Holodomor
Famine - Genocide
in Ukraine 1932-1933

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Objectives:

• To examine Stalin’s reasons for the Holodomor and his policies leading to it.
• To examine the nature and consequences of the Holodomor
• To examine cover-up of the Holodomor
• To examine the reasons behind the lack of response in the West to the Holodomor
• To examine the Holodomor in the context of 20th century genocides
Ukraine

- Largest country entirely in Europe
- Capital: Kyiv
- Located north of the Black Sea
- Borders Poland, Belarus, Russia, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, & Hungary
- Population = 46 million
- Eastern Slavic culture
“Breadbasket of Europe”

Fertile soil provides grain to most of Europe
1922 - most of Ukraine forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union
Stalin’s Reasons for Implementing the Holodomor

1. To annihilate a significant part of the Ukrainian population, openly resisting Soviet repressive policies in Ukraine

2. To terrorize the surviving Ukrainian population into submission to the Soviet totalitarian regime

3. To provide funds for Soviet industrial expansion and the purchase of machinery in the West from the sale of expropriated Ukrainian grain and other produce.
“If we do not begin correcting the situation in Ukraine immediately, we could lose Ukraine...The objective should be to transform Ukraine, in the shortest possible time into a veritable fortress of the USSR...Spare no money for that.”

Stalin wrote in his letter to Kaganovich, one of his henchmen responsible for the Holodomor.
After consolidating power over the Soviet Union, Stalin institutes the Five Year Plan 1928 - 1933

- Abolish private industry
- Nationalize commerce
- Collectivize farms
- Impose grain quotas
By mid 1932, nearly 75 percent of the farms in Ukraine are **forcibly** collectivized.

Villagers are brought under government control.

Farmers who resisted are shot or sent to Siberia.

**Collectivization**: collective farms replaced individual farms. Farmers had to surrender their land, livestock to collective farms.
"Farmers present by themselves the basic force of the national movement. Without farmers there can be no strong national movement. This is what we mean when we say that the national question is, actually, the farmers' question."

*Joseph Stalin, Marxist and the National-Colonial Question*

Stalin targeted the rural population - villages inhabited by ethnic Ukrainians who preserved the Ukrainian culture, language, and the spirit of independence.
HOLODOMOR
holod + moryty

holod = starvation
moryty = to kill

HOLODOMOR - killing by starvation
- defines a horrific tragedy in the history of mankind:
the genocide committed against the Ukrainian people by the Soviet regime under Joseph Stalin
- in 1932 – 1933

Pronunciation: hau lau dau more
Areas affected by the Holodomor
Seals Borders of Ukraine

Ukraine is the only Soviet republic whose borders are sealed to prevent food aid from entering or people from fleeing.

People attempt to board railway cars to escape
“Five ears of corn law”

- August 7, 1932 imposes the death penalty or 10 years imprisonment for theft of “socialist property”

... for picking a few ears of grain from the fields which had previously belonged to them.
“Food is a weapon”

Maxim Litinov – Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs

Grain quotas are increased by 44% over the previous year.

Special brigades of communist activists are sent in to remove all foodstuffs from the homes of starving villagers.

Holodomor victims on a street in Kharkiv. Photo by Winnerberger, 1933
Soviet Union denies the famine

- Moscow *refuses offers of food aid* from other countries and humanitarian organizations and labels reports of a famine as anti-Soviet propaganda.

- **Exports enough grain** from Ukraine to feed the entire population.

- **Foreign journalists are banned from traveling to Ukraine** and North Caucasus in 1933
In 1933, at the height of the Famine, Ukrainian villagers were dying at the rate of:

• 17 per minute
• 1,000 per hour
• 25,000 per day

“The Great Famine of 1932–33 in Ukraine (Holodomor), which took 7 to 10 millions of innocent lives, became a national tragedy for the Ukrainian people”.

Joint statement by 65 UN member states, adopted by the 58th UN General Assembly on 7 November 2003

Mass graves in Soviet Ukraine, 1933
... of these 3 million were children

- In desperate attempts, villagers abandoned children in urban areas which were less affected by starvation.
- In late spring 1933, over 300,000 children recorded homeless in the Kyiv region.
Exact number of victims not known

• Doctors were not allowed to put starvation as the cause of death

• Any mention of the Holodomor was a crime against the state.

