

reader should note that Snyder often compares Joseph Stalin to Adolf Hitler but utterly fails to demonstrate that similarity because the "evidence" he cites in support of this "Stalin — Hitler" comparison is not evidence at all but is based on falsification.

Consciously or not, Snyder uses the "Big Lie" technique to compare Stalin to Hitler, the communists to the Nazis, communism to Nazism. This comparison falls apart if one sticks to the truth — the truth dismantles it entirely. Hence the lies and falsehoods, "deliberate" or not.

A full professor of history at Yale University, publishing with a major American commercial publisher, can rely on "credibility" — the only coin in the propagandist's purse. The present study shows this coin to be counterfeit.

Chapter 1.

The "Man-Made" Famine and "Deliberate Famine" Arguments in *Bloodlands*,

Chapter 1.

More pages of *Bloodlands* are devoted to the subject of the famine of 1932-33 than to any other single event. Though he has never done research on the famine Snyder promotes a view that contradicts all the evidence as well as the view of the best scholars of this subject: that the famine was "man-made" and "deliberate." We present the conclusions of these scholars here.

In the course of studying Snyder's account of the famine and proving it wrong we also consider, and disprove, the works of scholars who are motivated not by objectivity and a desire to discover the truth but by ideological partisanship: anticommunism and Ukrainian nationalism.

Snyder devotes the whole first chapter of *Bloodlands* to insistence that the famine was deliberate. This is all wrong. Moreover, Snyder ought to be aware that it is wrong because the unanimous conclusion of the best experts who have studied this question is that the famine was a secular one caused by weather conditions and plant diseases. Snyder cites the works of these scholars. But he never informs his readers that they reject entirely the "deliberate starvation" notion that is central to Snyder's book.

There are two distinct though related parts to the "man-made famine" allegation. First, it is asserted that the Soviet government — "Stalin" — deliberately "murdered" the several million people, mainly Ukrainian peasants, who died from the famine. The reasons alleged for the decision to "murder" vary. Sometimes it is claimed that starvation was used to crush Ukrainian nationalism. Some-

times it is suggested that the Soviet government decided to export grain to fuel the program of crash industrialization in full knowledge that this meant death of millions by starvation. These two explanations are not mutually exclusive and are raised in an inconsistent manner, an inconsistency attributable to the fact that there is not the slightest evidence to support either one of them.

As a preface to our detailed critique of Snyder's account in Chapter One of *Bloodlands* we note the following passages from Snyder's articles in influential American and British intellectual journals. These passages attest to the fact that Snyder promotes this false position with great energy and persistence. We have emphasized some phrases for the readers' convenience.

A. The Famine Itself Was Deliberate Murder

Jewish communist partisans in Belarus or Ukraine obviously seem heroic as enemies of the Nazis and avengers of their families. Their legacy is muddled by the fact that they bore arms to defend **a system that had killed 3.5 million Ukrainians and a similar number of Kazakhs by famine** 10 years before, and a million other Soviet citizens by execution in 1937-1938. (2004-2)

The Soviets hid their mass shootings in dark woods and falsified the records of regions in which they had **starved people to death**... (2009-2)

...the Soviet policies that killed people directly and purposefully, by starvation... (2009-2)

Of the Stalinist killing policies, two were the most significant: the collectivization famines of 1930—1933 and the Great Terror of 1937—1938. It remains unclear whether the Kazakh famine of 1930—1932 was intentional, although it is clear that over a million Kazakhs died of starvation. **It is established beyond reasonable doubt that Stalin intentionally starved to death Soviet Ukrainians in the winter of 1932—1933.** Soviet documents reveal a series of orders of October—December

1932 with evident malice and intention to kill. By the end, more than three million inhabitants of Soviet Ukraine had died. (2009-2)

Here Snyder says "over a million Kazakhs" died. In the previous quotation, from the same article, he says "3.5 million Ukrainians and a similar number of Kazakhs."

