
Book Review

The suppressed story of Stalin's genocide against the Ukraine

by Laurent Murawiec and Luba George

Execution by Hunger, The Hidden Holocaust

by Miron Dolot

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Several million people were starved to death and several more million expelled, deported, and exterminated in Siberian concentration camps between 1929 and 1933, as most of the Western media and political leaders were busy extolling the "great leap forward" orchestrated by Josef Stalin in the form of the forced collectivization of Soviet agriculture. The Ukrainian holocaust of the early 1930s, at the expense of destroying Soviet agriculture and slaughtering millions, met the inner requirements of the Soviet Russian system of government.

Dolot's book, a soft-spoken narration of the facts and events as seen by the author, now a professor of Slavic languages in California, then a young teenager in a small Ukrainian village, sets the record straight on this deliberate genocide.

The tone is given by a party envoy descended upon the village, some 150 kilometers south of Kiev, in the district of Cherkassy: "A stray ant is worth nothing. It can get lost while looking for its food; it can be pitilessly crushed by someone it annoys, or be otherwise annihilated. Who cares for a lonely, stray ant? What really matters is the ant-hill, for it is it that ensures the protection and perpetuation of the ants' life. Ants only manage to survive because they live in a well-knit and well-organized society. You cannot imagine an ant without such a society. So it goes with human beings. By themselves, they are impotent; they can be exploited, persecuted, forgotten, and killed. The individual cannot find prosperity, happiness, and freedom but in Communist society. The collective farm is all. The collective farm is the first step toward this Communist society; all must therefore join in! Such are

the Party's orders, and the Party knows what is best for the farmers. There is no choice. He who is not with us is against us."

In the "collectivization" of Soviet agriculture which began in 1929, the Ukraine, breadbasket of Russia and the world, for centuries one of Europe's most productive farming areas, was to suffer even more than the other parts of Russia on its way to "prosperity, happiness, and freedom."

The collectivizers arrive

Unlike the Russian serf-peasant, the Ukrainian farmer had historically been a freer, land-owning producer. In the course of the 19th century, the vast expanses of "black earth" of the region, had become one of the prime sources of grain on the world markets. The great reforms launched from 1906 by Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin, which aimed at turning the Russian Empire's liberated, but backward, serfs into modern farmers, had had a profound impact there, promoting the hard-working farmer with the help of cheap, long-term credit. A new layer of "American-style" farmers was emerging, to the horror of both the revolutionary left, Bolsheviks and Socialist-revolutionaries, and the orthodox-revolutionary right, the Black Hundreds. After the vagaries of the civil war, when Lenin & Co. were compelled by the collapse of their economic system to give some free room to the productive system, the farmers, under conditions far worse than before World War I, got back to work.

The village described by Dolot had 4,000 inhabitants and 800 houses. One fine morning in December 1929, a group of 10 members of the Communist Party arrived from town, who promptly installed a telephone line. The villagers had heard rumors about a "collectivization" but knew nothing more. The political police, the GPU, arrested 15 villagers in a dawn raid, the teacher, the secretary of the local Soviet (assembly), the shopkeeper, and a few farmers, who were immediately deported to the Arctic Circle camps, with their families, women, children and all, all expelled from their houses. The

CP-GPU group then explained that “our beloved party and government” had ordered agriculture to be made collective. Villagers had to regroup in groups of 5, 10, and 100, and farmers were designated to fulfill official functions. One out of six inhabitants was thus assigned; refusing was exposing one to immediate deportation, while the new positions could afford new powers. The village, as it were, was to “self-collectivize.”

Once the new atmosphere, and the new organization, had been created, Phase II began: “No mercy for the ‘kurkul’! Kill the rich! Murder is righteous!” the party envoys said—the “kurkul” being the Ukrainian equivalent of the Russian “kulak,” the sting-word used to verbally sentence to death the wealthier farmers. A few cows or horses, a nice house, sufficed to qualify one as “rich.” Dolot reports a ghastly general meeting, attendance compulsory, designed to produce a unanimous, voluntary joining in the collective farm, where inducement and perfunctory cajoling having failed to convince anyone, stage-managed and pre-arranged “decisions” to join having also failed to produce emulation, violent threats are thrown at the assembled peasants. “Is this a rebellion? Are you trying to disobey to Comrade Stalin? No one will leave this room until you have all joined. . . . We will exterminate the enemies of the people.” After endless hours, only one out of five has joined.

