

The Holodomor – A Forgotten Genocide

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About the author:

Simon Bell is a retired mental health nurse. He had a 37 year nursing career in the U.K. For 35 years he worked in mental health care, and for 22 years he worked specifically with suspects, defendants and offenders with mental health problems. Some of the offenders he dealt with caused significant harm to others, and many had personal trauma experiences linked to all forms of childhood abuse. During the early part of his career he worked in old asylum care. Most of the patients were classed as 'long-stay' and had spent years, and sometimes decades, in hospital. Amongst those patients were survivors of the war in Europe, including combatants, civilians, and some who had survived the Holocaust. Over the years the author has dealt with survivors of other genocides, military personnel who had helped liberate the oppressed, and refugees who have fled warzones. These experiences have had a significant impact and reinforced a desire to help ensure that the world continues to learn from the lessons of the past. He is currently studying for an MA in Second World War Studies: Conflict-Societies-Holocaust. He is the author of *Auschwitz-Birkenau: From Hell to Hope?* and *Tribalism and Prejudice: The Far Right and Lessons From History*. He is also co-author, with Rainer Höß of *A Kinship of Purpose*.

Abstract:

The Holodomor, also known as the 'Terror Famine' caused a devastating loss of life and damage to the communities of Ukraine in 1932-33. It has variously been attributed to famine that impacted upon wider regions of the Soviet Union, to policies of industrialisation and collectivisation, to poor management of resources and food by the Soviet regime, to forced procurement of grain, and to deliberate policies designed to oppress and starve the peasants of Ukraine in order to enforce the will of Stalin and control a region deemed to be a seat of rebellion. The debate was somewhat suppressed

during the Soviet era, and it is only since the middle of the 1980s that a more complete picture has emerged. This essay seeks to consider some of the available research and acknowledge that, based on accepted criteria, it was almost certainly a crime of genocide that appears to have eluded wider discussion.

Introduction

The United Nations and other legislative bodies were spurred into action following the conclusion of the Second World War. The crimes of the Nazi regime and the Axis powers in the lands that had been controlled were beyond the accepted comprehension of what would occur in times of conflict, conquest, occupation and war. Most notably in Poland and the Soviet territories, the Nazis decimated entire communities and populations. The world was made aware of the concerted efforts to eliminate Jews from Europe, and of the horrors of concentration, labour and extermination camps in which millions suffered and died. The gas chambers, and the methodical slaughter techniques became synonymous with this period. Less well known to the wider public – but just as destructive – was the murder of men, women and children by other means that did not involve the camps. The use of ghettos and slave labour; the selections, the medical experiments, the transportations, the mass shootings, the destruction of communities, the casual decisions about who would live or die; these have all entered into the collective conscience of those who read history. Of course the Nazis killed others – Roma and Sinti, Slavs, homosexuals, intelligentsia, political opponents, criminals and ‘asocials’, the physically and mentally infirm, the elderly and the young – and these crimes too, are well documented. In fact, the Holocaust, and crimes associated with it, is the most researched and written about genocide in history.

Other genocides have been acknowledged by the United Nations: Cambodia, Rwanda, Srebrenica, and Darfur. Further crimes are discussed in terms of genocide such as the treatment of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, and others, in due course, will rightly be described either as crimes against humanity or as genocide. Some crimes have yet to be fully acknowledged including those committed

by Islamist and other terror groups, or nation states during wars. The massacre of Armenians by Turkish forces in 1915 is still being debated, and referring to it as genocide can result in prosecution in Turkey.

The Holodomor - a major event of extreme suffering - gets little in the way of public discussion. There are multiple reasons for this which will be discussed.

The United Nations has acknowledged a number of genocides, and yet there are still those who deny that they occurred, minimise or trivialise the harm caused, dispute the intent, question the evidence, and imply motivation by groups with a vested interest. The Holocaust is the most documented and researched genocide in history. The evidence that it occurred, that it was intentional, that methods of murder were used, and that specific groups were targeted, is overwhelming and accepted by scholars, politicians and historians. There is abundant documentary proof, material that was produced in evidence at war crimes trials, archives, first-hand accounts from survivors, perpetrators and witnesses, detailed plans, written orders and many primary and secondary sources. Yet Holocaust denial exists and is given legitimacy in some quarters. The horrors of the civil war in former Yugoslavia are seen as evidence of ethnic cleansing, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and, with the massacre at Srebrenica, the crime of genocide. Yet some seek to deny these crimes took place, or attribute them to yet another example of historical conflict in that region. In Rwanda the slaughter of the Tutsi minority (mainly) by the Hutu majority, is acknowledged as a genocide. Yet some will suggest that Hutus were killed too (true) and that this merely shows that it was a brutal civil war rather than the intended slaughter of one community. In Myanmar legitimacy is given to some in positions of authority who deny harm caused to the Rohingya Muslims, or who suggest that the harm caused is by the Rohingya rather than those forces of oppression that they are fleeing.

The ongoing debate around known and accepted genocides revolves in part around historical detail, which will change and develop as more information becomes available. Some of the debate will also seek to exculpate the perpetrators. Many will suggest that there is no paper trail leading to a written

order from Hitler for the Holocaust, despite the fact that he was the absolute leader of Nazi Germany who fully supported and promoted the Final Solution. Without Hitler it is questionable whether the Holocaust would have occurred. Some will dismiss the documentation from the Berlin Wannsee Conference, or the written and spoken words of Himmler, Heydrich, Goebbels, Eichmann and others. The evidence produced at the Nuremberg Trials will be condemned as fake or as Allied propaganda. The admissions given by Rudolf Höß, commandant of Auschwitz, as a witness at Nuremberg and during his trial in Poland, and indeed in his written memoirs, are disbelieved from some who choose not to accept them.

