivan Dzyuba, *Internationalism or Russification?* New York: Monad Press 1968, pp.130-131)

<sup>109</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 341. Citation: Beatrice Webb and Sidney Webb, *Is Soviet Communism a New Civilisation?* (London: The Left Review, 1936), 29

Nevertheless, Kulchytsky holds that in the 60s and 70s in Kuban, a region populated by mostly Ukrainians, songs and folklore tales about the famine were sung and told.

“But somehow I would find myself at a conference in Krasnodar. This is the center of the Kuban region. Everyone spoke Russian there, though the Ukrainian presence was still felt, and there were people who were studying the hunger in the Soviet Union, when all these studies were allowed. I was presented with a book published somewhere a long time ago. It was in 2007 or 2008. A book about the hunger in the Soviet Union. And there, in the preface, some leader, local leader, state, party, I do not know, but Russian of course, spoke of Ukrainian scientists who exaggerate everything, who did not say that the hunger was a general event that happened everywhere. But the documents themselves in this book were talking about an interesting phenomenon. There was such a Kuban folk choir, it was famous, one of the most famous ensembles, back in Soviet times. Often traveled abroad with its concerts. And with it, with this choir, back in the 60s, in the seventies, there was such a research group as it was called, which collected folklore. Including collected folklore about the famine of 32-33 years. Both songs and stories, it was in the seventies, 30 years, 40 years later, when all those people who had experienced the famine were still alive”.<sup>110</sup>

It was in the 70s when the discussion on the famine would plant its roots. Once again outside the Soviet Union. The Ukrainian diaspora abroad had grown large enough to establish its own journals, produce its historians and open the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute and the Canadian Institute for Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.<sup>111</sup> Yet, their attempts in shaping a mainstream historical narrative based on the Ukrainian identity were not significant enough. Since some Ukrainians collaborated with the Nazis during World War II, the idea of an independent Ukraine and

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<sup>110</sup> “Но, как-то бы я был на конференции в Краснодаре. Это центр Кубани. И там уже все говорят по-русски, но вот это украинское присутствие всё-таки ощущается, и люди были такие которые занимались исследованием голода в Советском Союзе, когда эти все исследования были разрешены. Мне подарили там книгу, опубликованную где-то давно, давно это, а восьмом году или седьмом году, 2007 или 2008 год. Книгу о голоде в Советском союзе. И там, в предисловии, какой-то руководитель, местный руководитель, государственный, партийный, я не знаю, но русский, ясное дело. Говорил об украинских учёных, которые всё преувеличивает, которые не говорят о том, что голод был вообще союзный, то есть, везде одинаковый голод. А вот сами документы в этой книге говоря об интересном явлении. Есть такой народные Кубанский хор, он знаменитый, один из наиболее знаменитых ансамблей, еще в советское время. Часто выезжал за границу со своими концертами. И при нём, при этом хоре, ещё в 60-ых годах, в семидесятых годах, была такая, как это назвать, исследовательская группа, которая собирала фольклор. В том числе собирала фольклор о голоде 32- 33 годов. И песни, и рассказы, то есть тогда это были семидесятые годы, 30 годы, это 40 лет разница, еще были живы все те люди, которые испытали на себе голод”.

Kulchytsky, S. Interview. Kiev, 01.10.2019

<sup>111</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 339

Ukraine identity was to many North Americans and Europeans, too nationalist and therefore dubious. But in the 80s, with *glasnost* and a better-established Ukrainian diaspora (with a larger body of middle-class citizens) in North America and Europe that could afford to support the production of films and books, the topic of the famine began to draw public attention. During this time the term “famine” (голод) was replaced by the neologism Holodomor and first appeared as “Holodomord” (not “Holodomor”) in the USA and Canada. It became more widespread and known as “Holodomor” in 1988.

“As a genocide perpetrated against the Ukrainian nation, the famine became known as the Holodomor, which means plague of hunger”.<sup>112</sup> Eventually the term was not new. It had been already used in the USSR where the word was adopted for the first time by Ivan Drach, a Ukrainian poet and activist.<sup>113</sup> In 1986 during Gorbachev’s *perestroika*, while the topic of the famine was still public taboo, at the Writers’ Union Congress in Ukraine, the famine was discussed as a topic of national importance. Here, Ivan Drach, accusing the leadership of the Communist Party of Ukraine, related the disaster of Chernobyl nuclear power plant, with the extermination of Ukrainians during the famine of 1932-33.<sup>114</sup>

My research indicates that today most Ukrainians have positively received the term Holodomor and fully acknowledge its meaning. The Ukrainian government and most Ukrainian historians also agree on the validity of the term. But Russian activists still look upon the concept of Holodomor with suspicion. Most Russian sources I consulted still refer to the disaster as “голод” (famine). So did several Russians and other ex-Soviet citizens that I had the chance to talk to in Russia, Norway and Germany over the course of the writing of this thesis. Only a few times, Russian historians and other people I conversed with, used the term Holodomor (with the Ukrainian pronunciation), only to make sure that we were talking about the famine of 1932-33 and no other Soviet famines. The fact that it was the Ukrainian émigrés who started the discussion on Holodomor abroad, with the help of non-Ukrainian historians such as Robert Conquest and James Mace, have often inflated the idea of “myth of Holodomor”<sup>115</sup> among Russian

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<sup>112</sup> Dietsch, J. 2006; 205

<sup>113</sup> Википедия. ‘Голодомор в политике’. [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Голодомор\\_в\\_политике](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Голодомор_в_политике)

<sup>114</sup> Dietsch, J. 2006; 203

<sup>115</sup> Прудникова, Е; Чигирин, И; 2013

activists. Robert Conquest (15 July 1917 – 3 August 2015) and James Mace (18 February 1952 – 3 May 2004), the former a British-American and the latter an American historian, had been providing research assistance to the Ukrainian Famine Project initiated by Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. A pioneer project based on eyewitness testimony and the memories of over 200 victims.<sup>116</sup>

Robert Conquest was the author of several books on the Soviet Union and Communism in Khrushchev's thaw period. His most notable work remains: *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* published in 1968. In 1986, he published the book *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* assisted by James Mace that helped Conquest collect and process historical material for his book at Harvard University, benefiting from the 1984 US President Ronald Reagan's commitment in the famine issue. Reagan had in 1984 given green light to a study on the Ukrainian famine.

"In 1984, the Ronald Reagan administration no longer just used this wording in internal manuals for fighters against the 'red threat' but was about to bring the theme of 'extermination of Ukrainians by the Soviet government' to the international level. The United States Hunger Commission in Ukraine was even created with the goal of 'expanding the world's knowledge of hunger and to provide American society with a better understanding of the Soviet system by exposing the role of the Soviets in Ukrainian hunger'. The commission, headed by historian James Mace, worked until 1988 and concluded that 'Joseph Stalin and his entourage committed genocide against ethnic Ukrainians in 1932-1933'".<sup>117</sup>

James Mace was appointed the commission's executive director. It took the commission

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<sup>116</sup> Malko, V. A. 2019. The Holodomor as Genocide in Historiography and Memory.

[https://www.academia.edu/41145405/The\\_Holodomor\\_as\\_Genocide\\_in\\_Historiography\\_and\\_Memory](https://www.academia.edu/41145405/The_Holodomor_as_Genocide_in_Historiography_and_Memory)

<sup>117</sup> 'В 1984 году администрация Рональда Рейгана уже не просто использовала эту формулировку во внутренних методичках для борцов с «красной угрозой», а собиралась вывести тему «уничтожения украинцев советским правительством» на международный уровень. Была даже создана Комиссия США по голоду на Украине с целью «расширения познаний мира о голоде и для обеспечения американского общества лучшим пониманием советской системы посредством разоблачения роли Советов в украинском голоде». Комиссия, которую возглавлял историк Джеймс Мейс, проработала до 1988 года и пришла к выводу, что «Иосиф Сталин и его окружение совершили геноцид в отношении этнических украинцев в 1932-1933 годах». Аргументы и факты, 23.10.2019. 'Реальный голод и мифический Голодомор. Трагедия как орудие пропаганды'. [https://aif.ru/society/history/realnyy\\_golod\\_i\\_mificheskij\\_golodomor\\_tragediya\\_kak\\_orudie\\_propagandy](https://aif.ru/society/history/realnyy_golod_i_mificheskij_golodomor_tragediya_kak_orudie_propagandy)

three years to finish its work which was composed by a collection of oral and written testimonies from the diaspora survivors. James Mace paid a visit to Ukraine in 1990 where he handed the testimonies gathered by the commission to Ukrainian historian Stanislav Kulchytsky. Years later, Kulchytsky claimed that these testimonies helped him come to the conclusion that the famine was a form of organized terror.<sup>118</sup>

These publications would start a discussion on the “distortion of historical facts”, “myths” and “falsification of history” that today has still not diminished, especially due to the origins and the intentions of the Ukrainian diaspora, Ukrainian elites and Ukrainian nationalizing agencies. Douglas Tottle, a Canadian labor activist, in 1987 published a book titled *Fraud, Famine and Fascism: The Ukrainian Genocide Myth from Hitler to Harvard*. Although Tottle was Canadian, his book remains the first elaborate “Soviet Response” to the famine.<sup>119</sup> In it, he argued that Ukraine had eventually been starving due to bad weather, modernization and kulak sabotage, and he refused to concede that the famine was deliberately organized. He also rejects the role of the Communist leadership in it, and claims that the creation of the “myth” of Holodomor and all accounts of it, were produced by Nazi propaganda.

My research has disclosed that such views are what most of the Russian narrative on Holodomor agrees with, today.

“In retrospect, Tottle’s book is significant mostly as a harbinger of what was to come, nearly three decades later. Its central argument was built around the supposed link between Ukrainian ‘nationalism’-defined as any discussion of Soviet repression in Ukraine, or any discussion of Ukrainian independence or sovereignty- and fascism, as well as American and British intelligence. Much later this same set of links-Ukraine, fascism, the CIA- would be used in the Russian information campaign against the Ukrainian independence and anti-corruption movement of 2014. In a very real sense the groundwork for that campaign was laid in 1987”.<sup>120</sup>

In 1991, Ukraine elected its first president and voted for independence becoming a sovereign state acknowledged as such by the world. These political changes triggered

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<sup>118</sup> Dietsch, J. 2006; 207

<sup>119</sup> Applebaum, A. 2017; 344

<sup>120</sup> Applebaum, A. 2017; 345

what Aleida Assmann calls *interaction between memory and history*. From here, Ukraine's history could reach the public opinion. The communist party, before it stepped out of power, passed a final resolution on the famine of 1932-33, blaming Stalin of deliberate mass-killing. The Ukrainian political debate would for the first time be independent from Moscow and the foundation of new parties could take place. Ivan Drach and other intellectuals founded Rukh, a political party that pushed for a broader acknowledgment of the famine.

“...he (Ivan Drach) demanded that Russians ‘repent’, and that they follow the example of Germans in acknowledging their guilt. He referred directly to the Holocaust, noting that the Jews had ‘forced the whole world to admit its guilt before them’”.<sup>121</sup>

In the 90s, the famine would inevitably enter the political sphere. In 1993, during the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the famine, a monument to the victims was inaugurated in Kiev.

“President Leonid Kravchuk stated officially that the history of the famine and the monument in itself should be used as a political resource to legitimize national sovereignty of the democratic state”.<sup>122</sup>

The fact that the origins of the Holodomor term are highly complex and extremely divisive and that furthermore it has been utilized both in Ukrainian and Russian literature with complete different purposes, and later on in politics, clearly indicates that the famine of 1932-33 is not just a simple factological question of what actually took place. In the beginning of the 2000s, Russia began advancing the idea of a joint commission of Ukrainian and Russian historians. The aim of the commission was that of “harmonization” of historical facts. Two historical events proved to be particularly challenging. The war between the Bolshevik and White Russian armies of 1917-21, and the artificial famine of 1932-33.<sup>123</sup> The discussion on how the researches of Holodomor

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<sup>121</sup> Applebaum, A. 2017; 351

<sup>122</sup> Dietsch, J. 2006; 207. (Citation: Holos Ukrainy, September 9, 1993)

<sup>123</sup> Kuzio, T. 2 July 2002. ‘Ukrainian- Russian Historical Commission raises storm’.  
[http://www.taraskuzio.com/media13\\_files/5.pdf](http://www.taraskuzio.com/media13_files/5.pdf)

were conducted, the literature it produced and the divisive political debate that surrounds the famine still now, are among the many obstacles that hinder the harmonization of the understanding of the historical event between the two nations and the harmonization that the intergovernmental commission of Ukrainian and Russian historians is expected to reach.

## 6. Political usage of Holodomor in Ukraine and Russia

Andreas Kappeler is a Swiss historian and professor of Eastern European history in Vienna. He initiated an international research project on Russian-Ukrainian relations at the University of Vienna.<sup>124</sup> In his article “Ukraine and Russia: Legacies of the imperial past and competing memories” (2014), points out that the famine was man-made and caused by the policies of Stalinist Soviet Union in peacetime. My reading of different sources and interviews with experts on the event disclose that most Ukrainian, Russian and other experts agree on both the former and the latter. The famine was the result of Stalin's ruthless policies, driven by disregard for human life. It was man-made and therefore totally avoidable. Yet, there are some crucial elements in this agreement that have kickstarted a lively political debate and still divide Ukraine and Russia and internally in Ukraine. A few nuances both exploited and implemented in politics, make the historical understanding of Holodomor problematic, blurring the line between history and politics. The most recurrent and significant of them is based on the following question: ***Was the famine a chain of tragic accidents that progressively worsened due to Stalin's unscrupulousness, or did Stalin intentionally cause the famine with the purpose to kill ethnic Ukrainians?***

Ukrainian politicians started to include the history of the famine into their political message, mostly defending but at times also discarding the assertion that Holodomor

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<sup>124</sup> Wikipedia. 'Andreas Kappeler'. [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andreas\\_Kappeler](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andreas_Kappeler)



was a “deliberate act of mass killing” or genocide (геноцид) directed at the Ukrainian people and their nation alike. However, most Russian experts and some Russian politicians adhere to the theory that the hunger was caused by a series of unlucky events and that the topic of the famine must remain outside the political sphere.