...millions of Ukrainians were **deliberately starved** by Stalin. (2009-2)

The preoccupation with Ukraine as a source of food was shared by Hitler and Stalin. Both wished to control and exploit the Ukrainian breadbasket, and both caused **political famines**: Stalin in the country as a whole, Hitler in the cities and the prisoner-of-war camps. (2009-2)

The **famine** certainly did happen, and it was **deliberate**. (2010-1)

He threatened local officials with the Gulag, **forcing them to collect grain from the starving**; and he sealed the internal borders of the republic so that they could not beg in other parts of the Soviet Union. (2010-1)

...the **deliberate starvation** of the three million inhabitants of Soviet Ukraine by the Stalinist regime... (2010-2)

While it is true that Stalin's policy of collectivization — the state seizure of farmland and the coercive employment of peasants — brought enormous suffering throughout the USSR in the early 1930s, it is also true that Stalin made **deliberate decisions** about grain requisitions and livestock seizures that **brought death to three million people in Ukraine who did not have to die.** Some of the very worst of the **killing** took place in southeastern Ukraine, where Stalin is now being celebrated and where Yanukovich has his political base. The famine destroyed that region's rural society by killing

many, cowing more, and permitting the immigration of people from beyond Ukraine — chiefly Russians, some of whom inherited the homes of the starved. The cult of Stalin is thus no empty symbol in Ukraine; it is a mark of active identification with a person who owed his mastery of Ukraine to a **campaign of death**. (2010-2)

We now know, after 20 years of discussion of Soviet documents, that in 1932 Stalin knowingly transformed the collectivization famine in Ukraine into a **deliberate campaign of politically motivated starvation**. (2010-5)

Of those who starved, the 3.3 million or so inhabitants of Soviet Ukraine who died in 1932 and 1933 were victims of a **deliberate killing policy related to nationality**. (2011-1)

Stalin requisitioned grain in Soviet Ukraine **knowing that such a policy would kill millions**. (2011-1)

(All emphases added.)

In these semi-popular articles Snyder is at liberty to make the charge of “deliberate famine” and “mass murder” without citing evidence of any kind. In *Bloodlands* Snyder finally has to present his “evidence” to the scrutiny of his readers. We shall examine his argument in detail and expose it for the fraud that it is.

The “Ukrainian Famine” and post-Soviet nationalism

Since the 1950s Ukrainian Nationalist organizations have been claiming that Stalin and Bolshevik leaders deliberately starved the Ukraine in order to punish Ukrainian nationalist spirit. The same Ukrainian nationalist groups entered the USSR with the Nazis and collaborated in massacring at least hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens — mainly other Ukrainians, as they were largely confined to the Ukraine, as well as Jews. They also committed the “Volhynian massacres” of 50,000 - 100,000 Polish peasants in their

attempt at “ethnic cleansing” — a little-known holocaust that has received attention only since the end of the USSR and Eastern bloc. Their version of the famine, which they call “Holodomor,” or “deliberate death by starvation,” is best known in the West from the 1986 book by Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*. Conquest has retracted his claim, as we shall see below.

The thesis of Conquest’s book, that the famine was deliberate and aimed at Ukrainians, is today’s “Holodomor” thesis, though this term was not yet used in the 1980s. Anticommunist Soviet-studies experts rejected it at the time the book was published.

“There is no evidence it was intentionally directed against Ukrainians,” said Alexander Dallin of Stanford, the father of modern Sovietology. “That would be totally out of keeping with what we know — it makes no sense.”

“This is crap, rubbish,” said Moshe Lewin of the University of Pennsylvania, whose Russian Peasants and Soviet Power broke new ground in social history. “I am an anti-Stalinist, but I don’t see how this [genocide] campaign adds to our knowledge. It’s adding horrors, adding horrors, until it becomes a pathology.”

“I absolutely reject it,” said Lynne Viola of SUNY-Binghamton, the first US historian to examine Moscow’s Central State Archive on collectivization. “Why in god’s name would this paranoid government consciously produce a famine when they were terrified of war [with Germany]?”

These premier Sovietologists dismiss Conquest for what he is — an ideologue whose serious work is long behind him. But Dallin stands as a liberal exception to the hard-liners of his generation, while Lewin and Viola remain Young Turks who happen to be doing the freshest work on this period. In Soviet studies, where rigor and objectivity count for less than the party line, where fierce anti-

Communists still control the prestigious institutes and first-rank departments, a Conquest can survive and prosper while barely cracking a book.