The Holodomor – a forgotten genocide

The wealth of historical evidence and material on the genocides mentioned so far is easily accessible. Because of this, these genocides are well known to most people with a reasonable awareness of modern world history. By contrast, the Holodomor has not entered into common knowledge and discussion. Academic papers, and a handful of books can be found, but these need to be sought out in ways that material on similar events does not. The Holodomor occurred in the Ukraine during Stalin's period of control of the Soviet Union. During the ensuing years until the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 debate was controlled, source material was limited, records were concealed, and the narrative about what happened was dictated at various levels of government. Furthermore, most genocides have some form of consistency in historical opinion and accepted fact, but the Holodomor continues to be debated, particularly about whether it was one of many famines in the region, whether it was attributable to political and social policies of the Soviet regime, whether it was due to deliberate deprivation of vital food sources, whether it was due to oppressive policies towards elements of the Ukrainian population, or whether – by intent, by act, by omission – it was genocide.

Little had been written in English about the Holodomor until the 1980s. In 1983, the year marking the 50th anniversary of the peak of the famine, a project was initiated by the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University. In 1986 this resulted in Robert Conquest's book *The Harvest of Sorrow* on the

terror famine. Conquest admitted that his estimation of the death tolls lacked sources.¹ In the same year the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies published a book edited by Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko.²

Further efforts to increase awareness took place in North America. The first international conference in the famine was held in Montreal in 1983. In 1984, Ukrainian émigrés produced the documentary film *The Harvest of Despair* which was widely screened in Canada and the U.S. The following year the famine entered the curricula of American public high schools as part of studies into genocide and human rights.³

In the late 1980s the United States Commission on the Ukrainian Famine published three volumes of eyewitness testimonies. In a sign of the conflicting opinions about the Holodomor this resulted in a negative article in *Slavic Review* by Mark B. Tauger which maintained the claim that the famine was due to the poor harvest of 1931 and low grain reserves in the Soviet Union.⁴

The Holodomor also emerged into public and political discourse in Ukraine during the middle of the 1980s, particularly as an opportunity to offer criticism of the Soviet past. During the presidency of Leonid Kravchuk from 1991-1994 it became politically useful to challenge the rhetoric of the totalitarian past and the famine of 1932-33.⁵

The end of the 1980s impacted upon the previously understood narrative of the Holodomor, and it was increasingly seen as having been organised by the Bolshevik regime in Moscow to suppress the national identity of Ukrainian peasants. The resistance of the peasants became part of the new

¹ David R. Marples, Ethnic Issues in the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61 (3) (May 2009), p. 507

² *Ibid*, p. 507

³ Rebekah Moore, "A Crime Against Humanity Arguably Without Parallel in European History": Genocide and the "Politics" of Victimhood in Western Narratives of the Ukrainian *Holodomor*, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 58 (3) (2012), p. 369

⁴ David R. Marples, Ethnic Issues in the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine, p. 507

⁵ Georgii Kas'ianov, The Holodomor and the Building of a Nation, *Russian Social Science Review*, 52 (May-June 2011), p. 75

historical identity of Ukraine.⁶ For Ukrainians, the commemoration of the famine's innocent victims was seen as part of the awakening from the amnesia of communism, a chance to heal wounds, and restoration of Ukrainian history.⁷ The identification of mass graves, commemorative ceremonies, memorial marches, and acts of remembrance were initiated by Ukrainian intellectuals, writers, historians and activists.⁸ Furthermore, in 1992, the Association of Holodomor Researchers was created. Financial and moral assistance for all of these activities was mainly provided by the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada and the United States.⁹

In 1988 the U.S historian James Mace compiled three volumes of testimony and documentation for the United States Commission on the Ukraine Famine, which was presented as a report to Congress. Mace clearly argued that the famine was an anti-Ukrainian measure which concurred with Robert Conquest's opinion that the Holodomor was a weapon of terror used by Stalin.¹⁰ Both Conquest and Mace were denounced as anti-Communists but the efforts to undermine and marginalise their work were hindered by Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of glasnost which exposed and opened to scrutiny elements of Soviet history for Russians, Ukrainians, and non-Russians.¹¹ For Soviet historians this meant that they could examine the horrors of the Soviet past and conclude that Stalin was a monster. It also helped to ensure that the famine could no longer be dismissed as a conspiracy of anti-Communists and disgruntled Ukrainian émigrés.

The period of the Holodomor was catastrophic. It is estimated that at least 5 million people died from hunger between 1931 and 1934 across the whole Soviet Union. This includes more than 3.9 million Ukrainians.¹² Due to its sheer scale the famine of 1932-33 was described in publications by émigré

⁶ Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "Capital of Despair" Holodomor Memory and Political Conflicts in Kharkiv after the Orange Revolution, *East European Politics and Societies*, 25 (3) (August 2011), p. 601

⁷ *ibid*, p. 601

⁸ *ibid*, p. 601

⁹ *ibid*, p. 601

¹⁰ Alexander J. Motyl, Deleting the Holodomor: Ukraine Unmakes Itself, *World Affairs Journal*, (September/October 2010), p. 28

¹¹ *ibid*, p. 28

¹² Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine*, (London: 2018), p. xxiv

populations at the time, and since, as the *Holodomor* – from the Ukrainian word for hunger (*holod*) and extermination (*mor*).¹³

Estimates of the death toll have ranged widely over the years from a few thousand to 2 million, 7 million or even 10 million.¹⁴ More accurate numbers have been established more recently by a team of Ukrainian demographers after considering numbers that were tabulated at district and provincial level and then passed to Kharkiv and Moscow. The demographers accept that there was some falsification of cause of death on death certificates, but they assert that the number of deaths was not tampered with.¹⁵ In considering this, they sought to establish reliable numbers of ‘excess deaths’ – specifically the numbers of deaths above the expected average. They also considered ‘lost births’ or births that did not happen, in comparison to what would have been expected, when both of these sets of figures are due to the famine.¹⁶ It is from the work of these demographers that agreement seems to have been reached on the figures of 3.9 million excess deaths, or direct losses, and 0.6 million lost births, or indirect losses. Therefore the total of missing Ukrainians is estimated at 4.5 million.¹⁷ To put these figures into perspective it is worth noting that the population of Ukraine at the time was approximately 31 million and as such the direct losses of 3.9 million are 13 per cent of that total. Of those deaths 3.5 million were rural Ukrainians and 400,000 urban dwellers.¹⁸ The rapidity of the death toll is demonstrated by the fact that 90 per cent of the losses took place in 1933, with most occurring in the first half of the year and the highest numbers in May, June and July.¹⁹