“Putin’s government has opposed recognizing the famine in Ukraine as genocide, and this view also dominates Russian historiography”.<sup>125</sup>

One can look at both sides, the Ukrainian and the Russian, as two phenomena of “History politics”. Ukraine politicizes the famine (*history politics* by Miller), while Russia denies the wrongdoings of the communist party (*silencing* by Assmann) leading to a dispute between the two where the past becomes “traumatic”. Such different political opinions and approaches to the causes of the famine, have rendered the topic highly debated and divisive and above all, difficult to analyze from a historical perspective. Therefore, some sources claim that the political discussion on Holodomor distorts the true historical facts and turns Holodomor into myth. I asked Ukrainian historian Georgii Kasianov: “How in your view does the myth of Holodomor distort the historical facts?”<sup>126</sup>. He replied:

“What it means... how a myth distorts... A myth uses facts. Yes, the myth is built on some facts, but the meaning of the myth is that it has a certain symbolic value. So, according to this, myth uses facts, but it uses them selectively. You can’t say that it distorts them. Because any form of description of something, already distorts that something. That is, it already distorts any story about something, therefore the assertion that the myth distorts, is probably a little politicized when the word myth is interpreted as something that was created specifically to distort, in someone’s interests. Therefore, I would not say that the myth distorts, the myth simply forms a certain reality, hyperreality. And this hyperreality, is here already functioning in a certain space: mental, political and so on. So, I would not say that the myth distorts, but simply forms its own special reality

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<sup>125</sup> Himka, J. 2013. Many of the issues are discussed in Stanislav Kulchytsky, “What Is the Crux of Ukraine-Russia Dispute?” *The Day*, 3, 10, 17, and 24 February 2009, <https://day.kyiv.ua/en/article/close/what-crux-ukraine-russia-dispute-1>

<sup>126</sup> “Как, на ваш взгляд, миф о Голодоморе искажает исторические факты?” Kasianov, G. Interview. Kiev, 16.01.2020.

or hyperreality”.<sup>127</sup>

The task of reconstructing historical facts from the Soviet time is a rather new discipline in Ukraine and other ex-Soviet Republics. Russian historian Alexei Miller claims that ex-communist countries are experiencing the phenomenon of “History politics”, rewriting history and doing politics simultaneously. In his article “The Holodomor and the building of a nation” (2011), Kasianov confirms Miller’s assertion. He discusses how history had to be rewritten in the ex-Soviet Republics after the fall of the Soviet Union, moving from “sovereign” to “national” history. In the process of writing a national history, the past also became an instrument in the creation of political sovereignty. He writes:

“In all these countries, history is used as an argument in political debates and in sorting out relations with neighboring states, especially with Russia as the legal successor of the Soviet Union...Professional historians are invariably drawn into the politics of history, and everywhere this leads to conflict between representative of the state, who habitually try to impose a ‘correct’ history on historians, and the professional community”.<sup>128</sup>

According to Miller, the consequence of this involvement of politics into history, compromises the trustworthiness of history itself. Politicians and historians alike no longer adhere to historical accuracy.

“...I don’t think that Putin cares about historical accuracy. As we know, Professor Kulchystsky, also doesn’t care about historical accuracy. He started his career

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<sup>127</sup> “Что значит, как миф искажает...Миф использует факты. Да. Миф строится каких-то фактах, но смысл мифа заключается в том, что оно имеет определённую символическую ценность. Так, поэтому миф факты использует, но использует их выборочно. Говорит, что он искажает, нельзя. Потому, что любая форма описания чего-то, она уже искажает, что что-то... То есть, любой рассказ о чём-то он уже искажает, поэтому формулировка, что миф искажает, наверное, она немножко политизированная, когда слово миф трактуется как что-то, что создано специально, чтобы исказить, в чьих-то интересах. Поэтому я не стал говорить, что миф искажает, миф просто формирует определенная реальность, гиперреальность. И эта гиперреальность, вот и она уже функционирует в определённом пространстве: умственном, политическом и так далее. Так что, я и не сказал бы, что миф искажает, но просто формирует свою особую реальность или гиперреальность”. Kasianov, G. Interview. Kiev, 16.01.2020

<sup>128</sup> Kasianov, G. 09.12.2014. ‘The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation’.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10611428.2011.11065433>

with books which fought against the concept of Holodomor because he was living in communist Kiev”.<sup>129</sup>

Holodomor was born abroad, but the political debate started in Ukraine followed by opposition that came not only from Russia. In Russia, the Ukrainian politicization of Holodomor has met with perhaps the fiercest opposition. However, reactions were stark within Ukraine too. Several Russian amateur historians claim that the myth around the famine is a purely political device that serves the purpose of politics, either pro-Russia or pro-Ukraine. Miller holds that it is understandable that the famine is politicized:

“...this famine tells the story of the eastern, central and southern part of Ukraine as the story of the victims of the Soviet rule...so if we want to fix anti-Russian narrative, we should focus on the famine. This is one thing. Another thing, the famine becomes very important for Ukrainian nationalists from the West, and particularly from the immigration in Canada and the USA. Not because these regions where they come from suffer from the famine, they didn't. But because they were target of accusation for their role in the Holocaust and they decided that the best strategy to fight against this image of perpetrator is to construct the image of victim. That is why they hired Conquest. They hired him. It is not a secret, it is already an acknowledged fact, and they hired Applebaum recently”.<sup>130</sup>

On the other hand, several Ukrainian politicians see the implementation of historical events in politics as a positive benefit of Ukraine's gained freedom of speech after the fall of the Soviet Union, and also fundamental to the development of democracy. After all, Miller explains that freedom of speech is a necessary condition of “History politics”. This set off fierce debates not only among politicians, but historians too. For some, like Oxana Pachlovska of the department of literature and philosophy of Rome University, the use of history in the political debate is a matter of democratic development. For others, it is not. Viktor Kondrashin for example, claims that scholarly debates should not enter the world of politics. Criticized by Stanislav Kulchytsky, author of “Why did Stalin

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<sup>129</sup> Miller, A. Interview. St. Petersburg, 12.11.2019

<sup>130</sup> Miller, A. Interview. St. Petersburg, 12.11.2019

exterminate the Ukrainians? Comprehending the Holodomor”<sup>131</sup>, Kondrashin comments on Kulchytsky’s book and some statements from Pachlovska, as follows:

“The author (Stanislav Kulchytsky) further found it expedient to adorn the front cover with a conception of the ‘Holodomor as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people,’ which he probably shares with Oxana Pachlovska of the Department of Arts and Philosophy, Chair of Ukrainian Studies, at La Sapienza University of Rome. ‘Why Stalin destroyed Ukraine’, Pachlovska writes, ‘is above all one of the key issues of Russian history. Until the Russians start to recognize the Holodomor as an act of genocide, as the Germans did vis-a-vis the Holocaust, their country will never become democratic. Meanwhile, the growing distance between Russia and Europe will become an abyss.’ How is Russia supposed to respond to such ultimatum-like statements? This is no longer a scholarly debate but pure politics”<sup>132</sup>.

Miller too was quick and firm in dismissing the issue brought up by Pachlovska on democracy, indicating that political discussions problematize the historical facts.

“It is interesting that she starts with Stalin having destroyed Ukraine. If Stalin destroyed Ukraine...they should reject fully and completely the legacy of Stalin. Give Galicia back to Poland, give Bukovina to Romania, give Transcarpathia to the Czech Republic...to begin with, she says that Stalin destroyed Ukraine and then she says that this is the issue of Russian history. Why Russian history? It is Soviet History, in which Ukrainians and Russians participate together, but she wants Russia to be guilty for what happened to Ukraine which she compares to the Holocaust”<sup>133</sup>.

I also discussed the topic of the politicization of Holodomor with Artemii Plekhanov and asked him how the famine is politically utilized/not utilized in the two countries. He stated the following:

“...about the famine as genocide...the tradition was started with the Ukrainian diaspora from Canada, from the USA, from Australia and from other regions and during Perestroika this discourse came to post-Soviet Ukraine as the most important narrative...in this time Ukrainian historians started to open the archives, open the documents about the USSR, about political movements and the political situation in the

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<sup>131</sup> Kulchytsky S. 1.11.2005. ‘Why did Stalin exterminate the Ukrainians? Comprehending the Holodomor’. <http://faminegenocide.com/resources/kulchytsky/kulchynsky2.htm> (no longer accessible)

<sup>132</sup> Kondrashin, V. 01.04.2019. ‘Was the 1932-33 famine in Ukraine “An act of genocide against the Ukrainian people?”’. My response to S. V. Kulchytsky’. Congress1917.gr <https://congress1917.gr/archives/1017>

<sup>133</sup> Miller, A. Interview. St. Petersburg, 12.11.2019

30s in Ukraine, and they understood that the historiography in the Soviet Union was not completely true”.<sup>134</sup>

Yet Plekhanov sees two problems emerging from this *interaction between memory and history*<sup>135</sup> which are also the cause of disputes between the two countries. One from the Ukrainian side and the other from the Russian. He claims that Russia still lacks political discussion after the fall of the USSR.

“...Russia now is continuing the USSR... like a colonial actor and political actor and after that...political problems continue from the USSR. On the one hand, Russia is a new political organization and people now should not answer to difficult questions as they did in 1952-53, but on the other hand, we see that the elites from Russia,... now it's a continuation of the Soviet elite in all (Russian) regions”.<sup>136</sup>

While Ukraine faces a different problem. Plekhanov holds that:

“...Ukrainian elites have real simple answers... ‘what is wrong with our community, what is wrong with our societies...it is Russia. It is colonization problems...it is Chernobyl...all our problems are from Russia and we have good answers...Russia should pay for it’. Simple answers for real difficult problems in post-Soviet Ukraine. It is very simple ‘problems are not in our country but in another country’”.<sup>137</sup>

In addition to this, he claims that Ukraine has a “victimization” problem: “The fact is that in Ukraine, memory politics is built on the basis of victimization”.<sup>138</sup> Victimization together with the question on the perpetrator, has highly problematized the reception of the Ukrainian political usage of Holodomor in Russia. The question whether Ukraine adopts the myth of *martyrium*<sup>139</sup> where the oppressor is the neighbor (Russia) and the oppressed is asserted to be right, is often used by Russian activists against Ukraine. They claim that Ukraine uses it to distinguish herself from Russia. Regarding Plekhanov’s statement on Russia’s “continuation of Soviet elite” and her claim on

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<sup>134</sup> Plekhanov, A. Interview. St. Petersburg, 13.11.2019

<sup>135</sup> Assmann, A. Spring 2008

<sup>136</sup> Plekhanov, A. Interview. St. Petersburg, 13.11.2019

<sup>137</sup> Plekhanov, A. Interview. St. Petersburg, 13.11.2019

<sup>138</sup> “Дело в том, что в Украине политика памяти, выстроенная, исходя из ‘framework жертвы’”. Plekhanov, A. Interview. St. Petersburg, 13.11.2019

<sup>139</sup> Kolstø, P; 20; 2005

control over certain regions, one can also relate such issues to the myth of *antiquitas*.<sup>140</sup>

But Ukraine has been also dealing with division within her territory too. These various interpretations offered formidable material that has up till now served different politicians in their political campaigns. In my interview with the Ukrainian historian Georgii Kasianov I asked him what the main causes of disagreement exploited by politics between the Russian and Ukrainian versions of the famine are. His statements confirm that Ukraine has not reached a consensus on the famine and that several approaches to the famine exist. He added a third element that gives rise to disagreements in addition to victimization and the perpetrator: The number of victims.

“...and the Ukrainian side, speaking of the official version, claims that it was a genocide of ethnic Ukrainians, a purposeful specially created famine. This is the main contradiction, but we are talking about official versions, because in Ukrainian historiography, for example, there are different approaches, they are more diverse than the official version. They were diverse in terms of the interpretation of the term genocide. Because there are historians who claim that there was a genocide of ethnic Ukrainians, while others talk about the genocide of a political nation. There is a discrepancy regarding the number of people killed and affected by hunger. That is, Ukrainian historiography is not monolithic, in this sense. There are different opinions, different approaches, including the approach that comes down to the fact that the word genocide is not applicable to this particular situation”.<sup>141</sup>

While on the Russian general opinion, he states:

“The official version which historians adhere to in Russia, is that the famine of 32-33 was Union-wide. It occurred not only in Ukraine, but also in other agricultural regions and in Kazakhstan, which was then not an agricultural region. And based on this, the Russian version claims that it was not deliberate genocide, but it was connected to the general economic situation, with the way of managing the economy, with forced collectivization, and so on. That is what destabilized the agriculture in a

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<sup>140</sup> Kolstø, P; 22; 2005

<sup>141</sup> “...а украинская сторона, если говорить об официальной версии, утверждает, что это был геноцид этнических украинцев, целенаправленный, специально созданный голод. В этом основное противоречие, но мы говорим об официальных версиях, потому что в украинской историографии, например, есть разные подходы, они более разнообразны чем официальная версия. Они были разнообразные из точки зрения трактовки самого термина геноцид. Потому что есть историки, которые утверждают, что был геноцид этнических украинцев, а кто-то говорит, что говорит о геноциде политической нации. Есть расхождение относительно количества погибших и пострадавших от голода. То есть украинская историография не является монолитной, в этом смысле. Есть разные мнения, разные подходы, в том числе и подход, который сводится к тому, что слово геноцид не применимо к этой конкретной ситуации”. Kasianov, G. Interview. Kiev, 16.01.2020.

certain way. In addition to this, a certain social policy that was aimed at eliminating the individual farms was adopted. The peasant farmers. All this led to the famine. Hunger was not aimed at the destruction of any particular ethnic group, in this case, the Ukrainians. This is the central contradiction. The Russian side claims that if this must be genocide, then this genocide applies to everyone, but rather it was not genocide, but sociocide, aimed at the peasantry.<sup>142</sup>

Different Ukrainian presidents have made use of the Holodomor memory in their political campaigns (see below). They also brought different interpretations of the famine into the political discourse. Each political implementation of the events was often incompatible with the other. Such politicization of the famine did not take place in Russia. Apart from a few commentaries of former president of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev, my research has revealed that Russian politicians are far less involved in the discussion on Holodomor. I had a brief conversation with Artemii Plekhanov on this topic. I asked him why there are such substantial differences between the Ukrainian and Russian use of the famine on politics. He told me that this is partly due to Russia's desire not to take part in any political discussion. He compares the discussion on Holodomor to other issues Russia is facing, such as the colonization of Siberia and the Caucasus. In such situations, the typical approach of Russia to the matter, is to refute all allegations without entering the discussion. One can look at this approach as a type of perpetrator's *strategy of survival* discussed by Aleida Assmann. A defense against guilt and an attempt to shut down the memory and its recognition of guilt.