"He's terrible at doing research," said veteran Sovietologist Roberta Manning of Boston College." He misuses sources, he twists everything."¹

In a polite but firmly negative review of Conquest's book in the *London Review of Books* in 1987 American Soviet scholar J. Arch Getty wrote:

Conquest's hypothesis, sources and evidence are not new. Indeed, he himself first put forward his view two years ago in a work sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute. The intentional famine story, however, has been an article of faith for Ukrainian émigrés in the West since the Cold War. Much of Conquest's most graphic description is taken from such period-pieces as *The Golgotha of the Ukraine* (1953), *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin* (1953) and *Communism the Enemy of Mankind* (1955). Conquest's book will thus give a certain academic credibility to a theory which has not been generally accepted by non-partisan scholars outside the circles of exiled nationalities. In today's conservative political climate, with its 'evil empire' discourse, I am sure that the book will be very popular.²

Despite their best efforts Ukrainian researchers have been unable to find *any* documentary support for their claim of deliberate starvation. A huge number of archival documents, a few of them reproduced in a Library of Congress volume *Revelations from the*

¹ Quoted in Jeff Coplon. "In Search of a Soviet Holocaust. A 55-Year-Old Famine Feeds the Right." *Village Voice* (New York City) January 12, 1988.

² "Starving the Ukraine." Review of Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow the terror-famine*. *London Review of Books* January 22, 1987 pp. 8-9. Conquest's reply, Getty's response to it, and the ensuing back-and-forth, bitter on Conquest's part and skillful on Getty's, was online on October 24, 2013 when I accessed it. Now only ¼ of it is available for free.

Russian Archives,³ documents in English translation, make it clear that no such deliberate starvation occurred.

Nevertheless the myth of the "Holodomor" is now constitutive of the nationalist identity promoted by the independent state of Ukraine and is taught compulsorily in Ukrainian schools as fact. A few articles by the world's leading scholar on the 1932-33 famine, Mark Tauger of West Virginia University, whose work contradicts the Ukrainian nationalist account have just begun to appear in Russian-, though not in Ukrainian-language publications.

Even Robert Conquest has backed off his initial claim that the famine was deliberate, as Davies and Wheatcroft have revealed.

Our view of Stalin and the famine is close to that of Robert Conquest, who would earlier have been considered the champion of the argument that Stalin had intentionally caused the famine and had acted in a genocidal manner. In 2003, Dr Conquest wrote to us explaining **that he does not hold the view that 'Stalin purposely inflicted the 1933 famine. No.** What I argue is that with resulting famine imminent, he could have prevented it, but put "Soviet interest" other than feeding the starving first — thus consciously abetting it'.⁴ (Emphasis added)

Yet the "man-made famine" claim continues to be presented either as settled fact, as Snyder does, or as one plausible theory among others.

In 1995 Davies, Tauger, and Wheatcroft outlined their conclusions about the famine in this way:

We therefore conclude:

1. All planners' stocks — the two secret grain reserves, Nepfond and Mobfond or Gosfond, together

³ I have put these documents from this collection online at <http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/ukfaminedocs97.pdf>

⁴ R. W. Davies & Stephen G. Wheatcroft. "Debate. Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932 — 33: A Reply to Ellman." *Europe-Asia Studies* 58 (4) June 2006, 629; Also in Davies & Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931 — 1933* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 441 n.145.

with "transitional stocks" held by grain organizations — amounted on 1 July 1933 to less than 2 million tons (1.997 million tons, according to the highest official figure). Persistent efforts of Stalin and the Politburo to establish firm and inviolable grain reserves (in addition to "transitional stocks") amounting to 2 or 3 million tons or more were almost completely unsuccessful. ...

2. We do not know the amount of grain which was held by grain-consuming organizations, notably the Red Army, but we suspect that these "consumers' stocks" would not change the picture substantially.