It has been suggested that the famine was devastating across Russia and elsewhere in the Soviet Union, however the figures show that in rural Russia there were 3 per cent excess deaths, whereas in rural Ukraine there were 14.9 per cent excess deaths.²⁰ Furthermore, although some regions of Russia

¹³ *ibid*, p. xxiv

¹⁴ *ibid*, pp.284-285

¹⁵ *ibid*, pp. 284-285

¹⁶ *ibid*, pp. 284-285

¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 285

¹⁸ *ibid*, p. 285

¹⁹ *ibid*, p. 285

²⁰ *ibid*, p. 285

had the same famine patterns of Ukraine (the Volga German region, the Saratov region, Krasnodar and the North Caucasus) with high death rates in the first half of 1933, the numbers of excess deaths were lower than the worst hit regions of the Ukraine.²¹

The Holodomor continues to have an impact beyond not just those who were immediately affected by it, but also their children and grandchildren.²² One study identifies two key themes resulting from the genocide – emotions and inner states; and trauma based coping strategies. All of the studied generations reported that the changes in emotions and inner states, when combined with those coping strategies that had originally been adopted by the first generation, had been beneficial for survival during the trauma period of 1932-1933.²³ Significantly, whilst the trauma still affected survivors, the themes were also reported, and impacting upon, the daily lives of second and third generations, even though these descendants perceived them as being irrational.²⁴ Emotional and internal states included horror, fear, shame, anger, sadness, anxiety, low self-worth, and stress. Trauma-based strategies included extreme reverence for food, overemphasis on food, overeating, stockpiling food, inability to discard unwanted items, social hostility, indifference toward others and risky health behaviours.²⁵ Some of the first, second and third generation participants in the study reported that they were living in survival mode.²⁶

Furthermore, many of those who participated in the study reported feeling a sense of ethnic shame, which included humiliation, degradation, shame, embarrassment, an inferior sense of being, and a sense of being made fools of due to the Holodomor being inflicted on Ukrainians. Reports of this shame actually increased with each younger generation, and some second generation men described

²¹ *ibid*, pp. 285-286

²² Brent Bezo, Stefania Maggi, Living in “Survival Mode:” Intergenerational transmission of trauma from the Holodomor genocide of 1932-1933 in Ukraine, *Social Science & Medicine*, 134 (2015), pp. 89-90

²³ *ibid*, pp. 89-90

²⁴ *ibid*, pp. 89-90

²⁵ *ibid*, pp. 89-90

²⁶ *ibid*, pp. 89-90

feeling shame as a result of the notion that the genocide was used to destroy their independent way of life and turn them into slaves of the Soviet regime.²⁷ Anger was the least discussed emotion, but reasons for Holodomor related anger as reported by all generations included:

- 1 Anger that the genocide occurred
- 2 Anger toward “those” perpetrators, in terms of “such a rage that they could dare” orchestrate this genocide
- 3 Anger associated with the inhumanity of genocide in terms of “how people were judged as being so terrible, humans did this to other humans.”
- 4 Anger over the denial of the Holodomor
- 5 Anger related to the genocide's destruction of identity and way of life
- 6 Anger that there has been no justice for the perpetrators.²⁸

Of the participants, only women noted issues of anxiety, stress and reduced self-worth as being Holodomor related factors that still affected their lives. First generation women spoke of being nervous and worried due to surviving the Holodomor. Second generation women did not mention this issue. Third generation women reported seeing their parents and grandparents perpetual motion as being in a survival mode, which directed their own constant tendency to work and activity, maintaining food and other surpluses, and a need to always do more. Furthermore, they reported that a constant need for survival resulted in stress and anxiety which impacted on their ability to enjoy life, or to make time for stronger interpersonal relationships with friends and family, or for personal development.²⁹

Historical debates

The historiography and interpretation of the Holodomor varies and in part is dictated by multiple influences and narratives. It is undoubtedly the greatest catastrophe endured by Ukraine during the period of Soviet rule.³⁰ For Ukrainian national and émigré historians there has been the added difficulty of competing with Soviet officials, propagandists and historians who ignored the famine or

²⁷ *ibid*, p. 90

²⁸ *ibid*, p. 91

²⁹ *ibid*, p. 91

³⁰ Alexander J. Motyl, *Deleting the Holodomor*, p. 27

dismissed it as an émigré delusion.³¹ Certainly, the first Ukrainians to alert the world to the tragedy were survivors of the Holodomor who had fled to the West. It was these survivors who compiled two major volumes of documentary material and survivor testimony called *Black Deeds of the Kremlin: A White Book*.³² They were dismissed as anti-communists by much of the Western intellectual and political establishment. They were not really heard much outside of their own émigré communities.³³ It has been noted that prior to the 1980s most publications in the West about the Holodomor resulted from the work of the Ukrainian diaspora, with Western scholars only occasionally making reference to a man-made famine.³⁴

Since Ukraine gained its independence the Holodomor has become increasingly significant. Despite the famine becoming part of Ukraine's national identity, its progress has been hindered by political dissent, public disputes, and a lack of agreement among the population about its scale, and its origins.³⁵ In part these difficulties are due to the continued relevance of the Soviet era on Ukrainian life and issues associated with developing an independent state.³⁶

The debate and disagreement about the Holodomor has been around its causes. It has been observed that some of the Ukrainian scholars who have written most regularly on the famine suggest several factors and true causes, including: the rapid introduction of collectivisation in Ukraine compared to other regions; the excessive and unreasonable grain quotas; Stalin's directive of 22 January 1933 that closed the borders of Ukraine and the North Caucasus to stop starving peasants from migrating; the inaction in response to Ukrainian officials informing Moscow of the imminent famine as early as 1932; Stalin's fear of losing Ukraine and suspicions about Ukrainian peasants as outlined in a letter to