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<sup>142</sup> “Официальная версия которой придерживаются историки в России заключается в том, что голод 32- 33 годов был общесоюзным, что он был не только на Украине, но и в других регионах земледельческих и в Казахстане, который тогда не был земледельческим регионом. И исходя из этого российская версия предполагает, утверждает, что это не был геноцид целенаправленный, что это было связано с общей экономической ситуации, со способом ведения хозяйства, с форсированной коллективизацией, так далее. Вот всё что дестабилизировало определённый уклад сельского хозяйства, плюс определенная социальная политика, которая была направлена на то, чтобы ликвидировать единоличное крестьянство, да, крестьян единоличников. Что вот это всё привело в купе к голоду, что голод не был направлен, чтобы уничтожить какую-то конкретную этническую группу, данном случае украинцев. Вот это вот- центральное противоречие. Российская сторона утверждает, что если был геноцид, то тогда это геноцид относится ко всем, а скорее это был не геноцид, а социцид, направлен крестьянство”. Kasianov, G. Interview. Kiev, 16.01.2020

## 6.1 Ukrainian Presidents and the Implementation of Holodomor in Politics

Leonid Kravchuk, Leonid Kuchma, Viktor Yushchenko and Petro Poroshenko have supported the interpretation of Holodomor that holds that the famine was not just man-made, but it was an act of mass killing. Viktor Yanukovich officially opposed this version, but he also appeared to have endorsed it on some occasions. Trauma, “History politics” and “Myths”, have been drawn into their use of the famine. All the interpretations were problematical and none of them were fully recognized on world scale.

Leonid Kravchuk was the first president of Ukraine after the fall of the Soviet Union. He was officially the first Ukrainian politician to import the diaspora’s term Holodomor to Ukraine. His task was primarily that of distancing Ukraine from the Soviet past, yet his “History politics” has been highly criticized. Kasianov holds that Kravchuk’s efforts in condemning the crimes of totalitarianism such as the famine of 1932-33, were necessary in order to relaunch his new political career after his role at the highest level of the Communist party nomenklatura.

“He and his entourage actively mastered the rhetoric of the ‘totalitarian past’ in general and of the famine of 1932-33 in particular”.<sup>143</sup>

The Russian press too was critical of Kravchuk, describing his rhetoric on the famine as a topic aimed at criminalizing the Soviet past, allying with growing nationalism and diverting the attention of the Ukrainian public opinion from the economic problems Ukraine was facing. A shift of public attention from certain events to others is what Aleida Assmann calls *politics of forgetting*. Kasianov, discussing the problematic role of Holodomor in the building of the Ukrainian nation, wrote:

“For the first president of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk, it was extremely important to gain a foothold in his post, and in the wake of nationalism, the easiest way to do this

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<sup>143</sup> Kasianov, G. 09.12.2014. ‘The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation’. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10611428.2011.11065433>



was to deny the Soviet legacy. Moreover, it helped to distract the population from serious economic problems. The theme of the famine came in handy”.<sup>144</sup>

Kasianov points out that Kravchuk’s condemnation of the Soviet times especially, became an important aspect of what he calls “Nuremberg trial for communism”.<sup>145</sup>

“Totalitarianism” was represented as the enemy of the Ukrainian people to be fought by a new nationalist revival. Dissidents that had previously worked for the party nomenklatura “...who had flourished under the previous regime and again found cushy jobs under the ‘new regime’”.<sup>146</sup> Kasianov further problematizes Kravchuk’s approach to the famine. He points out that Kravchuk had used Holodomor to both support and combat ‘nationalistic fabrication’ concerning the famine”.<sup>147</sup> An international scholarly conference on the famine of 1932-33, was held in Kiev in 1993. Kravchuk participated in the conference where he described the Holodomor as genocide. Yet, ten years before the fiftieth anniversary of the famine, Kravchuk as head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party:

“...took an active part in counter propaganda efforts directed against the anti-Soviet campaign unleashed in the West in connection with the so called -fiftieth anniversary of the man made famine in Ukraine”.<sup>148</sup>

Kuchma (the second president of Ukraine) was the first president to push for the commemoration of the famine and for its national recognition, elevating Holodomor to a Ukrainian national symbol. In November 2002, he declared:

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<sup>144</sup> “Для первого президента Украины Леонида Кравчука крайне важно было укрепиться на своем посту, и на волне национализма проще всего это было сделать через отрицание советского наследия. К тому же это помогало отвлечь население от серьезных экономических проблем. Тема голодомора пришлось очень кстати”. News.rambler.ru.  
<https://news.rambler.ru/ukraine/43237402-kak-golod-30-h-godov-pomogaet-ukrainskim-prezidentam-uder-zhivat-vlast/>

<sup>145</sup> Kasianov, G. 09.12.2015. ‘The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation’.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10611428.2011.11065433>

<sup>146</sup> Kasianov, G. 09.12.2015. ‘The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation’.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10611428.2011.11065433>

<sup>147</sup> Kasianov, G. 09.12.2015. ‘The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation’.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10611428.2011.11065433>

<sup>148</sup> Kasianov, G. 09.12.2014. ‘The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation’.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10611428.2011.11065433>

“The Holodomor became a national disaster. During the years 1932-1933 a fifth of the rural population of Ukraine died”.<sup>149</sup>

Kuchma also noted that a memorial to the victims of Holodomor should be erected in Kiev to commemorate the victims and remind the Ukrainian people of their immortality. He appealed to what Aleida Assmann calls “a moral model of understanding the past” calling for the acknowledgment of the traumatic memory of the victims.<sup>150</sup>

“This is not a formality- it is a testimony of deep respect for the dead, an immortal memory of this tragic page in history and at the same time- a symbol of the immortality of our people”.<sup>151</sup>

But this type of use of Holodomor, what Miller calls “...ideological indoctrination of society with regard to historical consciousness and collective memory...”<sup>152</sup>, in the creation of the Ukrainian nation, got problematized by Viktor Kondrashin.

“We will not use this tragedy for political purposes. For example, to consolidate the nation in the upbringing of young people, as it is done in Ukraine”.<sup>153</sup>

Furthermore, Kuchma’s nationalistic view on Holodomor has been seriously challenged not only in Russia but in Ukraine too. Former deputy of the Odessa city Council Alexander Visiliev claims that Kuchma’s statements are propaganda with a powerful influence on the subconsciousness of people living in a formerly peasant country.

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<sup>149</sup> “Голодомор стал национальной катастрофой. Только на протяжении 1932-1933 годов погибла пятая часть сельского населения Украины”. Newsru.com 2002. ‘Украина должна рассказать миру правду о голодоморе, заявил президент Кучма’. <https://www.newsru.com/world/23nov2002/gk.html>

<sup>150</sup> Assmann, 2017; 57

<sup>151</sup> “Это не формальность -это свидетельство глубокого уважения к погибшим, бессмертной памяти об этой трагической странице истории и в то же время - символ бессмертия нашего народа”. Newsru.com 2002. ‘Украина должна рассказать миру правду о голодоморе, заявил президент Кучма’. <https://www.newsru.com/world/23nov2002/gk.html>

<sup>152</sup> Miller, 2010. ‘The Ruinous Consequence of History Politics for the Country and Its Relations with Neighbors’. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Russia: Politics and History-14896>

<sup>153</sup> “Мы не будем использовать эту трагедию в политических целях, к примеру, для консолидации нации и воспитания молодёжи, как это делается на Украине”. Regnum.ru 2009. ‘Украина признает правоту России в дискуссии о "голодоморе": интервью Виктора Кондрашина’. <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/1220438.html>

“The nationalist interpretation of this tragedy is positively perceived by the population (this is also confirmed by the data of sociologists), this approach affects the strings of the collective unconscious. In a recently former peasant country, propaganda is superimposed on family memory”.<sup>154</sup>

Kuchma is also the author of a book called “Украина не Россия” (Ukraine is not Russia) published in 2003 in which he attempts to unveil an alleged conspiracy of silence around the sore spots in the relation between the two countries. One of the topics he discusses is the famine of 1932-33. Holodomor is used to single out the Ukrainian people as “a/the People of God”.<sup>155</sup> Kuchma’s assertions are typically targeted by Russian historiography due to their mythological nature. In this case, the myth of *sui generis* that sees the myth-making nation builders highlighting certain differences between the peoples of two countries where one (the Ukrainian) of the two is distinguished because of its uniqueness, exclusivity and its superior cultural background.

Viktor Yushchenko (third President of Ukraine from 2005 to 2010) continued implementing Kuchma’s interpretation of Holodomor into politics, and he also pushed for the recognition of Holodomor as “genocide” with far more vigor than his predecessors. Yushchenko, who also faced the task of rewriting history in post-Soviet Ukraine, established a Ukrainian Institute of national memories under his leadership. Miller asserts that the establishing of institutions and museums by the ruling party is a characteristic of “History politics”.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> “Националистическая трактовка этой трагедии воспринимается населением положительно (это подтверждают и данные социологов), такой подход затрагивает струны коллективного бессознательного. В бывшей еще недавно крестьянской стране пропаганда накладывается на семейную память”. Народный корреспондент, 16.12.2018. ‘Геноцида украинцев не было’. Почему Киев боится правды о голодоморе’. <https://nk.org.ua/politika/genotsida-ukraintsev-ne-byilo-pochemu-kiev-boitsya-pravdyi-o-golodomore-173453>

<sup>155</sup> Garianin, A. 2007. ‘Непрочитанное послание Леонида Кучмы’. Журнала «Отечественные записки» 2001 - 2014 годов. <http://www.strana-oz.ru/2007/1/neprochitannoe-poslanie-leonida-kuchmy>

<sup>156</sup> Miller, 2010. ‘The Ruinous Consequence of History Politics for the Country and Its Relations with Neighbors’. Russia in Global Affairs. [https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Russia:\\_Politics\\_and\\_History-14896](https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Russia:_Politics_and_History-14896)

“On Yushchenko’s initiative, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory was established, which was tasked with ‘recreating the just history of the Ukrainian nation’ and ‘forming and implementing state policy in this direction’... the real steps to create it officially counted from July 11, 2005, when Yushchenko as President of Ukraine, signed decree No. 1087/2005 ‘on additional measures to perpetuate the memory of victims of political repression and famine in Ukraine’. This document instructed the government ‘to solve the day of remembrance of the victims of Holodomor and political repression, which in 2005 was celebrated on November 26, the issue of creating the Ukrainian Institute of national memory’”.<sup>157</sup>

By elevating the famine to “genocide” he internationalized the topic too. Holodomor became a pivotal topic of Yushchenko’s career, but the “History politics” use he made of the famine, received harsh critiques. In an interview released to Regnum.ru, Georgii Kasianov states that the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory’s work is not scientific due to its political nature. “This is an organization that appeared on a political request, its creation was very chaotic,...”.<sup>158</sup> According to Yushchenko, the famine was not just man-made, it was an act of mass killing with the intention of eliminating the Ukrainian statehood and not just Ukrainian nationalists.

“The famine in Ukraine in the 1930s did not cause death by famine, but it was murder of the people through famine...famine in Ukraine was chosen as a way to pacify the Ukrainian people. These crimes, in their scope, objectives and methods, certainly fall within the definition of genocide given by the 1948 United Nations Convention. The goal was to bleed Ukraine dry, undermine its forces and thus eliminate the possibility of restoring Ukrainian statehood. This goal was not hidden”.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> “По инициативе Ющенко был создан Украинский институт национальной памяти, перед которым была поставлена задача ‘воссоздания справедливой истории украинской нации’ и ‘формирования и реализации государственной политики в этом направлении’... реальные шаги по его созданию официально отсчитываются с 11 июля 2005 года, когда Ющенко как президент Украины подписал указ № 1087/2005 ‘О дополнительных мерах по увековечению памяти жертв политических репрессий и голодоморов на Украине’. Этим документом правительству поручалось ‘решить до Дня памяти жертв голодоморов и политических репрессий, который в 2005 году отмечается 26 ноября, вопрос создания Украинского института национальной памяти’”. Википедия. ‘Ющенко, Виктор Андреевич’. [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ющенко,\\_Виктор\\_Андреевич](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ющенко,_Виктор_Андреевич)

<sup>158</sup> “Это организация, которая появилась по политическому запросу, ее создание было очень хаотичным,...”. Regnum.ru, 24.12.2010. ‘Позиция Януковича по “голодомору” мало чем отличается от позиции Ющенко: интервью Георгия Касьянова’. <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/1360130.html>

<sup>159</sup> “Голод на Украине 1930-х годов не являлся смертью через голод, а убийством народа через голод. ...голод в Украине был выбран как способ усмирения украинского народа. Эти преступления по своим масштабам, целям и методам, безусловно, подпадают под определение геноцида, которое даёт конвенция Организации Объединённых Наций 1948 года. Цель была обескровить Украину, подорвать её силы и таким образом устранить возможность восстановления украинской

Furthermore, Kasianov argues that Yushchenko when talking about “the Ukrainian nation”, refers to ethnic Ukrainians. This interpretation does not include all people living in Ukraine, and it is therefore a problematic definition of the nation. And above all, it created an unease among political forces that do not strictly represent “ethnic Ukrainians”.

“Therefore, when the President said, ‘my nation’, as if referring to the political nation, in the context of the statement clearly there were ‘ethnic Ukrainians’. And it provoked a conflict. A reaction from political forces which consider that they represent other ethnic segments of the population of Ukraine”.<sup>160</sup>

Yushchenko was also the only Ukrainian president to receive a direct response from a Russian politician. Dmitry Medvedev, former President of the Russian Federation, wrote directly to Viktor Yushchenko.

