

The Holodomor: Genocide in Ukraine



“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. -Stalin

"Nowhere else did repressions, purges, suppressions, and all other kinds of bureaucratic hooliganism in general acquire such horrifying scope as in Ukraine, in the struggle against powerful forces concealed in the Ukrainian masses that desired more freedom and independence." -Trotsky

Based on the quotes by Stalin and Trotsky in regards to Ukraine, what was the major cause of the forced famine, and later genocide of the Ukrainian population in the Soviet Union?

The Holodomor: Genocide in Ukraine

Read and analyze the following memoir written by a Soviet grain collector and NKVD (secret police) member.

“It was easier then. Believe it or not. Everything was as clear as could be. They were bad, the rats, the counterrevs! So you light ‘em up like one cigarette to the next. Blast ‘em with machine guns and rifles. And then wiggle like a snake around the side, or rush ‘em head on, one after another. Hurrah! Stick ‘em with the bayonet! Butt ‘em in the chops! If they don’t raise their hands, pack ‘em off to the graveyard and keep going!

I’ve got my nagan revolver on me. But you only use it for self-defense, or to show off a little bit. Maybe to shake up some real rat. The enemy can be sitting right next to you, saying hello, so I’ve got to keep it in my pocket. I assume that there must be seventy-four thousand tons of grain in Petrivtsy alone. Those dirty turkeys hid it [turkeys, slang for Ukrainian peasant farmers]. I have always hated the Ukrainians. Every time I began to speak I wanted to make sure that these people knew they were making a serious mistake by hiding the grains.

Drivers down the road carry bodies, some in sacks. At the edge of town there is a field. Not with cows, live stock, or vegetables. It is a mass grave. No need for a cross. That’s where the drivers are headed. One mother was repeating her self as we took away her children's corpses, “ We ourselves are already dead. I didn't cry over your little graves, I handed your body away to be buried without any coffin.”

“Who would have thought we can make profit out of someone who is dying.”

What did Stalin order the NKVD and Russian soldiers to do throughout Ukraine that led to famine?

What was the punishment for stealing grain from the NKVD?

How did some Ukrainians obtain 200 grams of bread?

What was the Soviet Government doing with the grain confiscated from the Ukrainian people?

Nikifor Filimonovich Sviridenko, from the village of Kharkivtsi in the Pereyaslav district was the son of poor people who did not own any land before the revolution. After the revolution Nikifor was given a piece of land, married his Nataalka, and set up housekeeping. He had two small children.

During the winter of 1932-33 the government, conducting its grain-garnering operations, relieved them of their last kernel of grain. Nikifor's relatives, like a great many other families, starved for some time and finally perished.

In February 1933, the neighbors noticed that for two or three days there had been no sign of life in Nikifor's dwelling. Accordingly, three women entered the house through the unlocked door. On the mud floor they saw Nikifor's corpse, while the dishevelled, hunger-distended Nataalka lay nearby. No children were to be seen.

The neighbors asked Nataalka how she was feeling, and she answered, "I'm hungry. There's an iron pot on the porch. Bring it in. It has food in it."

One of the women went out to the porch and saw the little fingers of a child protruding from a small pot standing on the floor. She screamed in fright. The other woman came out, and removed the whole tiny hand from the whitish liquid in the pot.

They began to question the woman, "Where are your children, Nataalka?"

"They're on the porch," replied Nataalka, whose reason had been unbalanced by hunger.

Nikifor and Nataalka had murdered their children and eaten the first one, but had not yet begun on the second. Nikifor was dead, and Nataalka was taken to jail after this, but she also died there three days later.

Victims, Perpetrators, and Survivors Recall the Horrors of Genocide.

Document 1: "Please return the grain that you have confiscated from me. If you don't return it I'll die. I'm 78 years old and I'm incapable of searching for food by myself."

(From a petition to the authorities by I.A. Rylov)

Document 2: "What I saw that morning ... was inexpressibly horrible. On a battlefield men die quickly, they fight back ... Here I saw people dying in solitude by slow degrees, dying hideously, without the excuse of sacrifice for a cause. They had been trapped and left to starve, each in his own home, by a political decision made in a far-off capital around conference and banquet tables. There was not even the consolation of inevitability to relieve the horror."

(as remembered by Victor Kravchenko, a Soviet defector who wrote up his experiences of life in the Soviet Union and as a Soviet official.)

Document 3: "I still get nauseous when I remember the burial hole that all the dead livestock was thrown into. I still remember people screaming by that hole. Driven to madness by hunger people were ripping the meat of the dead animals. The stronger ones were getting bigger pieces. People ate dogs, cats, just about anything to survive."

(as remembered by Vasil Boroznyak)

Document 4: "The famine began. People were eating cats, dogs in the Ros' river all the frogs were caught out. Children were gathering insects in the fields and died swollen. Stronger peasants were forced to collect the dead to the cemeteries; they were stocked on the carts like firewood, than dropped off into one big pit. The dead were all around: on the roads, near the river, by the fences. I used to have 5 brothers. Altogether 792 souls have died in our village during the famine, in the war years – 135 souls"

(As remembered by Antonina Meleshchenko)

Document 5: FAMINE IN RUSSIA—Malcolm Muggeridge—The British journalist's report to The Manchester Guardian newspaper in March 1933.

A little market town in the Kuban district of the North Caucasus suggested a military occupation; worse, active war. There were soldiers everywhere—in the railway station, in the streets, everywhere... all differing notably from the civilian population in one respect. They were well fed, and the civilian population was obviously starving. I mean starving in its absolute sense; not undernourished... but having had for weeks next to nothing to eat.

"How are things with you?" I asked one man. He looked around anxiously to see that no soldiers were nearby. "We have nothing, absolutely nothing. They have taken everything away," he said and hurried on. This is what I heard again and again and again... They had nothing. It was also true that everything had been taken away. This famine is an organized one. Some of the food that has been taken away from them—and the peasants know quite well—is being exported to foreign countries.

Complete the following graphic organizer based on your analysis of documents 1-5 and the video.

Realities: (Experiences of the people, actions taken by those involved)

Results (What did these actions and experiences lead to?)

--	--