³¹ *ibid*, p. 27

³² *ibid*, p. 27

³³ *ibid*, p. 27

³⁴ Rebekah Moore, "A Crime Against Humanity Arguably Without Parallel in European History": Genocide and the "Politics" of Victimhood in Western Narratives of the Ukrainian *Holodomor*, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 58 (3) (2012), pp. 368-369

³⁵ David R. Marples, *Ethnic Issues in the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine*, p. 505

³⁶ *ibid*, p. 505

Kaganovich on 11 August 1932; the draconian measures taken by the Extraordinary Commission in Ukraine led by Molotov, with its decree of 18 November 1932 ordering the confiscation of grain, plus meat and vegetables, which inevitably led to peasants starving; the lack of similar starvation in other republics, particularly Russia and Byelorussia; the link between the famine and the assault on the Ukrainian nation through terror and deportations; the purge of national and cultural leaders; and the halting of the earlier policy of Ukrainisation.³⁷

The historiography of the Holodomor was, for decades, dominated by the official Soviet narrative. Indeed, *Stalin's History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) – Short Course* did not mention the famine at all, and suggested that the violent excesses of collectivisation were corrected by Stalin as early as 1930.³⁸

Following the death of Stalin, particularly after the 20th Party Congress, some of the hitherto established ideological taboos were broken. Although Khrushchev did not make mention of the famine in his secret speech, some Soviet historians began to reassess the history of collectivisation and starvation.³⁹ During the era of Brezhnev, any revision of the official history was unwelcome, and discussion about mass famines were limited to the dissident community.⁴⁰ From the mid-1980s the Holodomor became an instrument of the Ukrainian diaspora and Ukrainian nationalists in the fight against Soviet communism.⁴¹ In 1983, the fiftieth anniversary of the famine was used by the diaspora to draw the attention of academics and the international public to the famine.⁴²

³⁷ *ibid*, p. 506

³⁸ Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "Capital of Despair", p. 600

³⁹ *ibid*, p. 600

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 600

⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 600

⁴² *ibid*, p. 600

In 1986 the KPU (Communist Party of Ukraine) established a special commission. The Ukrainian historian Stanyslav Kul'chyts'kyi was appointed to the commission and would later become one of the leading exponents of the genocide thesis. By 1987 the KPU officially accepted the famine as fact.⁴³

As will be seen in this essay, Western scholarship is divided on whether the famine was a deliberate act of genocide, whilst most Ukrainian historians writing about the famine concur that Ukraine was particularly targeted. Ukrainian historians argue that it was in the territories populated by ethnic Ukrainians that hunger was used as a weapon of terror, at the same time as there was repression of the elites and the cessation of the Ukrainisation campaign.⁴⁴ Conversely, Soviet historians asserted that there was a class dimension to the famine whilst minimising the national element.⁴⁵

Perestroika allowed the discussion of the Holodomor as a crime of the Stalin regime to enter the public domain in Ukraine. Genocide was already being used to describe it, but was not overly emphasised. The Holodomor and the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl gave impetus to the delegitimising of the Soviet regime and the rule of communism.⁴⁶

Much of the historical debate has revolved around the issue of genocide. This will be addressed in more detail further on. The term genocide was first used by Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin in 1943, primarily in response to the crimes of the Nazis and the systematic extermination of European Jews.⁴⁷ Lemkin was instrumental in the establishment of the United Nations Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was approved by the General Assembly on 9 December 1948. This also provided a legal definition for genocide, which included: 'acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group.'⁴⁸

⁴³ *ibid*, pp. 600-601

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p. 601

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p. 601

⁴⁶ *ibid*, p. 601

⁴⁷ Rebekah Moore, "A Crime Against Humanity Arguably Without Parallel in European History", pp. 372-373

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p. 373

The genocide debate

Much of the debate about the Holodomor has revolved around whether it was deliberate and organised by the Soviet regime of Stalin, whether it was due to reckless Soviet policies, whether it was the tragic result of a wider famine, or whether it was genocide. President Yushchenko issued a presidential decree in 2008 declaring it the Year of Commemoration of the Holodomor Victims.⁴⁹ Yushchenko used identity politics to define Ukrainians as a 'post-genocide nation', as victims of the communist regime, and with the Holodomor being represented as a crime comparable with the Holocaust.⁵⁰ As Rebekah Moore observes: 'the Nazis' destruction of the Jews has resulted in what one scholar has termed "a Holocaust-based conception of genocide", meaning that we think more about the Holocaust than any other genocide, and we understand other genocides by analysing their similarities to and differences from the Holocaust'.⁵¹ This has had a serious impact on the understanding and knowledge of such events and also upon discussions about genocide, with the risk of what might be referred to as Holocaust envy.⁵² This is not to imply that comparing the Holodomor to the Holocaust is due to envy, or that it cheapens or diminishes the horror of one genocide when compared to another. If Ukrainians perceive a similarity then that is their right.

The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was signed by the General Assembly in Paris on 9 December 1948, following a unanimous vote. It strayed somewhat from the original concepts of Raphael Lemkin who had first proposed that such a crime existed and should be punished. The Convention's final text made clear that genocide, whether it occurred in peacetime or war, in domestic circumstances or abroad, was a punishable and extraditable offence under international law. It further clarified that anyone, whether they be a private person or

⁴⁹ Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "Capital of Despair", p. 602

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p. 603

⁵¹ Rebekah Moore, "A Crime Against Humanity Arguably Without Parallel in European History", p. 375

⁵² *ibid*, p. 375

public official, who committed genocide, or was complicit through incitement or conspiracy, would be made subject to prosecution. Article II of the Convention defined genocide as:

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such:

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.⁵³

Other genocides have provided wider sources of consideration beyond the initial criteria of the Genocide Convention which was formulated based on the crimes of the Axis powers in the Second World War. This author, citing the work of Marko Milanovic (Marko Milanovic, *State Responsibility for Genocide: A Follow Up*, *The European Journal of International Law*, 18 (4) (2007)), noted the following:

One needs to consider intent, act, or omission with complicity to commit genocide. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) Appeals chamber stated that it considered aiding and abetting to be part of complicity in genocide. As Milanovic observes, factors such as instigation might require the presence of genocidal intent, but aiding and abetting does not. Complicity can be seen as a general term for various parts of participation in criminal behaviour; whereas *mens rea* depends on the specific type of complicity. Milanovic gives as a good example the unscrupulous businessman selling poison to Auschwitz. He will certainly be aware that the camp has a genocidal purpose, but he is not necessarily an accomplice to genocide; however, he is still acting deliberately if he knows what the gas will be used for but is indifferent to the consequences. From this it is taken that aiding and abetting genocide is always deliberate, even if it is not done so with specific intent – it is not an act of negligence.⁵⁴

This is clearly of relevance with reference to those who claim that the actions of the Soviet government had consequences that could not be foreseen or prevented. It must have been apparent at all levels that the grain quotas imposed (primarily) on rural peasants could not be sustained without serious loss of life. Yet the quotas continued, and the starvation and loss of life was known. Similarly the policies of collectivisation, prevention of migration, industrialisation, and repression had observable consequences at the time that those in positions of power and authority must have been aware of.

⁵³ Simon Bell, *Tribalism and Prejudice: The Far-Right and Lessons From History*, (Cardiff, California: 2017), pp. 6-7

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p. 40

Raphael Lemkin, the Polish lawyer (from modern day Ukraine) and creator of the term 'genocide' spoke of the Ukraine during the era of the Holodomor as a classic example of his concept. Indeed he stated that: 'It is a case of genocide, of destruction, not of individuals only, but of a culture and a nation.'⁵⁵ In his 1955 work *Soviet Genocide in Ukraine*, Lemkin stated:

The mass murder of peoples and of nations that has characterised the advance of the Soviet Union into Europe is not a new feature of their policy of expansionism...Instead, it has been a long-term characteristic even in the internal policy of the Kremlin – one which the present masters had ample precedent for in the operations of Tsarist Russia. It is indeed an indispensable step in the process of 'union' that the Soviet leaders fondly hope will produce the 'Soviet Man', the 'Soviet Nation' and to achieve that goal, that unified nation, leaders of the Kremlin will gladly destroy the nations and the cultures that have long inhabited Eastern Europe.⁵⁶

Lemkin left Lviv for Warsaw in 1929, but wrote that the history of his region inspired him to think about genocide.⁵⁷ *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation – Analysis of Government – Proposals for Redress*, was published in 1944, when Lemkin was living in the U.S. Lemkin defined genocide in this book as a process, stating:

Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accompanied by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the politics and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.⁵⁸

In 1984 James E. Mace, an American historian, was the first to describe the famine in Ukraine as 'an act of genocide.'⁵⁹ Robert Conquest, in his 1986 book *The Harvest of Sorrow*, also presented the famine

⁵⁵ Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine*, p. xxv

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p. 353

⁵⁷ *ibid*, p. 355

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p. 355

⁵⁹ Rebekah Moore, "A Crime Against Humanity Arguably Without Parallel in European History", p. 369

as being planned by the Soviet regime and suggested that it was genocide against the Ukrainians.⁶⁰ International opinion appears to concur. In April 1988, the final report to Congress of the United States Commission into the Ukrainian Famine concluded that: 'Joseph Stalin and those around him committed genocide against Ukrainians in 1932-1933.'⁶¹ The 1990 report of the International Commission of Inquiry into the Ukrainian famine suggested that: 'the Soviet authorities, without actively wanting the famine, most likely took advantage of it once it occurred to force the peasants to accept policies which they strongly opposed.' However the commission did not reach a unanimous agreement on a genocidal interpretation of the famine.⁶²

The level of scholarly disagreement over whether the famine was genocide is broad and argued with equal passion. Holocaust scholar Michael R. Morris in a foreword to the 1988 publication *The Foreign Office and the Famine: British Documents on Ukraine and the Great Famine of 1932-1933* stated: 'In my view, formal classification of the Famine [as a genocidal attack upon Ukrainians] matters less at this point than the appreciation of the limitless cruelty and anguish it entailed.'⁶³ Yaroslav Bilinsky, commenting on this states: '...I would respectfully disagree. For both intellectual and political reasons it does matter whether the man-made Soviet famine was a central act in a campaign of genocide, or whether it was designed to simply cow Ukrainian peasants in to submission, drive them in to the collectives and ensure a steady supply of grain for Soviet industrialization.'⁶⁴ Bilinsky concedes that there is honest disagreement on whether the famine was genocide or not, but argues that it was genocide, even if a more restrictive definition is adopted. He suggests that, as proposed by Henry R. Huttenbach: 'Genocide is the destruction of the specific group within a given national or even international population...Genocide is the any act that puts the very existence of a group in

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 369

⁶¹ *ibid*, pp. 369-370

⁶² *ibid*, pp. 369-370

⁶³ Yaroslav Bilinsky, Was the Ukrainian famine of 1932-1933 genocide? *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1 (2) (1999), p. 147

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. 147

jeopardy.⁶⁵ Others have attempted to examine the various arguments that have been proposed. Many suggest that the famine does constitute an act of genocide in that it was deliberately planned by the Soviet authorities and aimed to destroy the Ukrainian nation as a political entity and social organism, which could only be achieved through extermination.⁶⁶

Those who agree with this stance argue that the famine did not arise from natural causes and was wholly man-made. The harvests were adequate (but smaller) and the famine resulted from unrealistic and excessive grain requisitions from Ukrainian peasants at the same time as an assault on Ukrainian nationalism.⁶⁷ At the time, Soviet leaders were aware of the famine situation they had created but refused to allow assistance for those who were starving, including rejecting international aid.⁶⁸ Yet, exports of grain continued, the borders were closed to the famine areas, and those who were starving were left to die.⁶⁹

The 2004 book *The Years of Hunger*, by R.W Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, is cited by many scholars and historians. It is clearly seen as an important and authoritative contribution to the debate about the Holodomor. Davies and Wheatcroft rejected the famine being described as genocide, and suggested it had multiple causes:

We do not at all absolve Stalin from responsibility for the famine. His policies towards the peasants were ruthless and brutal. But the story which has emerged in this book is of a Soviet leadership which was struggling with a famine crisis which had been caused partly by their wrongheaded policies, but was unexpected and undesirable. The background to the famine is not simply that Soviet agricultural policies were derived from Bolshevik ideology, though ideology played its part. They were also shaped by the Russian pre-revolutionary past, the experiences of the civil war, the international situation, the intransigent circumstances of geography and the weather, and the modus operandi of the Soviet system as it was established under Stalin. They were formulated by men with little formal education and limited knowledge of agriculture.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ *ibid*, p. 147

⁶⁶ Rebekah Moore, "A Crime Against Humanity Arguably Without Parallel in European History", p. 368

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 368

⁶⁸ *ibid*, p. 368

⁶⁹ *ibid*, p. 368

⁷⁰ *ibid*, pp. 370-371

Davies and Wheatcroft asserted that that ultimately the famine was: ‘a consequence of the decision to industrialise this peasant country at breakneck speed.’⁷¹

Michael Ellman asserts that whilst the interpretation of Davies and Wheatcroft is powerful and has evidence to support it, there are also questions to be asked about whether it is complete.⁷² Ellman also observes that even though no document has been found in which Stalin issues explicit orders for starvation, this does not provide conclusive proof to exculpate him or the regime.⁷³

The issue of intent by Stalin is contentious. If the famine was inflicted on Ukrainians consciously then it is more easily described as genocide; however, if Stalin did not intend to start it, and whether it was caused by natural factors or not, he did not intervene to stop it, then the case for arguing genocide becomes weaker.⁷⁴ The historian Norman Naimark observed that:

There is not a lot of evidence that Stalin himself ordered the Ukrainian killer famine, but there is every reason to believe he knew about it, understood what was happening, and was completely indifferent to the fate of the victims. This may not be enough evidence to convict him in an international court of justice as a genocidaire, but that does not mean that the event itself cannot be judged as genocide. Recent international jurisprudence concludes that a historical event — such as the massacre in Srebrenica in July 1995 — can constitute genocide without the demonstration that specific perpetrators were guilty of the crime.⁷⁵

Some may argue that whether the deaths were due to intentional genocide or natural conditions is irrelevant, but obviously it is important to victims and to the truth of history.⁷⁶

Davies and Wheatcroft asserted that the famine was unintentional based on a combination of rapid industrialisation of a peasant country and the need for grain to feed the towns and cities, to feed the

⁷¹ *ibid*, pp. 370-371

⁷² Michael Ellman, The Role of Leadership Perceptions and of Intent in the Soviet Famine of 1931 -1934, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 57 (6) (September 2005), p. 824

⁷³ *ibid*, p. 824

⁷⁴ Rebekah Moore, “A Crime Against Humanity Arguably Without Parallel in European History”, p. 374

⁷⁵ *ibid*, p. 375

⁷⁶ Michael Ellman, The Role of Leadership Perceptions and of Intent in the Soviet Famine of 1931 -1934, p. 823

army, and to finance industrial equipment.⁷⁷ They also suggest that a bad harvest caused by drought in 1931 and the second in 1932 caused by unfavourable weather, may also have had a greater impact due to the number of horses.⁷⁸ They suggest that foolish agricultural and export policies worsened the situations, but they assert that the famine was unexpected and unintended.⁷⁹

In a letter to Sholokhov Stalin suggested that the peasants were waging war against the Soviets Union using weapons such as starvation. Specifically he wrote:

'the esteemed grain growers of your region (and not only your region) carried out a sit down strike (sabotage!) and would not have minded leaving the workers and the Red Army without bread. The fact that the sabotage was quiet and apparently harmless (bloodless) does not alter the fact that the esteemed grain growers were basically waging a "quiet" war against Soviet power. A war by starvation...'⁸⁰

The approach adopted by Stalin here appears to blame the peasants for their own plight and suggest that they were deliberately adopting a policy of starvation. This could be described as a classic propaganda ploy of 'accusation in a mirror' in which one party imputes another party with their own intentions. An example might be a leader about to start a war by declaring peaceful intentions whilst accusing an enemy of warmongering.⁸¹

Others argue that according to the Stalinists the peasants had under-fulfilled their grain quotas which put pressure on the state to improve procurement activities. As such the peasants were guilty of 'sabotage' and 'waging war against Soviet power', which naturally required them to be punished. For the Stalinists the use of starvation as a weapon of punishment against peasants was justified as they perceived that the peasants were using the same weapon against workers and the Red Army.⁸²

⁷⁷ *ibid*, p. 823

⁷⁸ *ibid*, pp. 823-824

⁷⁹ *ibid*, pp. 823-824

⁸⁰ *ibid*, p. 824

⁸¹ *ibid*, p. 824

⁸² *ibid*, p. 829

Michael Ellman argues that whilst this is certainly not proof, it is circumstantial evidence of the use of starvation as a political instrument.⁸³

Horoaki Kuromiya refers to Amartya Sen's thesis and asserts that the famine was man-made because no famine takes place under a democracy. He states that politics is to blame for modern famines including the Soviet famine of 1932-1933. Furthermore, whilst the harvest of 1932 was exceptionally small, the famine could have been averted and much more limited if the Soviet government had reviewed its trade priorities and also accepted international aid.⁸⁴ As Kuromiya observes, if a relaxed definition of genocide is used – that Stalin knew or should have known the implication of his policies – then the famine in Ukraine constitutes genocide.⁸⁵ Furthermore, he states that if Stalin intended to kill millions through premeditated starvation it would fit the definition of genocide; if he targeted ethnic Ukrainians it might also be defined as genocide.⁸⁶ From the perspective of Kuromiya, evidence of Stalin's intention to kill millions may surface through written or oral testimony, which would help to end some of the controversy.⁸⁷

Lazar Kaganovich, a political ally of Stalin's is said to have remarked: 'even if some kolkhozniki (workers on collective farms) die, they are paying for their own mistakes.'⁸⁸ This appears to apportion blame on the peasants for the famine that they suffered, and may provide a clue to the thinking of Stalin.