“The famine of 1932-1933 in the Soviet Union was not aimed at the destruction of any particular nation. It was the result of drought, forced collectivization and dekulakization. It struck the whole country, and not just Ukraine. It killed millions of residents in the Middle and Lower Volga, in Northern Caucasus, in Central Chernozem, in Southern Urals and in Western Siberia, Kazakhstan, Belarus. We do not justify the repression of the Stalinist regime against the entire Soviet people. But to say that it was an attempt to exterminate the Ukrainians, means to contradict the facts and to try to give a nationalistic subtext to the general tragedy. Discussions about any ‘qualitative differences’ between hunger in Ukraine and famine in Russia and other regions of the USSR, in our opinion, are simply cynical and immoral”.<sup>161</sup>

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государственности. Эта цель не скрывалась”. Википедия. ‘Ющенко, Виктор Андреевич’.  
[https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ющенко,\\_Виктор\\_Андреевич](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ющенко,_Виктор_Андреевич)

<sup>160</sup> “Поэтому, когда президент говорил ‘моя нация’, как бы имея в виду нацию политическую, в контексте заявления явно присутствовали именно ‘этнические украинцы’. И это спровоцировало конфликт, реакцию со стороны политических сил, которые считают, что они представляют другие этнические сегменты населения Украины”. Regnum.ru, 24.12.2010. ‘Позиция Януковича по “голодомору” мало чем отличается от позиции Ющенко: интервью Георгия Касьянова’.  
<https://regnum.ru/news/polit/1360130.html>

<sup>161</sup> “Голод 1932–1933 годов в Советском Союзе не был направлен на уничтожение какой-либо отдельной нации. Он стал следствием засухи и проводившихся в отношении всей страны, а не одной только Украины, насильственной коллективизации и раскулачивания. Погибли миллионы жителей Среднего и Нижнего Поволжья, Северного Кавказа, Центрального Черноземья, Южного Урала, Западной Сибири, Казахстана, Белоруссии. Мы не оправдываем репрессии сталинского режима в отношении всего советского народа. Но говорить о том, что существовала цель уничтожения украинцев, – это значит противоречить фактам и пытаться придать националистический подтекст общей трагедии. Рассуждения же о каких-либо ‘качественных отличиях’ голода на Украине от голода в России и других регионах СССР, на наш взгляд, просто циничны и аморальны”. Kremlin.ru. 2008. ‘Дмитрий Медведев направил послание Президенту

During Yushchenko's presidency, the Holodomor genocide museum was also established. It is today located in the Pechersk district of Kiev, a highly sacred location. With it, a tradition was also born. Assmann relates this phenomenon (the establishment of institutions such as museums) as the ability of one group to organize itself as a collective and have the experience of victimization become a *cultural memory*.

“Since 2009 a new tradition in the Ukrainian society has been developed – every fourth Saturday in November, the honoring of the memory of Holodomor victims takes place. On this day the city residents and visitors of Kiev, with the participation of leaders of the Ukrainian state, come to the memorial and light candles to commemorate the victims of genocide”.<sup>162</sup>

Some, such as renowned American Canadian historian John Paul Himka, see this as the result of Holodomor 'over-politicized' nature.

“A final deficiency of the genocide category, at least as it plays out with reference to the Ukrainian famine, is that it is over-politicized and under-intellectualized”.<sup>163</sup>

The establishment of tradition got further problematized by the question on the 'sacralization' of the famine which some consider an act of nationalism. It also opens a discussion on the *myth of martyrism*.

“The negative effect of sacralization—the tendency to replace rational inquiry with a dominating myth—is compounded by nationalization. One of the features of genocide, at least in its non-Naimarkian (American historian who writes on modern Eastern European history and genocide and ethnic cleansing in the region) conceptualization - that is, one that is focused exclusively on 'national, ethnical, racial, or religious' groups - is that it reifies the very categories that determine the targets. Thus, the interpretation of the famine as a genocide directed against the Ukrainian nation instantiates the nation itself in addition to feeding the nation-project's self-narrative of shared historical experience and victimization. Since genocide is a crime, moreover, it has perpetrators; and these can be identified with the inimical 'others' against whom the nation is constructed. Those who promote awareness of the Holodomor are often the same people who promote the glorification of the Organization

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Украины Виктору Ющенко, посвящённое проблематике так называемого «голодомора»'.  
<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/2081>

<sup>162</sup> History of National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide.

<https://holodomormuseum.org.ua/en/history-of-national-holodomor-genocide-museum/>

<sup>163</sup> Himka, J. Spring 2013. 'Encumbered Memory: The Ukrainian Famine of 1932–33'.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/kri.2013.0025>

of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and who downplay the Holocaust and/or Ukrainian nationalist participation in it. This was largely true of President Yushchenko and his entourage—at the same time as Yushchenko was trying to solidify the place of the Holodomor in Ukrainian and global public memory, he was also making posthumous heroes of OUN leaders Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych”.<sup>164</sup>

Furthermore, Artemii Plekhanov claims this is also a way to draw political consensus into the religious sphere.

“Since 2011, a tradition has arisen of participating in this event. Not only the current head of state, but also all ex-presidents of Ukraine participate in it, which is a marker of the victory of the “genocidal” discourse on the Holodomor. Similar events are held on this day in all major cities of Ukraine. Those who do not participate directly in them can put candles on the windows of their houses or watch the broadcast of the ceremony through the central channels. The event involves a variety of categories of people: believers and atheists, representatives of the elite and ordinary citizens, those who want active action and inclusion in the atmosphere of a mourning event, and those who join the action by simply taking part in a minute of memory or by putting a candle on the window. In news reports, these practices are presented as an example of the unification of a nation by honoring the memory of those who died of starvation. The importance of this event is precisely as a ritual of civil religion and a marker of national consensus; it demonstrates the unity of the people and the ruling class of the country”.

<sup>165</sup>

The question on whether Stalin planned the genocide of the entire Ukrainian people is highly debated and yet to be determined. During my research I conducted two interviews in the Holodomor museum. I interviewed two different guides and right after the interviews, I followed them through the guided visit of the museum. Both guides

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<sup>164</sup> Himka, J. Spring 2013. ‘Encumbered Memory: The Ukrainian Famine of 1932–33’.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/kri.2013.0025>

<sup>165</sup> “С 2011 г. возникает традиция участия в этом мероприятии не только действующего главы государства, но и всех экс-президентов Украины, что явилось маркером победы ‘геноцидного’ дискурса о голодоморе. Подобные мероприятия проводятся в этот день во всех крупных городах Украины. Те, кто не участвует в них напрямую, могут поставить свечи на окна своих домов или следить за трансляцией церемонии по центральным каналам. В мероприятии задействованы самые разные категории населения: верующие и атеисты, представители элиты и рядовые граждане, те, кто хочет активного действия и включенности в атмосферу траурного события, и те, кто присоединяется к действию, просто приняв участие в минуте памяти или поставив свечку на окно. В новостных репортажах данные практики репрезентируются как пример объединения нации путем чествования памяти погибших от голода. Важное значение это мероприятие имеет именно как ритуал гражданской религии и маркер общенационального консенсуса; при этом демонстрируется единство народа и правящего класса страны”. Плеханов. А. А, 2019 ‘Формирование календаря государственных праздников и памятных дат в постсоветской Украине’. <https://ras.jes.su/ethnorev/s086954150007382-0-1>

were firm in their replies on the nature of the Holodomor. Their stance on Holodomor was undiscussable. This version is what Gerogy Kasianov calls the “Государственная версия”<sup>166</sup> (State version). Both guides stated that:

“In Ukraine the famine was an instrument of genocide against Ukrainians”.<sup>167</sup>

Viktor Yanukovych, the fourth president of Ukraine from 2010 to 2014, assumed two different stances on Holodomor. He initially endorsed the genocide version of Holodomor, but later he reversed his view.

“On April 27, 2010, speaking at a session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, V. Yanukovych stated that ‘it would be wrong and unfair to recognize the Holodomor as a fact of genocide against a nation’ [Yanukovych said ... 2010]...The statement of V. Yanukovych satisfied the majority of delegations (first of all, the Russian ones) and provoked indignation of a part of Ukrainian parliamentarians representing the Ukrainian national-democratic opposition”.<sup>168</sup>

His stance neutralized the attempt made by Yuschchenko to gather support for a draft law on Amendments to the Criminal and the Procedural Criminal Codes of Ukraine, a maneuver that Miller calls “History politics” manifested in legislation.

“A draft law ‘On Amendments to the Criminal and the Procedural Criminal Codes of Ukraine’ was submitted by President Viktor Yushchenko for consideration by the Ukrainian Parliament. The draft law envisaged prosecution for public denial of the Holodomor Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine as a fact of genocide of the Ukrainian people, and of the Holocaust as the fact of genocide of the Jewish people. The draft law foresaw that public denial as well as production and dissemination of materials denying the above shall be punished by a fine of 100 to 300 untaxed minimum salaries, or

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<sup>166</sup> Kasianov, G. Interview. Kiev, 16.01.2020

<sup>167</sup> “В Украине голод был как инструментом геноцида против Украинцев”. ‘Ljana’. Interview. Kiev, 02.10.2019.

<sup>168</sup> “27 апреля 2010 г., выступая на сессии Парламентской ассамблеи Совета Европы в Страсбурге, В. Янукович заявил, что ‘признавать Голодомор как факт геноцида против того или иного народа будет неправильно, несправедливо’ [Янукович сказал... 2010]. Заявление было сделано за день до рассмотрения сессией доклада про голод 1932–1933 гг. и принятия резолюции, по поводу которой украинские участники сессии еще вели арьергардные бои с российскими оппонентами, добиваясь употребления термина ‘геноцид’. Заявление В. Януковича устроило большинство делегаций (прежде всего, российскую) и вызвало возмущение части украинских парламентариев, представлявших украинскую национал-демократическую оппозицию”.

Касьянов, Г.В. 2013. Чтиво. ‘Историческая политика в Украине и Голодомор’  
[http://shron1.chtyvo.org.ua/Kasianov/Ystorycheskaia\\_polytyka\\_v\\_Ukrayne\\_y\\_Holodomor\\_ros.pdf](http://shron1.chtyvo.org.ua/Kasianov/Ystorycheskaia_polytyka_v_Ukrayne_y_Holodomor_ros.pdf)



imprisonment of up to two years. The draft law, however, failed to receive support from incoming President Viktor Yanukovych”.<sup>169</sup>

The politicization of Holodomor continued when Petro Poroshenko served as the sixth president of Ukraine. He continued endorsing the genocide version of Yushchenko, but he brought it a step further by demanding that Israel should recognize the famine as genocide of the Ukrainian people. His request was not approved by Israel and criticized by Efraim Zuroff, head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. One can also argue whether Poroshenko’s attempt to seek recognition from abroad, is a question of *to have suffered together* which according to Assmann can be an exploitation of memories.

“Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko’s request that Israel recognize the Holodomor...was ‘unbelievable’ and an effort to promote a ‘double genocide theory’, Efraim Zuroff said on Tuesday...Ukrainians were the largest number of victims, but it wasn’t directed against them, it wasn’t a plan to eliminate the Ukrainian people...One of the biggest problem we are facing now is something called ‘double genocide theory’, something prevalent throughout Eastern Europe, where governments are trying to say that Communist crimes amounted to genocide...they were not. If they were, then that means that Jews committed genocide. There were Jews- not out of any loyalty to the Jewish people, and usually Jews who left the Jewish community- who worked in the KGB, and the communist security apparatus, and did horrible things. It’s true”.<sup>170</sup>

Poroshenko’s stance was also attacked by first deputy chairman of the Federation Council on Foreign Affairs and Representative of the legislative authority of the Jewish Autonomous Region, Vladimir Dzhabarov. He stated:

“In my opinion, blaming Russia for the Holodomor is Jesuit logic. The people of the entire Soviet Union suffered from the famine. We know that its causes are a series of both external and internal factors. But to say that Russia provoked a famine to commit genocide of the Ukrainian people, is simply immoral... It would be better if Poroshenko spoke clearly on neo-Nazism, which now, unfortunately, is manifested in Ukraine. Let him deal with more global issues, because with the policies that he is pursuing now, I do not exclude that life in Ukraine will become very difficult”.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Wikipedia. ‘Denial of Holodomor’. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denial\\_of\\_the\\_Holodomor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denial_of_the_Holodomor)

<sup>170</sup> The Jerusalem Post. 22.01.2019. “Zuroff: Israel should not recognize Holodomor as genocide”. <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Zuroff-Israel-should-not-recognize-Holodomor-as-genocide-578308>

<sup>171</sup> “На мой взгляд, обвинять Россию в голодоморе — это иезуитская логика. От голодомора пострадал народ всего Советского Союза. Мы знаем, что его причины — это ряд и внешних, и внутренних факторов. Но говорить, что Россия провоцировала голодомор, чтобы совершить

The newly elected Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, has fully supported the genocide version of the famine and called for Israel's recognition of it. On the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visit in Kiev in 2019, Zelensky stated:

“Honoring the eternal memory of the victims of the Holocaust, in which more than 2 million Ukrainian Jews died, Ukraine calls on Israel to also recognize the Holodomor as an act of genocide of the Ukrainian people”.<sup>172</sup>

Again, Zelensky's statement brings up the trauma of the Holocaust in order to achieve what Assmann calls *to have suffered together* that depends on the belated recognition of other groups<sup>173</sup>, in this case Israel. His view changed neither the Russian nor the Israeli stance on Holodomor. The website “RT in Russian” reports:

“It is worth noting that the Israeli parliament - the Knesset - had previously received bills recognizing this famine as genocide, but so far the deputies have not accepted them. In August 2017, the position of Tel Aviv on this issue was explained by the Minister of Environmental Protection of the Jewish state Zeev Elkin, head of the intergovernmental commission for the development of international relations between Ukraine and Israel. ‘The Israeli parliament believes that past issues should not be decided by politicians, but by professionals, as part of a professional discourse, Interfax-Ukraine quotes him. - Therefore, I don't think that any declarative decision will be made on the Holodomor, or on other difficult tragic pages in the history of these or those peoples, because this does not correspond to our parliamentary tradition”.<sup>174</sup>

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геноцид украинского народа, — это просто аморально... Лучше бы Порошенко чётко высказался по неонацизму, который сейчас, к сожалению, проявляется на Украине. Пусть разбирается с более глобальными вопросами, поскольку при такой политике, которую он сейчас проводит, я не исключаю, что жизнь на Украине станет очень тяжёлой”. News.rambler.ru, 25.11.2017. ‘В России ответили на призыв Порошенко покаяться за голодомор’.  
<https://news.rambler.ru/politics/38512335-v-rossii-otvetili-na-prizyv-poroshenko-pokayatsya-za-golodomor/?updated>

<sup>172</sup> “Что вечную память жертв холокоста, в котором погибли более 2 млн украинских евреев, Украина обращается к Израилю с призывом также признать голодомор актом геноцида украинского народа”. RT на русском. («Провокационный характер»: в России оценили призыв Зеленского к Израилю признать голодомор геноцидом). RT на Русском, 19.08.2019. ‘«Провокационный характер»: в России оценили призыв Зеленского к Израилю признать голодомор геноцидом’.  
<https://russian.rt.com/russia/article/660314-zelenskii-ukraina-golodomor>

<sup>173</sup> Assmann, 2016; 47

<sup>174</sup> “Стоит отметить, что в израильский парламент — кнессет — ранее уже поступали законопроекты о признании этого голода геноцидом, однако до сих депутаты не приняли их. Позицию Тель-Авива по этому вопросу в августе 2017 года пояснил министр охраны окружающей среды еврейского государства Зеэв Элькин, глава межправительственной комиссии развития международных связей между Украиной и Израилем.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has not changed its 2018 statement.