Troops come in, cavalry, infantry. Artillery shells are shot over the fields near the village for one week. Party brigades—city-dwellers indoctrinated that the peasant is the deadly enemy of the “proletariat”—are rushing in, invade every house. Next, the population is gathered, shown one tractor as a symbol of great expectations—and a riot started by the party officials who tear down the church, “a political orgy,” Dolot comments. One more week and troops surround the village, checking its people’s every move. And one more speech is held to the frozen villagers: “Exterminate the kurkul. The enemies of the people are here. Your least attempt to oppose the measures taken by our beloved party and the People’s Government will be ruthlessly repressed. We’ll crush you all as so much hateful vermin!” Unanimously, the liquidation of the “enemies of the people” is voted by the village.

Join the collective, or be eliminated. Those who resist are sent on endless marches through the snow, held captive in frozen barns for hours, “cold, humiliated, exhausted by the lack of sleep and harassment, the farmers had to wait for hours” and then listen to homilies and threats, “until they were physically exhausted and morally broken,” and joined. Families are decimated, people arrested under the flimsiest pretext, local party honchos exert unchecked tyrannical power. Groups are machine-gunned, others locked up, and mass-deportations effected.

Stalin hastily backtracked, tactically. “The true culprits,” the peasants were told by embarrassed but unrepentant party officials, “are those who have disfigured the party line, and those who have imposed so much suffering on your village,

are the Jews. Yes, the Jews did it, and not our dear party.” Attempts to incite pogroms, as in the good old days, failed . . . and mass-riots by the angered farmers resulted which targeted party and collective farm buildings, some of which were burnt down while the villagers rushed to retrieve a horse, a cow, an implement.

By early 1931, everything in the Ukrainian countryside had been collectivized.

Famine breaks out

This was the time of Stalin’s “great leap forward,” when collectivization, de-kulakization, and industrialization were going together under the hat of the First Five-Year Plan. To find the resources to buy his military-oriented industrial development, Stalin had to generate a surplus, which the mis-managed Soviet economy was plainly unable to provide. The obvious solution was to effect a “primitive accumulation” and get rid of large parts of the population, so many fewer eaters, so much expropriated assets, with the terrorization of all survivors a bonus. In order to force-feed the military assembly-lines, Stalin ordered the death of about 20 million.

By May 1932, as the famine was in full swing, the villagers were being compelled to send their greetings to the “beloved Party and the People’s Government” in thanksgiving for the new prosperity. When the time for the harvest came, more than one hundred thousand party members were mobilized—to detect, find, and confiscate the “hidden reserves of food,” the collection of which was imperative for the State, given the general collapse of output. Quotas of grain delivery were absurdly increased, reaching in 1931, 250% of the 1928 level.

Holocaust by design

The absurdity was, however, not over. Individuals and families that had not fulfilled their quotas were forbidden from buying anything from the State shop—by then the only remaining shop in the village. Salt and soap had become inaccessible—sugar had disappeared years ago. Members of the collectives were given one and a half pounds of bread *per month*, while two pounds a day were a vital minimum.

The winter 1932-33 was the last blow. All villages and communities that “sabotaged” the Five-Year Plan were placed on a black list by the government: those that had not fulfilled their grain delivery quotas were forbidden from taking part in the trade of any commodity or foodstuffs, old loans were called in and new ones denied. The true meaning of the measure: “Trade in foodstuffs and consumer goods was banned on the whole territory of the Ukraine, since there was not one village that had fulfilled its wheat delivery quota.”

The inventive Soviet authorities then informed the peasants that they could trade in their gold for cash. Wedding rings and family heirlooms were brought in by the dazed, starved survivors, to buy an overpriced loaf of bread or bar of soap. The Auschwitz model was at work—Stalin had

anticipated Hitler by many years. The Ukraine was one vast concentration camp. Corpses in heaps were piling up on the roads, in the streets, nobody strong enough or able to be concerned with burying them.