Of course the famine reached beyond Ukraine. It has been noted that Stalin and those who supported him did not help the starving and as such allowed them to die. When the famine was apparent to the regime, grain was still being exported, and the grain that could have been made available to relieve hunger was not released. It is suggested that 2.6 million tons of grain was available to be distributed, and that to have done so may have saved many of the millions of lives lost in the famine of 1932-

⁸³ *ibid*, p. 829

⁸⁴ Horoaki Kuromiya, The Soviet Famine of 1932-1933 Reconsidered, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60 (4) (June 2008), p. 663

⁸⁵ *ibid*, p. 663

⁸⁶ *ibid*, pp. 663-664

⁸⁷ *ibid*, p. 664

⁸⁸ *ibid*, p. 664

1933.⁸⁹ However, Moscow did not release the reserves of grain, even when evidence of mass starvation was apparent. The priority for Moscow was not saving starving peasants, but was feeding workers and the army.⁹⁰ Kuromiya asserts that this does not prove an intention to kill millions of people, but it is likely that Moscow intended some form of famine to be imposed as punishment and to teach a lesson.⁹¹ However, Kuromiya suggests (and this is part of the ongoing debate) that lack of direct evidence does not mean that Stalin did not intend to kill millions through the famine, but circumstantial evidence may indicate that this was not his intention.⁹² He also opines that although Stalin intentionally let starving people die, it is unlikely that he caused the famine in order to kill millions of people.⁹³ Kuromiya elaborates by noting that it is also unlikely that Stalin used famine as a cheap alternative to deportation. He suggests that it is certain that the famine affected Ukraine severely, and that Stalin distrusted Ukrainian nationalists and peasants, but not enough evidence exists to convince Kuromiya that Stalin engineered the famine specifically to punish ethnic Ukrainians.⁹⁴

Michael Ellman offers an alternative opinion on the issue of deportations and the link to famine. He notes that in 1933 there were plans for deporting three million people during that year, although the proposed figure was reduced to two million.⁹⁵ It is suggested that at the start of 1933 there was clear hostility towards the peasantry, and that the starvation and mass deaths could be seen as an alternative and a cheaper way of eliminating those elements that were seen as being anti-Soviet.⁹⁶

There appears to have been contempt for 'idlers' and 'slackers' with a suggestion that they deserved to starve. When the famine was at its peak, on 19 February 1933, Stalin gave a speech in which he

⁸⁹ *ibid*, p. 665

⁹⁰ *ibid*, p. 665

⁹¹ *ibid*, p. 665

⁹² *ibid*, p. 665

⁹³ *ibid*, pp. 673-674

⁹⁴ *ibid*, pp. 673-674

⁹⁵ Michael Ellman, *Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Revisited*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 59 (4) (June 2007), pp. 665-666

⁹⁶ *ibid*, p. 666

quoted Lenin: 'He who does not work, neither shall eat.'⁹⁷ It is claimed that these words referred to the exploiting classes who lived off the work of others, and also those who were idle and expected to be fed by others. Davies and Wheatcroft noted that these words influenced the actions of local authorities, and cite an official report of 22 March 1933 which observed that: 'The slogan "he who does not work, neither shall he eat" is adopted by rural organisations without any adjustment - let them perish.'⁹⁸ Furthermore, it is apparent that during the famine, Stalin did not recognise the right of the whole population to food, but actually specified two groups – the class enemies/counter-revolutionaries/anti-Soviets and the idlers, as being deserving of either repression or starvation. Additionally, he suggested that thieves should be killed. Local authorities interpreted this as meaning that those who were starving were thieves who deserved to die.⁹⁹

Ellman also agrees in part with Davies and Wheatcroft that in 1929-1930, at the time Stalin initiated the policy of collectivisation, he was not intending to implement a policy of starvation, but that over-optimism and ignorance of peasants and agriculture certainly played a significant part in the famine.¹⁰⁰

Ellman notes that in 1932-1933 Stalin caused deaths by acts of omission; he omitted to import grain and he omitted to seek international help. In terms of international law this would be classified as culpable homicide or equivalent.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, Stalin caused deaths by commission as he initiated actual and planned deportations, the exporting of grain, and the prevention of peasants fleeing the famine in Ukraine.¹⁰² The issue of intent has been widely debated. An explanation of intent was given to the United Kingdom House of Lords in 1985, which suggested that to ascertain intent, it is necessary to answer two questions:

First, was death ... a natural consequence of the defendant's voluntary act? Secondly, did the defendant foresee that consequence as being a natural consequence of his act? The jury

⁹⁷ *ibid*, pp. 664-665

⁹⁸ *ibid*, pp. 664-665

⁹⁹ *ibid*, p. 665

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*, p. 665

¹⁰¹ *ibid*, p. 680

¹⁰² *ibid*, pp. 680-681

should then be told that if they answer yes to both questions it is a proper inference for them to draw that he intended that consequence.¹⁰³

This is likely to be an ongoing debate that may only be truly resolved if documentary evidence comes to light which has hitherto been unavailable. However, as Anne Applebaum observes, the testimony of survivors is backed up by the archival records. As she states:

Neither crop failure nor bad weather caused the famine in Ukraine. Although the chaos of collectivization helped create the conditions that led to famine, the high numbers of deaths in Ukraine between 1932 and 1934, and especially the spike in the spring of 1933, were not caused directly by collectivization either. Starvation was the result, rather, of the forced removal of food from people's homes; the roadblocks that prevented peasants from seeking work or food; the restrictions on barter and trade; and the vicious propaganda campaign designed to persuade Ukrainians to watch, unmoved, as their neighbours died of hunger.¹⁰⁴

Additionally, the Soviet Politburo, in the autumn of 1932, took decisions that widened and exacerbated the famine in rural Ukraine, and prevented peasants from leaving the republic in search of food. When the crisis was at its height organised party activists and police personnel – motivated by their own hunger, fear, and several years of rhetoric – entered the households of peasants and seized everything that was edible, including livestock and pets.¹⁰⁵ These activities took place at the behest of the Soviet regime, and with the full and visible awareness that these items were being taken from starving peasants. The consequences must have been obvious, and, with or without a paper trail leading to Stalin, responsibility must start with him and work its way through all levels of the regime from the top to the bottom.