“It became a common tragedy of Russians, Ukrainians, Kazakhs and other peoples of the country and the largest humanitarian disaster in the USSR. Attempts to present these tragic events exclusively as ‘the genocide of the Ukrainian people’ have nothing to do with either restoring justice or historical facts, they are politicized and unscientific, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement from 2018”.<sup>175</sup>

(Most Ukrainians who commented on my questions on the internet look at this Russia’s stance as unjust. They claim that Russia uses it for *silencing*, one of the topics discussed by Assmann that asserts that perpetrators create taboos that hinder victims from recounting). In addition to this, claims on Ukrainian nationalism emerged once again. A member of the Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs, Sergei Tsekov stated:

“It is impossible to compare the Holocaust and the Holodomor, since if in the first case we are talking about the deliberate extermination of Jews, then in the second - about the famine that affected the entire Soviet Union... This decision about the Holodomor (recognition of its genocide. - RT) was dragged by Ukrainian nationalists. This is precisely the decision that undermines the foundations of the Ukrainian state. Such decisions led to the fact that Ukraine does not have an internal core that would unite all the peoples and nationalities living on its territory, it distorts its previous history. As a result, there is no consolidation of the Ukrainian nation”.<sup>176</sup>

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‘Израильский парламент считает, что вопросы прошлого должны решаться не политиками, а профессионалами, как часть профессионального дискурса, — приводит его слова Интерфакс-Украина. — Поэтому я не думаю, что будет принято какое-то декларативное решение по голодомору, как и по другим тяжёлым трагическим страницам в истории тех или иных народов, потому что это не соответствует нашей парламентской традиции”. RT на русском, 19.08.2019. ‘«Провокационный характер»: в России оценили призыв Зеленского к Израилю признать голодомор геноцидом’. <https://russian.rt.com/russia/article/660314-zelenskii-ukraina-golodomor>

<sup>175</sup> “Он стал общей трагедией русских, украинцев, казахов и других народов страны и крупнейшей гуманитарной катастрофой на территории СССР. Попытки представить эти трагические события исключительно как ‘геноцид украинского народа’ не имеют ничего общего ни с восстановлением справедливости, ни с историческими фактами, они носят политизированный и антинаучный характер, — говорится в сообщении МИД РФ от 2018 года”. RT на русском, 19.08.2019, ‘«Провокационный характер»: в России оценили призыв Зеленского к Израилю признать голодомор геноцидом’. <https://russian.rt.com/russia/article/660314-zelenskii-ukraina-golodomor>

<sup>176</sup> “Сравнивать холокост и голодомор нельзя, поскольку если в первом случае речь идёт о намеренном уничтожении евреев, то во втором — о голоде, который коснулся всего Советского Союза...”. RT на русском, 19.08.2019. ‘«Провокационный характер»: в России оценили призыв Зеленского к Израилю признать голодомор геноцидом’. <https://russian.rt.com/russia/article/660314-zelenskii-ukraina-golodomor>

Furthermore, the topic of Nazi collaborators, often present in Russian literature, was brought about by Viktor Vodolatsky, deputy chairman of the State Duma's committee on CIS affairs, Eurasian integration. He also accused president Zelensky of territorial speculations. He said to "RT in russian":

"Zelensky's call sounds provocative, given that he is not fighting the glorification of Nazism in Ukraine... Any calls of Zelensky are provocative, because he is inserting into the negotiation process issues related to the return of Crimea, bringing the Holodomor to the level of the Holocaust, and at the same time he himself cannot do anything with the rehabilitation of the Nazis who killed Jews in the same Ukraine".<sup>177</sup>

Not only presidents but also a variety of other politicians have expressed their thoughts on the famine. A few of their stances are significant and therefore worth mentioning in order to present how complex the discussion on the Famine is. Petro Semynenko is a Ukrainian politician and the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine. His view on Holodomor came with a harsh critique of Viktor Yushchenko.

"Commenting on the Holodomor issue in 2007, Petro Symonenko stated that he 'does not believe in any deliberate hunger' and accused President Yushchenko of 'using the Holodomor to incite hatred'. In response to such a statement, Viktor Yushchenko said he wanted to see a new law that would prohibit the denial of the Holodomor".<sup>178</sup>

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Boris Tarasyuk and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov came to direct confrontation on one occasion.

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<sup>177</sup> "Призыв Зеленского звучит провокационно, учитывая то, что он не борется с героизацией нацизма на Украине... Любые призывы Зеленского носят провокационный характер. Потому что он вставляет в переговорный процесс вопросы, связанные с возвращением Крыма, с выведением голодомора на уровень холокоста, а при этом сам же сегодня не может ничего сделать с реабилитацией нацистов, которые уничтожали евреев на той же Украине". RT на русском, 19.08.2019. '«Провокационный характер»: в России оценили призыв Зеленского к Израилю признать голодомор геноцидом'.

<https://russian.rt.com/russia/article/660314-zelenskii-ukraina-golodomor>

<sup>178</sup> "Комментируя тему Голодомора в 2007 году, Петр Симоненко заявил, что он 'не верит в любой преднамеренный голод', и обвинил Президента страны В. Ющенко в 'использовании Голодомора с целью разжигания ненависти'. В ответ на такое заявление Виктор Ющенко сказал, что хочет увидеть новый закон, который будет запрещать отрицание Голодомора". Биржевой лидер. 'Симоненко Пётр Николаевич'. <http://www.profi-forex.org/wiki/simonenko-pjotr-nikolaevich-.html>

“On April 21, 2006, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Boris Tarasyuk, who participated in the meeting of the Council of CIS Foreign Ministers in Moscow, proposed to include on the meeting's agenda the issue of recognizing the 1932-1933 famine as an act of genocide of the Ukrainian people. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, however, said that ‘discussion of this issue has already been held in a narrow composition, but no consensus has been reached’, and therefore, ‘the consequences of collectivization in Soviet times should be considered by historians’”.<sup>179</sup>

The current President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin has up to this date neither expressed his views, nor directly commented on Holodomor in public.

## 7. Interpretations of Holodomor in Ukrainian historiography

The main trends regarding Holodomor in Ukrainian historiography that recurred most frequently in my research, are those of “grain confiscation/blacklists”, the “border blockade” and “genocide of the Ukrainian nation/identity”. The work of the survivors of Holodomor (Ukrainian diaspora) along with the work of James Mace, Robert Conquest and the Harvard famine project, still play a significant role in Ukrainian historiography. Most Ukrainians I talked to and those who commented on my questions on the internet, hold on to these theories too. The recent work of Anne Applebaum is considered by many experts a continuation of Robert Conquest's study. Though she rejects the genocide interpretation of the famine (because the term was coined a decade after the famine and the U.N. Convention of 1948 cannot be applied retroactively<sup>180</sup>), Applebaum adheres to Ukrainian historiography. Kasianov states:

“Applebaum is Conquest two. She just repeats... her representation of the hunger repeats Conquest. My main complaint about Applebaum's book is that it simply presents the dominant discourses of the Holodomor adopted in official Ukrainian

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<sup>179</sup> “21 апреля 2006 года глава МИД Украины Борис Тарасюк, участвовавший в заседании Совета глав МИД стран СНГ в Москве, предложил внести в повестку дня заседания вопрос о признании голодомора 1932—1933 годов актом геноцида украинского народа. Глава МИД России Сергей Лавров, однако, заявил, что «обсуждение этого вопроса уже проходило в узком составе, но консенсуса не было достигнуто», а поэтому «последствия коллективизации во времена СССР должны рассматривать историки”. Википедия. ‘Голодомор в политике’.  
[https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Голодомор\\_в\\_политике](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Голодомор_в_политике)

<sup>180</sup> Malko, V.A. ‘The Holodomor as Genocide in Historiography and Memory’.  
[https://www.academia.edu/41145405/The\\_Holodomor\\_as\\_Genocide\\_in\\_Historiography\\_and\\_Memory](https://www.academia.edu/41145405/The_Holodomor_as_Genocide_in_Historiography_and_Memory)

historiography. That is, she actually transcribes the official point of view of Ukraine and the Ukrainian diaspora on the famine of 1932-33...her book is not a historiographic work. It is duplicative”.<sup>181</sup>

While Kondrashin affirms:

“Applebaum has ignored the huge array of archival documents on the topic of the 1932-1933 famine in the Ukrainian SSR, which was put into scholarly circulation by Russian and foreign historians and demographers in recent decades. She repeats the old historiography clichés about the 'special relationship' of I.V. Stalin to Ukraine and Ukrainians”.<sup>182</sup>

In Ukrainian historiography, the genocide/deliberate act of killing theory is the most common. This theory is supported by the succession of several tragic measures taken by Stalin. According to the Ukrainian narrative (unlike the Russian narrative), Stalin and the Communist party are the perpetrators who actively and intentionally caused the famine. Their aim was to either punish (with consequent enormous losses of lives) ethnic Ukrainians or exterminate them through starvation. The Ukrainian narrative of Holodomor assigns specific actors to the role of perpetrators and victims. Its Russian counterparts do not. In the Ukrainian version of the famine, “collectivization” (which is supposed to have taken place spontaneously) comes first. With collectivization, starting in 1929, came also “dekulakization” and religious repression. These measures were taken all over the Soviet Union.

“But in practice, the policy was pushed hard from above. In the week starting 10 November 1929 the party’s central committee met in Moscow and resolved to ‘speed up’ the process of collectivization of peasants households’ by sending party cadres into the villages to set up new communal farms and persuade peasants to join them. The same resolution condemned the opponents of collectivization and expelled their leader, Nikolai Bukharin- Stalin’s most important political opponent by the time- from the

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<sup>181</sup> “Эпплбаум, это Конквеста два. Она просто повторяет...Её репрезентация голода повторяет, Конквеста. Моя главная претензия к книге Эпплбаума заключается в том, что она просто транслирует, доминирующие дискурсы голодомора, принятые в официальной украинской историографии. То есть, она фактически транслирует официальную точку зрения Украины и украинской диаспоры на голод 32-33 годов... ее книга не является историографическим трудом, это пуплцистика”. Kasianov, G. Interview. Kiev, 16.01.2020

<sup>182</sup> “Эпплбаум проигнорировала огромный массив архивных документов на тему голода 1932-1933 годов в УССР, введённый в научный оборот российскими и зарубежными историками и демографией в последние десятилетия, и повторила старые штампы историографии по поводу 'особого отношения' И.В. Сталина к Украине и украинцам”. Кондрашин, В. 2018

Politburo. A few weeks later the People's Commissariat for Agriculture declared that all of the grain-producing regions of the USSR would be collectivized within three years".<sup>183</sup>

With massive forced collectivization, discontent among peasants in the countryside rose. The phenomenon of rebellion started to take place from 1930, especially in Ukraine where anti-Soviet sentiments were not new.

"The result was rapid, massive, sometime chaotic and often violent resistance. But properly speaking, it is incorrect to say that resistance followed collectivization, since resistance of various kinds actually accompanied every stage of dekulakization and collectivization...because peasants refused to cooperate, the idealistic young agitators from outside and their local allies grew angrier, their methods became more extreme and their violence harsher... Resistance, especially in Ukraine, also raised alarm bells at the highest level...Many Ukrainian peasants did not trust the Soviet state that they had fought against only ten years earlier...Ordered to hand over their livestock to collective farms that they did not trust, peasants began to slaughter cows, pigs, sheep and even horses. They ate the meat, salted it, sold it or concealed it- anything to prevent the collective farms from getting hold of it".<sup>184</sup>

By 1932, Stalin's worries over Ukraine had grown. He clearly expressed his thoughts when he told Kaganovich that Ukraine could have been lost and began suspecting that Ukrainian nationalism was the main cause behind resistance to collectivization. Nationalism was to be held responsible for the so-called acts of sabotage.

"He had long perceived a clear connection between the grain collection problem in Ukraine and the threat of nationalism in the republic".<sup>185</sup>

"Resistance to collectivization" was therefore to be quashed. The "blackboards" system (or blacklists) was introduced with vigor in Ukraine according to Ukraine historiography.

"In 1932 the blacklist returned as a tool for the reinforcement of grain procurement policy. Although they were used to some degree in all other grain-producing regions of the USSR, blacklists were applied earlier, more widely and

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<sup>183</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 115. Citing RtsKhIDNI 17/2/441, vols. 1 and 2; summarized in Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 112-14; and Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebel under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance*. (Oxford University Press, 1996), 24-6

<sup>184</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 141-142

<sup>185</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 187

more rigorously in Ukraine”.<sup>186</sup>

Failure to deliver the grain quota was interpreted as a problem of national sentiment. Harsh punishments in the form of confiscation were therefore inflicted on farmers. Farmers who had not met the grain quota because they simply did not have enough produce, were unjustly punished. Andrea Graziosi holds that deportations and attacks on the elites, were also significant in the size of the famine.

“Specific areas of Northern Caucasus and Ukraine, where the opposition to collectivization had been stronger, were punished even more cruelly: all goods, including non-agricultural, were removed from stores and all inhabitants were deported from certain localities... The awareness that in Ukraine and Kuban the peasant question also was a national question determined the need to deal with and ‘solve’ these questions together. In order to make sure that such a ‘solution’ was there to stay, it was complemented by the decision to get rid of the national elites and their policies, which were suspected, as we know, of abetting peasants”.<sup>187</sup>

Brekhunenko, over the course of my interview in Kiev, clearly pointed out that many peasants were punished as a result of Stalin’s war on Ukrainians during which “blacklists” were actively used to extend his control over the country and punish its population. Confiscations went on even when peasants had no grain.

“They simply did not have any (grain/supplies)!”<sup>188</sup>

Stalin’s suspicion was based on the assumption that the peasants nourished Ukrainian nationalistic and anti-Bolshevik sentiments. In other words, a dangerous class. But failure to meet the grain quota was not necessarily an act of sabotage or “theft of state property” according to Kulchytsky:

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<sup>186</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 197

<sup>187</sup> Graziosi, A. ‘The Soviet 1931-1933 Famines and the Ukrainian Holodomor: Is a New Interpretation Possible, and What Would Its Consequences Be?’.

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/41036863?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/41036863?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

<sup>188</sup> “У них просто нет!”. Yakubovskiy I; Lapchinskaya, N; Brekhunenko, V. Interview. Kiev, 03.10.2019.