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

*Nikita Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers*
### Population Statistics for the Soviet Union

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ukrainians within USSR</th>
<th>Russians in USSR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>31,195,000</td>
<td>77,791,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>28,111,000</td>
<td>99,591,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Ukrainian population decreased by **11%**
- Russian population increased by **28%**

Source: Prof. Alexander Palij, historian, Ukrainian Academy of Sciences “23 reasons for the Holodomor to be considered a genocide with no qualifications” (Ukrainian language), UNIAN, Nov. 27, 2010. [http://www.unian.ua/ukr/print/40](http://www.unian.ua/ukr/print/40)

The 1937 census revealed a sharp decrease in the Ukrainian population.

Those who conducted the census were **shot** and the results of the census were **suppressed**.
Arthur Koestler, British novelist

"I saw the ravages of the famine of 1932-1933 in the Ukraine: hordes of families in rags begging at the railway stations, the women lifting up to the compartment window their starving brats, which, with drumstick limbs, big cadaverous heads and puffed bellies, looked like embryos out of alcohol bottles ...“

Koestler spent about three months in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv during Famine. He wrote about his experiences in “The God That Failed.”
Reporters, such as Gareth Jones and Malcolm Muggeridge traveled to Ukraine in secrecy and reported on the widespread famine.

“Talked to a group of women peasants [at station]; “We’re starving. Two months we’ve hardly had bread. We’re from Ukraine and we’re trying to go north. They’re dying quietly in the villages. Kolkhozes are terrible. They won’t give us any [train] tickets and we don’t know what to do. Can’t buy bread for money.”

http://www.garethjones.org/
Quotation from the *Harvest of Sorrow* by the British historian Robert Conquest, 1986

“A quarter of the rural population, men, women, and children, lay dead or dying, the rest in various stages of debilitation with no strength to bury their families or neighbors.”
Holodomor cripples Ukraine as a nation for many generations.

- Loss of Ukrainian leaders
- Loss of educated classes
  - economic, political, intellectual and spiritual
- 80% of Ukrainian intellectuals are executed
  - Out of 240 Ukrainian authors 200 perish, and out of 84 linguists 62 are executed
- Entire villages depopulated
  - Russians are brought in to settle the depopulated villages

Destruction of the Ukrainian language, traditions, and the spirit of individualism and independence.
“[T]he assault by famine on the Ukrainian peasant population was accompanied by a wide-ranging destruction of Ukrainian cultural and religious life and slaughter of the Ukrainian intelligentsia...”

Robert Conquest. “Harvest of Sorrow” 1986
Definition of GENOCIDE?

...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group by:

• Killing members of the group

• Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group

• Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or part

• Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group

• Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

Genocide of Ukrainians

• A deliberate attempt to crush the Ukrainian nation as evidenced by witness accounts and laws enacted.
• Not a result of a natural calamity or poor harvest. It took place in peacetime.

"...A famine that came about without drought and without war."
*Alexander Solzhenitsyn, The Gulag Archipelago*

• Grain is exported while the farmers who produce it are dying of starvation.

• Intellectual and religious segment of the nation are destroyed through massive arrests, deportation, and firing squads.
“Soviet genocide in...Ukraine”

Raphael Lemkin, who coined the word “genocide” states that the Holodomor is “a case of genocide, of destruction, not of individuals only, but a culture and a nation.”

“the classic example of Soviet genocide, its longest and broadest experiment in Russification – the destruction of the Ukrainian nation.”

In 1988, the U.S. Congress Commission on the Ukraine Famine concluded that Joseph Stalin and those around him committed genocide against Ukrainians in 1932-1933.
Why is the Holodomor virtually unknown in the West? largely ignored or denied in the West for decades

“The truth of the matter is that we have a certain amount of information about the famine conditions in the south of Russia... We do not want to make it public because the Soviet government would resent it and our relations with them would be prejudiced.”