“ . . . In January [1933], it was learned that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, after having charged the Ukraine with having deliberately sabotaged the production of the required quotas, had dispatched Postichev, a chauvinistic Russian of sadistic cruelty. His appointment played a crucial role in the life of the Ukrainians. He introduced and

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implemented a new Soviet policy in the Ukraine, which openly advocated the destruction of everything Ukrainian. . . . [His] campaign led to the destruction of the Central Government of the Ukraine as well as of all the cultural, educational, and social institutions of the Ukraine. It also led to arrests in our village.” As author Dolot points out, the surviving villagers had understood at long last that this annihilation was a key part of the answer to the question: Why had the absurdly puzzling policy been implemented?

Agricultural production, by 1929, had recovered from the strains and destructions of the war, revolution, and civil war, it had even recovered from “War Communism,” at the point when Stalin’s “collectivization” and “de-kulakization” policies hit it. It has never recovered since. Not only were the most efficient and diligent farmers slaughtered en masse, which removed the best chance of an efficient agricultural production, not only were the herds decimated, numberless buildings and implements destroyed, but the survivors, compelled to return to the serfdom that the Czar Liberator Alexander II had abolished in the 1860s, and now enslaved to the socialist kolkhoz instead of the noble landowner and the stultifying peasant commune, would never believe a word of what came from party and government, would never voluntarily do anything in the collective unless compelled to do so, and would resist, as they still do today, stubbornly, passively, anything coming from above, from the “Vlasti,” those in power.

What the civil war led against the productive farmers demonstrates, is the operative concept of acceptable losses as seen through the mind of Soviet Russia’s rulers: Rather destroy agriculture for decades than accept the existence of a class of independent farmers.

The restoration of rural slavery, primitive accumulation against an outlawed, and therefore exterminated part of the population which can then yield its “riches,” procuring produce that can be traded in for foreign exchange, consolidating tyrannical power over the rural masses, were integral parts of the design. The brutality of the holocaust in the Ukraine responded equally to a national, or rather supranational imperative of the Great Russian Empire: the destruction of one of the most Western-oriented parts of the Empire. Religiously, culturally, and linguistically, the Ukraine over a period of one thousand years linked up repeatedly with the West. The persistence of the Uniates (Catholic of Byzantine rite) in religion, of a language and a culture distinct from those of Russia, and of a national sentiment distinctly opposed to Moscow’s, is perceived by the Russian chauvinists as a threat to the Empire, whence the ferocious policy of Russification, the forcible “dissolution” of the Uniate Church in 1946 and its “reintegration” into the Russian Orthodox Church.

It is even reported that Stalin, shortly after World War II, entertained the thought of expelling the totality of the population of the Ukraine to Siberia, and only gave up in view of the unfeasibility of uprooting several dozen million people in the middle of a period of postwar reconstruction. Russia’s policy is the best explanation to the joyous welcome received in 1941 in the Ukraine by advancing German units—anything, anything at all was better than Soviet rule. Remarkably, while the population spontaneously dissolved the kolkhozes as soon as Soviet rule collapsed, it was Adolf Hitler who ordered their immediate reconstitution!

The virulence of Soviet attacks against Pope John Paul II’s stand concerning the Ukrainian Uniates is not surprising—over the long run of cultural warfare, the existence of an unassimilable, even embryonic or partial pro-Western outlook in such a large part of the Empire, and among 50 million Ukrainians, is unbearable to Moscow’s imperial planners. This also explains why official Soviet propaganda has always denied the very reality of the great famine described in Dolot’s book—“the so-called famine,” chief Party propagandist Yakovlev recently said, in full agreement with most of the West’s journalists, writers, academics, and experts who covered up its very existence at the time and later, from the *New York Times* to former French Premier Herriot, who praised the prosperity and plenty he had found during his trip through the Ukraine in 1932!

The Oriental tyrannies that have adopted the ideological mantle of “Communism” have since emulated the Soviet model of genocide, and even improved on it—be it in Cambodia, where one-third of the population was slaughtered within three years; in China, where perhaps up to 100 million died during the “Cultural Revolution”; or today in Ethiopia. The Ukrainian “experiment” had been the ground-breaker. What constitutes “acceptable losses” *within* the Empire should make people in the West think afresh of how *they* may figure in Soviet planning.