“The peasants were not organized; the sabotage of collective farm labor was not organized”.<sup>189</sup>

My research shows that Ukrainian historiography agrees with Applebaum’s position on the “blacklists” that sees this law being applied to whole districts in Ukraine, not only to grain producers as it happened in Russia.

“Whole districts were blacklisted. Machine tractor stations, timber companies and all kinds of provincial enterprises only distantly connected to grain production were blacklisted...Blacklisting affected not just peasants but artisans, nurses, teachers, clerks, civil servants, anyone who lived in a blacklisted village or worked in a blacklisted enterprise”.<sup>190</sup>

This led to what some people interpret as the intentional destruction of the countryside and its population.

“... the goal of Bolshevik policy was not so much the formal implementation of the grain-procurement plan (this was merely a pretext) as the destruction of the peasantry and all who lived in the countryside...The blacklist became a universal weapon aimed at all rural residents”.<sup>191</sup>

A trend that significantly distinguishes the main Ukrainian version of Holodomor from the Russian one, is based on what comes after confiscation and blacklists (common traits of both historiographies). Along with “blacklisting”, came prohibition on trades and blockades around villages.

“The first official document enacted on all-Ukrainian level in which the term ‘blacklists’ was used, and its tragic content revealed was a resolution issued by the republican Communist Party headquarters on 18 November 1932. It included the following list of repressive measures: the complete suspension of delivery of goods; the removal of all goods available in stores (eventually, this measure came to be known as ‘good repressions’); a ban on credits of any kind and the preterm repayment of loans and other financial obligations issued earlier (‘financial repressions’); and thoroughgoing purge of ‘counterrevolutionary elements’ among the members of collective farms and local executive bodies”.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> “Крестьяне не были организованы, саботаж колхозного труда не был организован”. Kulchytsky, S. Interview. Kiev, 01.10.2019.

<sup>190</sup> Applebaum, A. 2018; 199

<sup>191</sup> Papakin, H. ‘Blacklists as an Instrument of the Famine-Genocide of 1932-1933 in Ukraine’ <https://holodomor.ca/translated-articles-on-the-holodomor/>

<sup>192</sup> Papakin, H. ‘Blacklists as an Instrument of the Famine-Genocide of 1932-1933 in Ukraine’ <https://holodomor.ca/translated-articles-on-the-holodomor/>

According to the Ukrainian narrative, blockades were issued only in Ukraine and in Kuban, an area populated by mostly ethnic Ukrainians. “Ljana” was firm and concise in explaining why the famine was different in Ukraine. At first a law was issued that banned traveling. She stated as follows:

“For example, a law was passed in January 33 in which peasants from Ukraine were not allowed to travel to Russia or Belarus. This was prohibited. This was the law. Nowhere else in the Soviet Union was there such a law, and people were not forbidden to leave any republic. There were people who lived, for example, 5 km from the border, that very often escaped from starvation by walking into the territory of Russia. They exchanged something for food, clothes for example, or some kind of tools. They somehow earned money for the food. They returned home to Ukraine and saved their families this way. In January 1933, this law was issued, banning traveling. Nowhere else in the Soviet Union it was issued. This is very important; it is such a confirmation that genocide was against Ukrainians. I’d also like to specify that this also happened in the territory of Kuban. Do you know where it is?... Do you know what was going on there in this period? ...There, too, about eighty percent of the population of Kuban were Ukrainians. And in Kuban it was also forbidden to travel in search of food. People were not allowed out. In Kuban and in Ukraine. Where Ukrainians were not let out, so we are talking about genocide and killing by famine”.<sup>193</sup>

Secondly, “blacklisting” was introduced. “Ljana” claims that “blockades” were raised around villages preventing people from transiting. For many villagers this measure meant a death sentence.

“Also, have you heard anything about the blackboard regime?... Yes, and you know that this is a regime; it was also used only in Ukraine. Nowhere else in the Soviet Union. What do you know about this regime? ...This regime was tried on December 6, 1932 for the first time. The village was recorded on this blackboard, but in reality, there

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<sup>193</sup> “Например, когда в 33 году в январе был издан закон, за которым крестинам с Украины нельзя было выезжать на территорию России или Белоруссии, это было запрещено. Вот такой закон был, больше нигде в советском союзе такого закона не было, ни с каких республик не запрещали выезжать. То есть люди, которые даже жили, например, 5 км от границы, они очень часто спасались от голода тем, что ходили пешком на территорию России, например, что-то там меняли на еду, одежду или же какие-то орудия труда инструменты свои или же зарабатывали как-то на эту еду. Возвращались домой в Украину и спасались так свои семьи. В январе 33-го года был издан вот этот закон о запрете выезда, больше нигде в советском союзе его не было. Это очень важно, это такое подтверждение, что именно против украинцев геноцид. Также хотела бы, обратить внимание, что этот закон он действовал и на территории Кубани, вы знаете где это? А знаете, что там этот период было? Там тоже, около в восьмидесяти процентов населения Кубани — это были украинцы. И поэтому в Кубани также было запрещено выезжать в поисках еды. Людей не выпускали. В Кубане и в Украине. Там, где украинцы оттуда не выпускали, поэтому мы говорим о геноциде и об убийстве голодом”. “Ljana”. Interview. Kiev, 02.10.2019

was no blackboard, it was just an imaginary blackboard. And those villages that were registered in it, yes, they were blocked from all sides. At first special detachments drove to this village. They took absolutely all the food and left nothing. Then they left and stopped leaving a 2- or 3-line barrier, around this village. They let nobody in and out, and sometimes they kept the village entry blocked for 2 months. And people were dying in whole villages precisely because of this blackboard regime, and I want to repeat once again that there was no such regime anywhere else in the Soviet Union”.<sup>194</sup>

Unlike the Russian historiography of the famine, the Holodomor Ukrainian narrative has no doubt on who the perpetrators and their collaborators were. I mentioned a statement of Kondrashin to Yakubovskiy, Lapchinskaya, and Brekhunenko during our meeting, as follows:

“Stalin’s plans for the destruction of the Ukrainians by means of a famine did not exist. The documents demonstrate that the leadership of the Ukrainian SSR, which hid the scale of the disaster, played a huge role in the tragedy. As soon as the Union Center was informed of the true scale of the tragedy, Ukraine received most of the food aid”.<sup>195</sup>

Brekhunenko quickly replied and dismissed Kondrashin’s assertion.

“[The party leadership in Ukraine at the time] was an occupation power. This was the Russian government. It was looking for local people to implement its decisions. Like Hitler. He, too, was looking for allies there everywhere ... the work he did was not done by Germans, but by the hands of those peoples who were there... for example, in the Jewish ghetto, in Ukraine, in Poland, in Lithuania, in Belarus, the police were from Jews

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<sup>194</sup> “Кроме того, о режиме черных досок вы что-то слышали? Да, и знаете, что это режим он также использовался только на территории Украины. Нигде больше в Советском Союзе этого режима не было... что вы знаете об этом режиме вообще? В первый этот режим попробовали 6-го декабря 32 года. Село, деревня, которая заносилась на эту черную доску, на самом деле буквально никакой черной доски не было, это такой образ черной доски. И те сёла, которые заносили сюда, да, их со всех сторон блокировали, сначала специальные отряды выезжали в это село, в эту деревню, забирали абсолютно всю еду, все продовольствия, ничего не оставляли, ну совсем. И выезжали остановились в 2 или 3 линии заградительных, вокруг деревне этой. Никого пускали, не выпускали и иногда держали и 2 месяца вот так село блокировали въезд и выезд. И понятно, что люди умирали вот целыми деревнями именно из-за этого режима черной доски и еще раз хочу повторить, что больше нигде в советском союзе такого режима не было”. “Ljana”. Interview. Kiev, 02.10.2019

<sup>195</sup> “Никаких планов Сталина уничтожить украинцев с помощью голода не существовало. Документы демонстрируют огромную роль в трагедии руководства Украинской ССР, которое скрывало масштабы бедствия. Как только союзный центр был проинформирован об истинном размахе трагедии, Украина получила большую часть продовольственной помощи. Народный корреспондент, 16.12.2018. ‘Геноцида украинцев не было’. ‘Почему Киев боится правды о голодоморе’. <https://nk.org.ua/politika/genotsida-ukraintsev-ne-byilo-pochemu-kiev-boitsya-pravdyi-o-golodomore-173453>

... and therefore here, it is speculation when Kondrashin says that the Ukrainians did it themselves. This was not done by Ukrainians. It was done by someone who, in the service of the occupation power, executed the decision of the occupation power. It was not the initiative of Ukraine. It was the initiative of the occupying power”.<sup>196</sup>

Professor Kulchytsky’s narrative on the famine was very similar to “Ljana”’s, but he included the possibility that Stalin wanted to use the famine as a form of “punishment”.

To my question: “Some Ukrainian expert talks about the destruction of the Ukrainian people (genocide). They say that Stalin “planned” the famine. Russian historian Viktor Kondrashin writes that this can’t make sense because the leadership of the Ukrainian SSR knew about the famine but hid the evidence. When Moscow got the news, food aid was sent to Ukraine from Russia. How responsible was the Ukrainian SSR in the catastrophe?”<sup>197</sup> Kulchytsky replied:

“I have known Kondrashin for a very long time ... We have been to various conferences together ... but I agree that it seems that Stalin did not want to destroy the Ukrainian peoples, I also agree because he (Stalin) did not have such a goal, to destroy the Ukrainian people. He wanted to punish the Ukrainian people. This is a completely different matter. This means terror. Terror by hunger. This is terror by famine as an instrument of punishment.”<sup>198</sup>

There is also a view held by some scholars asserting that Stalin policies were designed

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<sup>196</sup> “Это была оккупационная власть. Это была российская власть. Она искала местных для реализации своих решений. Как, например, Гитлер. Он тоже искал там союзников, везде... Работу делал руками не немцев, но делал руками тех народов, которые там были. Пример, с Еврейским гетто в Украине, в Польше, в Литве, в Белоруссии, полиция была из евреев, ..и поэтому здесь, это спекуляция, когда Кондрашин говорит, что Украинцы сами это сделали. Это делали не Украинцы, это делали те, которые (были) на службе оккупационной власти, исполняли решение оккупационной власти. Это не было инициативой Украины. Это было инициативой оккупационной власти”. Yakubovskiy I; Lapchinskaya, N; Brekhunenko, V. Interview. Kiev, 03.10.2019

<sup>197</sup> “Некоторые украинские эксперты рассказывают об уничтожении украинского народа (геноцид). Говорят, что Сталин «планировал» голод. Российский историк Виктор Кондрашин пишет, что это не имеет смысла, потому что руководство Украинской ССР знало о голоде, но скрывало улики. Когда в Москву поступили новости, в Украину была отправлена продовольственная помощь из России. Насколько ответственна была Украинская ССР в катастрофе?” Kulchytsky, S. Interview. Kiev, 01.10.2019.

<sup>198</sup> “Я с Кондрашиным знаком очень давно...Мы бывали на разных конференциях...но я согласен что кажется, что Сталин не хотел уничтожить Украинский народ, я с ним тоже согласен, потому что он (Сталин) не имел такой цели, уничтожить украинский народ. Он хотел наказать украинский народ, это совсем другое дело. Это означает террор. Террор голодом. Это террор голодом, как метод наказания.” Kulchytsky, S. Interview. Kiev, 01.10.2019

to attack not only ethnic Ukrainians in Ukraine, but also people of Ukrainian descent in other areas. However, I found this view very uncommon in Ukrainian historiography.

“...in the Lower Volga region, the North Caucasus, Western Siberia, and Kazakhstan,... those who were arrested, dispossessed of farm land and tools, exiled to force labour camps, and executed were Ukrainian by ancestry”.<sup>199</sup>

In Ukraine historiography, Stalin’s policies of the “blacklists” and the “blockade”, are key elements that set the Ukrainian famine apart from the notion of Soviet general famine supported by Russian historians. They make the famine “intentional”. They assign the role of “perpetrator” to Stalin and that of “victims” to the Ukrainians. The result of Stalin’s planned famine aimed at the Ukrainian population brought forward Article II of the United Nations’ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Since the 80s, references to Lemkin’s definition of genocide have been actively used in the Holodomor Ukrainian historiography which today still mostly adheres to James Mace’s views.

“Stalin’s famine, he (Lemkin) said, was ‘not simply a case of mass murder’ but ‘a case of genocide, of destruction, not of individuals only, but of a culture and a nation’”.<sup>200</sup>

The title of the Holodomor Victims Memorial brochure, I collected in February 2020 is:

“We were killed because we are Ukrainians”.<sup>201</sup>

It reads:

“...Genocide means...acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, any national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such”.<sup>202</sup>

This refers to Raphael Lemkin’s work on the meaning of *genocide*.

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<sup>199</sup> Malko, V.A. 2019. ‘Blacklists as an Instrument of the Famine-Genocide of 1932-1933 in Ukraine’. [https://www.academia.edu/41145405/The\\_Holodomor\\_as\\_Genocide\\_in\\_Historiography\\_and\\_Memory](https://www.academia.edu/41145405/The_Holodomor_as_Genocide_in_Historiography_and_Memory)

<sup>200</sup> Motyl, A. Sept-Oct 2010. ‘Deleting the Holodomor: Ukraine Unmakes Itself’. Sage Publications, Inc. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/27870299?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/27870299?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

<sup>201</sup> Holodomor Victims Memorial brochure. ‘We Were Killed because We Are Ukrainians’. (Collected on 16.01.2020)

<sup>202</sup> Holodomor Victims Memorial brochure. ‘We Were Killed because We Are Ukrainians’. (Collected on 16.01.2020)

“...a lawyer of Polish-Jewish descent who is best known for coining the word *genocide* and initiating the Genocide Convention. Lemkin coined the word *genocide* in 1943 or 1944 from *genos* (Greek for family, tribe, or race) and *-cide* (Latin for killing)”.<sup>203</sup>

## 8. Interpretations of Holodomor in Russian historiography and how they relate to Ukrainian interpretations

Over the course of this research the following topics frequently appeared in Russian historiography regarding the famine of 1932-1933: “Falsification of history”, “Russophobia”, “Ukrainian Nazi’s collaborators”, the “general and indiscriminate nature of the famine that struck the USSR”, “Stalin’s attempt to squeeze as much grain as possible from the Ukrainian peasants”, “the Ukrainian communist party’s responsibility” and “victimization”.