Excerpt from UK Foreign Office document

“There is no actual starvation or death from starvation, but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition”


Known as Stalin’s apologist
Turning a Blind Eye

“... (Our reporting) served Moscow’s purpose of smearing the facts out of recognition and declaring a situation which, had we reported simply and clearly, might have worked up enough public opinion abroad to force remedial measures. And every correspondent each in his own measure, was guilty of collaborating in this monstrous hoax on the world.” Eugene Lyons – (Moscow United Press correspondent from 1928 to 1934) Assignment in Utopia pp.573
In 1933, at the height of the famine, the U.S. government officially recognized the Soviet Union.

In 1934 the Soviet Union became a member of the League of Nations.
Two Murderers of the 20th century

Joseph Stalin

Adolph Hitler
Is Communism comparable to Nazism?

- Totalitarian regimes, which not only denied human rights but were also responsible for the loss of millions of lives.

- At the beginning of WWII, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany had been allies for almost two years (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact).

“Communism and Nazism are, and always were, morally indistinguishable.”

Stephane Courtois, French historian *The Black Book of Communism*
Differences between Communism and Nazism

The Holodomor was a precursor of the Holocaust. Some historians believe that without the Holodomor, which was committed with complete impunity, the Holocaust might not have happened.

- Nazi leaders were punished for the crimes they committed against humanity. Yet, no Communist leader has ever been brought to justice.

- Soviet Union lasted 70 years and covered a larger land area than Nazism, affecting more people.
Witness testimonies

“Where did all bread disappear, I do not really know, maybe they have taken it all abroad. The authorities have confiscated it, removed from the villages, loaded grain into the railway coaches and took it away someplace. They have searched the houses, taken away everything to the smallest thing. All the vegetable gardens, all the cellars were raked out and everything was taken away.”

(From the memories of Olexandra Rafalska, Zhytomir)

“More than a half of the village population perished as a result of the famine. It was terrifying to walk through the village: swollen people moaning and dying. The bodies of the dead were buried together, because there was no one to dig the graves.”

(From the memories of Galina Gubenko, Poltava region)
Witness Testimonies

“In February of 1933, there were so few children left that the schools were closed. By this time, there wasn't a cat, dog or sparrow in the village.”

(Tatiana Pawlichka)

“It was forbidden for people to leave their villages. GPU guards blocked all roads and railways. Any food that the farmers happened to be carrying was taken away from them. For picking a stray head of wheat or a frozen potato or beet left in the field, a person was sentenced to ten years in prison or concentration camp.”

(Polikarp Kybkalo)

Congressional Testimony presented before the United States Ukraine Famine Commission in Washington D. C., October 8, 1986
Why are Ukrainians pressing for recognition of the Holodomor as a genocide?

- To pay tribute to the millions of victims
- To condemn the crimes of the Soviet Communist government
- To raise awareness that food is still being used as a weapon
- Help prevent such deplorable acts from happening again

Monument to Holodomor victims in Ukraine
FOOD AS A POLITICAL WEAPON
20th century Communist imitators of Stalin


ETHIOPIA - Communist regime in 1974 - thousands, perhaps millions of people, seeking independence, starved to death while government spent millions of dollars on military armaments.

CAMBODIA - Communist Khmer Rouge in 1975 - government of Pol Pot was responsible for the death of some 2 million through a program of planned execution and forced starvation.
Only by understanding the genocides of the past, can we hope to prevent others from occurring in our lifetime.
HOLODOMOR 1932 -33
Ukrainian Famine - Act of Genocide
Ukraine Remembers - the World Acknowledges
Genocide in Ukraine  Graphic organizer

1. State four basic reasons describing why the Holodomor occurred.

3. State four basic facts describing how the Holodomor occurred.

2. What were four consequences of the Holodomor?

4. Express in verbal or graphic form the most potent mental picture you have of the Holodomor.

“Genocide Never Again” Curriculum 2007
Sources


Websites


**DVD/Video**


Luhovy, Yurij, dir. *Genocide Revealed*, 2011. La Maison de Montage Luhovy Inc. DVD “Best Historical Film 2011”, “Best Documentary 2011”

**Curriculum Guides**


Babij, Lana, Lidia Choma, and Borys Krupa. *Turning a Blind Eye: A Unit of Study*, 2012. Print. A classroom ready unit designated for high school curricula; presents the Holodomor, China’s 1959-61 Famine, Darfur and selected current events in terms of “recognizing, acknowledging, and exposing human rights violations and genocide, with a special focus on media and social responsibility.”