Discussion

The genocides thus far acknowledged by the United Nations – the Holocaust, Cambodia, Rwanda, Srebrenica, and Darfur – are understood, well documented, and easily defined. The most casual

¹⁰³ *ibid*, p. 681

¹⁰⁴ Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine*, p. 354

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*, p. xxiv

observer of history will have some familiarity with the Holocaust and possibly with the others. The Holocaust of course stands out. It is the most researched and written about genocide and elements of it – the Final Solution, the targeting of Jews and other groups, the methodology of killing - particularly in the gas chambers, the camps, the ghettos, the selections etc. – these are all well documented and have led to a common perception of what genocide entails. Similarly, with the other genocides, most people would understand the targeting of a group for oppression, removal from a nation state, and murder. Violence, and loss of liberty are part of the wider concept of what genocide is and how it occurs.

The images of these genocides involve armed military and paramilitary forces, along with other elements of state or regime officialdom, in acts of brutality against groups designated as lesser human beings and unworthy of the same rights as the oppressors. Mass-murder, mass-executions, forced labour, denial of medical treatment, dehumanisation, state sanctioned targeting, use of mass-media, hate-filled propaganda, contempt, deprivation of social status, and gradual normalising of the process of ethnic cleansing, forced migration, or even killing, have all entered the general understanding of the crime of genocide.

Such perceptions and imagery allow democracies to feel a sense of comfort. Without these obvious signs, then genocide becomes something that happens elsewhere. It also provides a safety net that allows people to believe that the warnings would be obvious and preventable.

Of course genocide does not always follow these patterns, although many factors are common and predictable indicators of potential harm.

The Holodomor is notable for many reasons. Due to the oppressive and strictly controlled nature of the Soviet regime during Stalin's time, and in the decades that followed, the narrative of history, and of what was permissible to discuss, was controlled and dictated by the structures of the state. Through such controls, despite the evidence, the Holodomor did not exist much officially in Ukraine and the Soviet Union until the mid-1980s. Indeed it was only with perestroika and the subsequent fall of the

Soviet Union, that much of the hitherto unavailable documentation became accessible, and historians within Russia and Ukraine were able to cast a more informed and critical eye over the events of the Soviet era.

Of course the Holodomor had been discussed by scholars and historians in the West, led largely by the Ukrainian diaspora. Commissions in the United States and Canada had been clear in their criticism of the famine and in recognising it as genocide. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union and Ukraine gaining independence there has been more open discussion and national commemoration of the Holodomor.

The debate among historians continues, as can be seen from the material sourced herein. Much of the discussion is about the issue of whether or not the famine of 1932-1933 should be classed as genocide. The policies of Stalin, and therefore all levels of the Soviet regime, enforced collectivisation, and rapid industrialisation on the population of Ukraine. They also enforced grain procurement. These policies had an observable impact – particularly on rural peasants – and resulted in observable starvation.

It is accepted that 3.9 million people died as a result of the famine (direct deaths), and some 600,000 indirect deaths occurred due to lost births. The suffering was apparent and reported to Moscow, but the policies, especially grain and food procurement, continued, even if that left peasants with nothing whatsoever to eat. Those who argue that no intent can be shown, omit to observe the obvious; when the suffering and death was clear to see, efforts should have been made to redirect surplus grain stocks and to appeal for international assistance. That Stalin and the regime failed to do this, that suffering was permitted to continue unabated, suggests that even though they were aware, they allowed the famine to devastate the Ukraine. This implies intent or at least deliberate omission of responsibility. Stalin's hostility toward Ukraine and distrust of the republic does not help the cause of those who seek to exculpate him; rather it helps to argue that there was motive and a rationale behind the decision to allow the suffering to continue.

It has been suggested that the famine was part of a wider problem in the region, and that other areas suffered. This is true, but the research cited does not suggest the crop failures of 1931 and 1932 were unmanageable. It does, however, show that the death and suffering in Ukraine exceeded that experienced in other parts of the region, and will have been compounded by the actions of the state in procuring all available grain (including that destined for planting) as well as other foodstuffs, and closing the borders to prevent starving peasants from migrating. These actions targeted Ukraine specifically which reinforces the thesis that there was an intention to excessively deprive and to cause harm.

Conclusions

This essay has endeavoured to pool together some of the scholarly and academic sources available on the Holodomor. The conclusions reached are that by most definitions the famine of 1932-1933 can be described as genocide. The republic of Ukraine was viewed with distrust and hostility by Stalin. A largely rural country with an agrarian peasant population was forced into rapid industrialisation and collectivisation by a regime that seemed to have little understanding of agriculture, the people, the lifestyle, the resources, and the culture.

The regime sought to use the resources of Ukraine to provide food to workers and the army across the Soviet Union. This led to a policy of grain procurement that was excessive in its demands and left insufficient food (and grain for planting) for the peasants of Ukraine. The procurements were so severe and extreme that households were entered by state operatives and all edible produce was removed. As starvation began to hit, peasants sought to leave the area, but the borders were closed to prevent migration.

The consequences were starvation. 3.9 million direct deaths and 600,000 lost births are attributable to the Holodomor. Most deaths occurred in the first half of 1933. The suffering must have been apparent to all levels of authority, and it is apparent that assistance was requested from Moscow in

1932 when the first signs of an impending famine were noticed. Yet, the procurements continued, the repressive policies did not cease, the borders were closed to those seeking to take flight, no grain was made available from surplus reserve stocks, and no international assistance was requested. These policies imply a deliberate and concerted effort to cause harm.

As noted earlier, The United Nations Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as:

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such:

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

The genocide definition can be readily applied to the Holodomor.

As has been observed, famines do not occur in democracies. There are still authoritarian and despotic regimes which subjugate and oppress populations or specified groups within nation states. To learn about genocide in all of its forms, there is a need to inform and observe the lessons from history. This essay concludes that the Holodomor should be seen as genocide, and that it should be made a subject of study and debate in the wider educational and social setting. This is necessary for the survivors of the Holodomor, for their descendants, for the community of Ukraine, and for the wider international understanding of the crime of genocide in all of its forms.

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