In Russian historiography, the actors drawn into the discussion are not the same as those in the Ukrainian discourse. The role of Stalin is considerably reduced while the role of the inventors of the term Holodomor (diaspora, Harvard institute and immigrants) easily gets drawn into the discussion. In Russian historiography one can assume that these actors are given the role of war criminals (collaborators of the Nazis during WW2) and promoters of “Russophobia” and propagandistic narratives where Russia is portrayed as a victim. In Russian historiography, “Holodomor” is still seen as propagandistic and anti-Soviet. Russian Wikipedia writes:

“The events of the first half of 1933 in the Ukrainian SSR were used in the West in publications, statements and actions of an anti-Soviet orientation”.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Wikipedia. ‘Raphael Lemkin’. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raphael\\_Lemkin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raphael_Lemkin)

<sup>204</sup> “События первой половины 1933 года в УССР использовались на Западе в публикациях, заявлениях и акциях антисоветской направленности”. Википедия. ‘Голодомор в политике’. [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Голодомор\\_в\\_политике](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Голодомор_в_политике)

In addition to this, the coinage of the term Holodomor by the Ukrainian diaspora is often interpreted as “Фальсификация истории”<sup>205</sup> (falsification of history). Among the traits rejected by Russian narrative, is the creation of Holodomor by Ukrainian immigrants, the Harvard project institute and the scientific research methods of Robert Conquest and James Mace. To some, the work of Mace and Conquest and the nature of their research is dubious. Claims that the work of Robert Conquest, author of *The Harvest of Sorrow* (1986), builds upon the “ужасов” (horror) genre<sup>206</sup> initiated by Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, abound in Russian narrative. Mace’s approach to the research and his research team are criticized. Elena Prudnikova (born in 1958) and Ivan Chigirin (born in 1944) are two Russian authors who wrote several books regarding the use of “myths” in anti-Soviet narrative. In their book *The Myth of Holodomor* (2013), they write:

“His method was very simple. The commission gathered suitable memories of Ukrainians who at different times left the USSR for the USA and Canada. And since in the USA, Nazi accomplices and OUN members were saved from the Communists, you can imagine the direction of these testimonies”.<sup>207</sup>

In his book *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine in 1919-1933*, James Mace discusses the purpose of the famine and its perpetrator. His thesis is refuted by activists in several Russian sources I consulted. One of these activists is A.B Martirosian.

“The Harvard Project received special attention from the ruling circles and special services of the United States. It was generously financed and constantly supplemented with new ‘scientific’ areas and developments. A book by James Mace, ‘Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine in 1919–1933’, was published at Harvard University Press in 1983. Completely dull from a scientific point of view, this work did not attract any attention from American scientists. However, Mace did not draw any conclusions for himself and proceeded to create the myth that Moscow, in an effort to strengthen its power, ‘destroyed the Ukrainian

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<sup>205</sup> Spivak, I. 18.12.2006. ‘Голодомор-Фальсификация истории’.  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20070113001331/http://www.westeast.us/51/article/420.html>

<sup>206</sup> Прудникова, Е; Чигирин, И. 2013

<sup>207</sup> “Исследовательский метод у него был очень простой- комиссия собирала подходящие воспоминания украинцев, в разное время выехавших из СССР в США и Канаду. А поскольку в США спасались от коммунистов в первую очередь нацистские пособники и ОУНовцы, можно представить себе направленность этих свидетельств”. Прудникова, Е; Чигирин, И, 2013; 18

peasantry, Ukrainian Intelligentsia, the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian history in the understanding of the people, and destroyed Ukraine as such”.<sup>208</sup>

Statements like Martirosian’s, often build on the Russian trend that rejects theories of the “destruction of the Ukrainians”.

“To consider the famine of 1932-1933 as a struggle against the Ukrainian people is to consciously misinterpret historical facts. Indeed, at this very time, Ukraine was in the midst of Ukrainianization.... Beginning in the 1920s, (the Soviet authorities) fought here not against the Ukrainian language and culture, but just the opposite — against the Russian language and Russian culture. By the time of the famine, the republic was 80% Ukrainized”.<sup>209</sup>

However, the people who started the discussion on Holodomor and applied the term, are not just associated with anti communist immigrants. A search on the internet on what Russian academics, activists and historians write about the origin of the term “Holodomor” borrowed by Mace, reveals numerous negative commentaries and severe critiques. Some of them are particularly harsh, such as Leonid Maslovskiy’s one.

“In our time, for the first time this term was applied to Ukraine by a US citizen, J. Mace, who probably borrowed it from the department of the Minister of Propaganda, Hitler’s friend and like-minded person, fascist Goebbels”.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> “Гарвардский проект пользовался особым вниманием правящих кругов и спецслужб США. Его щедро финансировали и постоянно дополняли новыми ‘научными’ направлениями и разработками. В издательстве Гарвардского университета в 1983 году была опубликована книга Джеймса Мейса ‘Коммунизм и дилеммы национального освобождения: национальный коммунизм в Советской Украине в 1919–1933 гг.’. Как полностью глупая с научной точки зрения, эта работа не привлекла никакого внимания американских ученых. Однако Мейс никаких выводов для себя не сделал и приступил к формированию мифа о том, что Москва в стремлении укрепить свою власть ‘погубила украинское крестьянство, украинскую интеллигенцию, украинский язык, украинскую историю в понимании народа, уничтожила Украину как таковую’. Мартиросян, А.Б. ‘200 Мифов о Сталине. Сталин и достижения СССР’.

<https://e-libra.ru/read/178883-stalin-i-dostizheniya-sssr.html#1425886733>

<sup>209</sup> “Рассматривать голодомор 1932-1933 годов как борьбу с украинским народом - значит, сознательно перевирать исторические факты. Ведь в это самое время на Украине была в самом разгаре украинизация...Начиная с 20-х годов здесь боролись не с украинским языком и культурой, а как раз наоборот - с русским языком и русской культурой. Ко времени голодомора республика была на 80 % украинизирована”. Webarchive.com, 24.11.2006. ‘Голодомор: геноцид или социоцид? Когда защита хуже оскорбления’.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20070314052441/http://www.gorod.donbass.com/archive/html/look432006.htm>

<sup>210</sup> “В наше время впервые этот термин по отношению к Украине применил гражданин США, вышеуказанный Д. Мейс, который, вероятно, позаимствовал его из ведомства министра



The idea that Nazi-collaborators who escaped to the West helped coin the term Holodomor, does not recur on internet sites only, but in books too. A book by Sigismund Mironin, suggested to me by Stanislav Kulchytsky, makes similar claims on the creators of Holodomor.

“However, according to historians, the true authors of this substitution of concepts were Ukrainian nationalists, second-wave immigrants, who from 1945 to 1952 carried out bloody actions in Western Ukraine, and during the Nazi occupation of Ukraine became ‘famous’ as collaborators, underlings of the Nazis”.<sup>211</sup>

During my conversation with Georgy Kasianov, I had the chance to discuss Robert Conquest’s work with him. Kasianov (Ukrainian born), does not exactly support the main Russian tendency on Holodomor thinking, but he often looks at the Ukrainian versions as non-exhaustive. Such is the work of Conquest according to him.

“I agree with Robert Conquest on all issues. If we are talking about his book published in '86, I mean that, I perceive what is written by Robert Conquest as a historiographical fact. I am not engaging in a discourse with Robert Conquest about what he wrote. I rate his work as simply part of historiography. I do not enter the discussion with him. There is no point in some sort of discourse. The work was simply written by order. It was formalized through the Ukrainian Institute, the Ukrainian-Harvard Institute, and it was the so-called Harvard Project. And the work of Conquest was written within the framework of the so-called totalitarian approach. The totalitarian theory that had that the ruling class of the Soviet Union organized the hunger in order to strike at the peasantry. And in general, this version of Conquest, fits into the genocidal version. But I do not refute Conquest, I do not say that he is wrong, it is simply one of the versions written as part of a totalitarian approach, a totalitarian school, nothing more”.<sup>212</sup>

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пропаганды, друга и единомышленника Гитлера, фашиста Геббельса”. Миртесен, 09.03.2017.  
'Голодомора на Украине не было! Это миф «made in USA».  
<https://kaleidoscopelive.mirtesen.ru/blog/43411206957/Golodomora-na-Ukrayine-ne-byilo!-Eto-mif-«made-in-USA»?nr=1>

<sup>211</sup> “Однако, как утверждают историки, подлинными авторами этой подмены понятий были украинские националисты, эмигранты второй волны, которые с 1945 по 1952 г. совершали кровавые акции на территории Западной Украины, а во времена гитлеровской оккупации Украины ‘прославились’ на поприще коллаборационистов, прислужников нацистов”. ‘Голодомор на Руси’. Миронин, С. 2008. [https://archive.org/stream/B-001-024-846-ALL/Миронин%20С.С.%20-%20"Голодомор"%20на%20Руси\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/B-001-024-846-ALL/Миронин%20С.С.%20-%20)

<sup>212</sup> “Я по всем вопросам согласен с Робертом Конквестом. Если речь идёт о его книге изданий в 86 году, я в том, что, я воспринимаю то, что написано Робертом Конквестом как историографический факт. Я не вступаю в дискурс с Робертом Конквестом по поводу того, что он написал. Я оцениваю его работу проста как часть историографии. Я не вступаю с ним в дискуссию. Здесь нет смысла, в какой-то дискуссии. Работа попросту была написана по заказу. Это был оформлено через

Russophobia is also a significant argument in Russian historiography disclosed in my research. Some people blame the entire Harvard University's Holodomor project for being an instrument that was not only utilized to defeat the Soviet Union or communism, but Russia itself and the Russians. The term Holodomor itself is loaded with Russophobia according to activist Leonid Maslovskiy.

"The myth of the Holodomor ... is an integral part of the so-called Harvard project, created for psychological sabotage of information against the Soviet Union, and then Russia. It clearly shows the direction - the maximum incitement to nationalist passions, and above all animal hatred and hatred of Russia and the Russian people... It is believed that the creator of the 'Harvard project' is ... the notorious American political scientist, one of the most vicious Russophobes - Zbigniew Brzezinski ..."<sup>213</sup>

Regarding the nature of the famine, I asked Alexey Miller whether the Holodomor was a chain of unlucky events or part of Stalin's murderous plan to exterminate the Ukrainians. He defends the Holodomor variant of general tragedy and furthermore he also attacks the Ukrainian "witness project" of collecting interviews with the survivors of Holodomor. His view is not unusual in many of the Russian sources I consulted when writing this thesis.

"It was a chain of events but not unlucky incidents. It was a chain of events which was the result of Stalin's desire to put pressure on the regions which traditionally produced grain and to squeeze them. To get as much grain as possible, assuming that people who were in charge of these regions were hiding resources. This was the case in Ukraine, this was the case in the Volga region, this was the case in Northern Caucasus, this was the case in Kazakhstan. Another very important factor was that

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украинский институт, украинско- гарвардский институт, был так называемый Гарвардский проект. И работа Конквестом написана, в рамках, так называемого тоталитарного подхода. Тоталитарной теории, которая заключается о том, что правящий класс Советского Союза организовал голод для того, чтобы нанести удар по крестьянству. И вообще- эта версия Конквеста она вписывается в геноцидную версию. Но я не опровергаю Конквеста, я не говорю, что он не прав, это просто одна из версий написана в рамках тоталитарного подхода, тоталитарной школы, не более того". Kasianov, G. Interview. Kiev, 16.01.2020

<sup>213</sup> "Миф о 'голодоморе'... является составной частью так называемого гарвардского проекта, созданного для информационно-психологических диверсий ещё против Советского Союза, а затем и России. В нём чётко просматривается направленность - максимальное разжигание националистических страстей, и прежде всего звериной вражды и ненависти к России и русскому народу... Считается, что творцом 'гарвардского проекта' является... пресловутый американский политолог, один из самых злобных русофобов - Збигнев Бжезинский...". Миртесен, 28.11.2017. 'Голодомора на Украине не было! Это миф «made in USA'.

<http://rosprav.mirtesen.ru/blog/43264398609/Mif-o-Golodomore-dolzhen-byit-razrushen?nr=1>

while carrying out collectivization, the Soviet Power assumed that it was also destroying the kulaks. And kulaks did not deserve any mercy because they were class enemies. Be it in Ukraine, in Russia, wherever. So, kulaks were targeted without ethnic difference. A hidden part of the story which probably we'll never know properly, is the story of how the conflict within the villages where poor peasants were now having the chance to take a revenge over their rich neighbors during the collectivization. It is not by chance that when Ukrainians started the project of collecting oral narratives of people who suffered during Holodomor, they collected it then they made transcripts, then they edited the transcripts and then they destroyed the tapes. It was a huge project which was heavily edited because it was showing how the internal conflict within the village was very often aggravating the situation. So, these narratives have been subject to redaction".<sup>214</sup>

Kondrashin is perhaps the Russian historian that researched the famine most extensively. He adheres to the theory of the general famine and argues that the term Holodomor is the result of the Ukrainian politicization of the famine that has been serving different causes since World War II.

"It should be recalled that this idea (the 'famine' of the Ukrainian people) is the result of artificial politicization of the problem ... For example, Ukrainian nationalists during the Great Patriotic War represented by the OUN-UPA in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine, did not use the tragedy of 1932-1933 in their 'ideological work'. For them, as well as for the Nazis, in their campaign to 'liberate' Ukraine from Bolshevism, the Holodomor was not considered a significant event".<sup>215</sup>

Kondrashin takes the theory of responsibility of the Ukrainian people on the catastrophe even further and considers Russian help sent to Ukraine as proof of this. He reduces the role of Stalin the "perpetrator" and introduces Stalin the "benefactor". The perpetrators are the leaders of Ukraine.

"In 1933, (Ukraine) received loans of 501 thousand tons of supply, at the expense of the Russian regions. Of the 12,100 tractors, she got almost half. Of the

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<sup>214</sup> Miller, A. Interview. St. Petersburg, 12.11.2019

<sup>215</sup> "Следует напомнить, что эта идея ('геноцид голодомором' украинского народа)- результат искусственной политизации проблемы...Например, украинские националисты в годы Великой Отечественной войны в лице ОУН-УПА на временно оккупированной территории Украины в своей 'идеологической работе' не использовали трагедию 1932-1933 годов. Для них, как и для нацистов, в их походе к 'освобождению' Украины от большевизма голодомор не считался значимым событием. В связи с этим применительно к теме 'голод и украинские националисты' ещё одним аргументом, подтверждающим политическую конъюнктурность концепции 'геноцида' голодомором Украины, является история с так называемый Всеукраинской повстанческой боевой организацией, раскрытой ОГПУ в начале 1933 года в Украинской ССР". Кондрашин, В. 2018

quota for the number of workers who were allowed to have gardens, a third. Everything because of the threat of crop failure in the republic. Because of the leaders of grain production. How does this fit into a 'genocide'? Russia was not killing Ukraine. The leaders and his people. Disputes over who suffered the hardest from the Stalinist regime are immoral".<sup>216</sup>

Kondrashin also claims that there is eventually no evidence of Stalin's plan to organize the famine.

(Interviewer) "So Stalin did not organize ethnic repression?"

(Kondrashin) "You know, I specifically searched for documents where he is supposed to have said: 'These damned Ukrainians!' etc. But I did not find any".<sup>217</sup>

On the role of the blockade that most Ukrainian historiography adheres to, with Stanislav Kulchytsky as initiator of this version that claims to be the vital element behind the genocide of the Ukrainian people, Kondrashin responds to as follows:

"While accusing me of being 'insufficiently familiar with the topic on the session's agenda', for all Ukraine to hear, S. V. Kulchytsky himself is guilty of unpardonable mistakes (or omissions?) and is thereby leading his colleagues astray. During the conference he insisted that Stalin threw up a blockade only around Ukraine and the Kuban in order to enclose the starving people in the famine zone; they were forbidden to leave it, hence the death toll and proof of the 'Holodomor as genocide'. I am talking about the notorious directive of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (Jan. 22, 1933) on measures aimed at preventing the mass exodus of starving peasants, in keeping with which the mass departure of peasants from the Ukrainian SSR and the North Caucasus 'in search of bread' had to be stopped".<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> "В 1933 году она получила 501 тысячу тонн ссуд, это, отмечу, и за счет российских областей. Из 12,100 тракторов ей досталась почти половина. Из квоты на число рабочих, которым разрешалось иметь огороды, - треть. Всё - из-за угрозы срыва посевной в республике, лидере зернового производства. Но как оно вписывается в 'геноцид'? Не Россия убивала Украину. Вождь - свой народ. Споры на тему, кто тяжелее пострадал от сталинского режима, безнравственны и политически опасны". Известия IZ. 'Историк Виктор Кондрашин: "Не Россия убивала Украину. Вождь - свой народ"'. 22.10.2008. <https://iz.ru/news/341984>

<sup>217</sup> "Значит, Сталин не организовывал репрессии по этническому принципу? Вы знаете, я специально искал документы, где бы он говорил: 'Эти проклятые хохлы!' и т.д. Но я не нашел ни одного". Историческая Экспертиза. 'Кондрашин В.В. "Если бы не коллективизация, никакого голода, с точки зрения погодных условий, не было бы"'. [https://istorex.ru/page/kondrashin\\_vv](https://istorex.ru/page/kondrashin_vv)

<sup>218</sup> Congress 1917.gr. "Viktor Kondrashin – Was the 1932-33 famine in Ukraine "an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people"? My response to S. V. Kulchytsky", 01.04.2019. <https://congress1917.gr/archives/1017>

During my meeting with professor Kasianov, I also inquired on the blockade issue, knowing that Kasianov does not fully agree with Ukrainian historiography, and his interpretation of Holodomor is very much respected in Russia.

I therefore asked Kasianov the following question:

“As for the article by James Mace, can you confirm his information that the border between Russia and Ukraine was closed for long periods in 1933-34, and there was no hunger during the famine in Kharkov in Belgorod? If so, should we consider this as irrefutable evidence that Ukraine was a particular target?”<sup>219</sup>

Kasianov refuted the Ukrainian version of the blockade replying as follows:

“And the facts of the blockade. The blocking of railroad tracks, yes there was, but talking about the border between Russia and Ukraine is not entirely correct. Because the border, in the sense we imagine a border with guards and so on, was not there. Some borders appeared in some places but not in all areas. This means that the border was conditional, that is, people who fled to Russia to areas that were not affected by hunger, indeed, they fled. But there were cases of blockade, overlapping certain parts of the territory, including the border, but these were conditional borders. This doesn't confirm that Ukraine was a special object of the organization of the hunger. Entire territories were also blocked in Russia when people tried to escape. So, this does not indicate that this is a feature of the Ukrainian hunger. But the Ukrainian famine had its own definition of features related to the fact that here, for example, they (the Ukrainians) suffered more in certain areas, while assistance was provided to only one area. Already in 1933, in the winter and in the spring of 33, help was provided, but in other regions there was no help. For example, areas where industrial crops were grown, like in the Kiev region where beets were grown. They were grown on a large scale. Help came here on a limited scale, because beets were not needed. But in those areas where grain was grown, help was already sent in the spring of 1933 on a large scale, this is one of the features. In addition, there were, let's say, as the population was largely agricultural at that time, although reinforced urbanization was already taking place here, losses that were in absolute terms much greater than in other territories of the Soviet Union”.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> “Что касается статьи Джеймса Мейса, можете ли вы подтвердить его информацию о том, что граница между Россией и Украиной была закрыта в течение длительных периодов в 1933-34 годах, и во время голода в Харькове в Белгороде не было голода? Если да, то должны ли мы считать это неопровержимым доказательством того, что Украина была особенно мишенью?”. Kasianov, G. Interview, Kiev 16.01.2020.

<sup>220</sup> “А факты блокады, перекрытия железнодорожных путей, да это так было, но говорить о границе между Россией и Украиной было не совсем грамотно, потому что граница в таком смысле, как мы себе её представляем, вот что было граница с пограничниками и так далее, такой границы не было. Она сейчас такая появилась и то не на всех участках. Значит, граница была условной, то есть в Россию в районы которые не были поражены голодом, действительно, люди бежали, но случаев блокады, перекрытия определённых участков территории, и в том числе и на границе, но это условные границы, они были, но они не подтверждают, то что это, вот Украина была как бы

Kondrashin's view cannot be referred to as "государственная версия" as Kasianov refers to the Ukrainian version of the Holodomor museum. His explanation is nevertheless shared by Dmitry Medvedev (the only Russian president to mention and comment on the famine of 1932-33 publicly since *perestroika*). Furthermore, several students, professors and experts I talked to during my work on this thesis and also ex-Soviet non-Ukrainian citizens that I met and questioned since February 2019, support his view. These actors agreed with Kondrashin's claims:

"The famine did not target individual nations. There was no genocide specifically against the Ukrainian people; there was a joint tragedy of the Ukrainian, Russian, and other peoples of our country, which was the fault of the Soviet leadership. The famine of 1932-33 was a tragedy that afflicted the entire Soviet countryside, particularly in Ukraine and Russia".<sup>221</sup>

## 9. Conclusion

This thesis has presented some of the challenges met by Ukraine and Russia in interpreting the famine of 1932-33. The memory is shared by both nations but understood and utilized in considerably different ways. The inability of the two countries to find a common agreement on its interpretation and a final assessment on the cause

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особым объектом организации голода. В России тоже блокировались целые территории, когда люди пытались бежать. Так что, это не указывает на какую особенность украинского голода. А украинский голод имел свое определение особенности, связанные с тем, что здесь, например, в одни районы сильнее страдали, одним района оказывалась помощь. Уже в 33 году, зимой весной 33 года, оказалась помощь, а в других регионах не оказалась помощь. На пример, районы, где выращивали технические культуры, Киевская область, здесь свёклу выращивали. Они были в больших масштабах. Сюда помощь шла в ограниченных масштабах, потому что свёкла была не нужна. А вот в тех районах, где выращивали зерно, туда помощь уже шла весной 1933 года в больших масштабах, вот это одна и особенностей. Кроме того, здесь были, скажем так, поскольку население было в значительной степени аграрное на тот момент, хотя уже происходила урбанизация, усиленная здесь, потери в абсолютных цифрах были гораздо большее, чем на других территориях Советского союза". Kasianov, G. Interview. Kiev, 16.01.2020

<sup>221</sup> Congress 1917.gr. 01.04.2019. 'Viktor Kondrashin – Was the 1932-33 famine in Ukraine "an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people"? My response to S. V. Kulchytsky'. <https://congress1917.gr/archives/1017>

of the tragedy, has turned the event into a traumatic memory. Through the gathering and the examination of primary and secondary sources related to the tragedy, and interviews with experts on the field, the paper looks at the vastness and complexity of the topic with the myriad of actors involved in the construction of its discourse, its narrative and its politicization. The understanding of what Ukrainian narrative refers to as “Holodomor” and its Russian counterpart as “famine”, has become a highly complex matter of *identity between history and memory*.

The discourse on the famine commenced in the West, initiated by Ukrainian immigrants especially in the USA and Canada already in the 50s, when any discussion on the event was still strictly prohibited in the Soviet Union. Here the discourse arrived only in the 80s, during *perestroika* when the political changes triggered an *interaction between memory and history*. The Ukrainians diaspora would eventually forge the term *Holodomor* which means “to kill by starvation”. This does not only mark a definitive departure from Soviet historiography, but also the birth of a nuance which would kickstart a fiery debate between Ukraine and Russia, a debate still very much alive today.

James Mace, Robert Conquest, Harvard University and former US president Ronald Reagan’s commitment in researching the famine, were decisive factors in composing this literature. One of their purposes of this literature was to pinpoint the *perpetrator* of the famine. However, there are several challenges encountered by this narrative. First and foremost, the nature of this historiography was met with fierce resistance and has been the object of harsh Russian critiques igniting a sore debate on *perpetrators* and *victims* in which Russia assumed a *strategy of survival*. These allegations accuse the Ukrainian immigrants of being either ex-Nazi collaborators that escaped the USSR and were able to use the famine as anti communist propaganda in order to cover their failings, or Russophobic Ukrainian nationalists that sought to externalize Ukraine from Soviet history and create an identity for Ukrainian immigrants abroad by proposing the

study of their suffering. Several Russian activists claim that this study is based on *myths*. Furthermore there seem to be considerable discrepancies within Western literature itself and not just between Ukrainian and Russian historiography. By consulting western historiography, the thesis reconstructs a version of the actual famine. In it, all authors seem to agree on the fact that the famine struck the peasantry of the USSR and was aggravated by Stalin's botched collectivization, dekulakization and the absurd confiscation that followed, where as much foodstuff and money as possible were squeezed out of an already poor population. Yet, not all agree on Stalin's intentions, especially on the claims that entail Moscow launching a deliberate act of mass killing on Ukrainian peasants because they were potential nationalists and embodied the identity of Ukraine which Stalin severely distrusted.

The thesis also presents a brief discussion on the building of politics around the famine, showing that *history politics* has been drawn into the debate of the famine since the event entered the political sphere with the consequent problematization of the historical facts. Several Ukrainian presidents and most of the Ukrainian public opinion look upon the politicization of the famine as a result of the advantages of the democratic process that Ukraine undergoes, while Russian historians respond by accusing Ukraine of distorting the historical facts through politics. Many Ukrainians hold Russia responsible for *silencing* the crimes of the Communist party, while Russian historians and activists blame Ukraine of seeking recognition for their victimhood based on the myth of *martyrium*. This relation of *perpetrator* and *victim* has further increased the traumatic character of the memory and turned it into a tool that serves politicians in their political career. In addition to this, Ukraine's politicians themselves were divided by the famine. Different presidents have pushed for their own version of the famine, at times by advancing certain arguments that supported their political proposals, and at times by withdrawing them. Although many of these versions largely agree with various western narratives on Holodomor, none of them was fully acknowledged worldwide on the political level. Ironically for Ukraine, the pro-Russia version of Yanukovych was the one



that received full support from other politicians abroad. From Russia herself and former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev (although Russia has never officially acknowledged it), unlike the Yushchenko's genocidal version that met with resistance in the West and in the East (also Applebaum refutes this version) and that was rejected by Israel. Even though President Putin refers to Russians and Ukrainians as peoples with a common tradition and a common history and appeals to the *myth of common descent*, he has neither defended the Russian version of common Soviet famine, nor expressed any thoughts on the event.

The thesis has also looked at the two main discourses on the famine recurring in Ukrainian and Russian historiography. According to the dominant Ukraine narrative, the famine struck the peasantry of Ukraine and other parts of the USSR populated by Ukrainians. Ukraine had a large peasant population and was often referred to as the *breadbasket* of the Soviet Union. The famine was not the result of unfavorable weather conditions or Stalin's political ruthlessness, but instead an attempt by Stalin and the communist party in Moscow to exterminate the peasantry. Using measures specifically designed for Ukraine such as "blacklists" and "blockades", Stalin guaranteed that Ukrainian peasants would suffer the most and eventually starve to death holding them responsible for "dangerous nationalism" that pushed for an independent Ukraine. Ukrainian narrative has it that Stalin was afraid to lose Ukraine.

The dominant Russian narrative defends the theory of general famine that struck the USSR indiscriminately, holding that all assumptions on the extermination of ethnic Ukrainians are immoral and unjust due to the multi-ethnic nature of the USSR where several ethnic groups suffered in equal measure. *Falsification of history and myths* are recurrent arguments in Russian historiography and thus represent rejections of the Ukrainian version of the famine. These arguments are often based on the assertion that Ukrainians narrate the facts from the *victims* point of view which distorts the true facts. Russian and pro-Russian narratives share the view of failed collectivization but discard

the idea of Stalin's genocidal intentions, holding that Stalin wanted to squeeze as much grain as possible out of Ukraine. His total disregard for human life increased the damage inflicted on the population. The "deliberate" act of killing is totally absent in Russian narrative.

Russia's narrative also rejects the theory of Stalin designing "special measures" for Ukraine such as "blacklists" and "blockades". It claims that "blacklists" were a common phenomenon of the whole USSR and discards the topic on the "blockade". It claims that although roadblocks eventually appeared in different spots at different times, the border was never completely sealed. This narrative also claims that help was sent to Ukraine in large quantities (Ukraine received more than other Russian areas, some Russian sources claim), but unluckily these supplies were not sent to all areas. Certain areas were prioritized.

All the above-mentioned disagreements on the Holodomor-contended memory, clearly indicate that the nature of the disputes between the two countries extends far beyond what really happened in 1932-33. The two main versions of the hunger, the Ukrainian and the Russian, though at times very similar, unfold themselves into completely different territories removing the two nations from one another. Yet, this thesis attempts to incorporate as many examples as possible from significant elements of the interpretations of the famine, presenting perhaps what could be a *third* version. Not a replacement of the previous versions, but a possible way of research that might inspire others into looking at such an important topic of the past, which traits and similarities can for sure be found in other disputed historical events.

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