3. These findings do not, of course, free Stalin from responsibility for the famine. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to assess the extent to which it would have been possible for Stalin to use part of the grain stocks available in spring 1933 to feed starving peasants. The state was a monopoly supplier of grain to urban areas and the army; if the reserves of this monopoly supply system — which amounted to four-six weeks' supply — were to have been drained, mass starvation, epidemics and unrest in the towns could have resulted. Nevertheless, it seems certain that, if Stalin had risked lower levels of these reserves in spring and summer 1933, hundreds of thousands — perhaps millions — of lives could have been saved. In the slightly longer term, if he had been open about the famine, some international help would certainly have alleviated the disaster. And if he had been more far-sighted, the agricultural crisis of 1932-1933 could have been mitigated and perhaps even avoided altogether. But Stalin was not hoarding immense grain reserves in these years. On the contrary, he had failed to reach

the levels which he had been imperatively demanding since 1929.⁵

In their major work on the subject published in 2004 Davies and Wheatcroft outline their conclusions as follows:

Our study of the Famine has led us to very different conclusions from Dr. Conquest's. He holds that Stalin "wanted a famine," that "the Soviets did not want the famine to be coped with successfully," and that the Ukrainian famine was "deliberately inflicted for its own sake." This leads him to the sweeping conclusion: "The main lesson seems to be that the Communist ideology provided the motivation for an unprecedented massacre of men, women and children."

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 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. Above all, they were a consequence of the decision to in-

⁵ R.W. Davies, M.B. Tauger and S.G. Wheatcroft. "Stalin, Grain Stocks and the Famine of 1932-1933." *Slavic Review* Volume 54, Issue 3 (Autumn, 1995), 642-657, at 656-7.

dustrialize this peasant country at breakneck speed.⁶

Mark Tauger did not coauthor this book. Of these three authors only Tauger has devoted his professional life to the study of the 1932-33 famine, Russian famines, and famines generally. In his review of Davies' and Wheatcroft's book Tauger both sums up their conclusions and expresses some criticisms of them.

Popular media and most historians for decades have described the great famine that struck most of the USSR in the early 1930s as "man-made," very often even a "genocide" that Stalin perpetrated intentionally against Ukrainians and sometimes other national groups to destroy them as nations. The most famous exposition of this view is the book *Harvest of Sorrow*, now almost two decades old, by the prolific (and problematic) historian Robert Conquest, but this perspective can be found in History Channel documentaries on Stalin, many textbooks of Soviet history, Western and even World Civilization, and many writings on Stalinism, on the history of famines, and on genocide.

This perspective, however, is wrong. The famine that took place was not limited to Ukraine or even to rural areas of the USSR, it was not fundamentally or exclusively man-made, and it was far from the intention of Stalin and others in the Soviet leadership to create such as disaster. A small but growing literature relying on new archival documents and a critical approach to other sources has shown the flaws in the "genocide" or "intentionalist" interpretation of the famine and has developed an alternative interpretation. The book under review, *The Years of Hunger*, by Robert Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, is the latest and largest of these revi-

sionist interpretations. It presents more evidence than any previous study documenting the intentions of Soviet leaders and the character of the agrarian and agricultural crises of these years.

Tauger also expresses some serious criticisms of Davies' and Wheatcroft's work:

Second, the book still does not satisfactorily explain why the famine took place when it did and especially why it ended. The authors' chapters on agriculture and procurements in 1933, which was of course the crucial agricultural year because this was when the famine basically ended, are substantially shorter than those on 1931 and 1932 and have a certain "rushed" quality. Davies and Wheatcroft identify several objective factors to which they attribute the declines in food production in 1931-1933 that in great part caused the famine. Most of those factors that they identify for 1932, however, still prevailed or were even worse in 1933. The decline in livestock numbers and draft forces, for example, continued into 1933 and possibly 1934 (depending on how one calculates the value of a tractor); the disorder in crop rotation was not overcome even by the reduced sowing plans of 1933, or for some years thereafter. Most important, famine conditions were much worse. The authors cite a few sources claiming that peasants somehow knew in 1933 that they had to work hard (p. 238), but they also acknowledge in another context that at least some peasants worked hard in 1932 as well (p. 418). In any case, all evidence about peasants' resistance is anecdotal and can be shown not to be representative of their views and actions generally (see my article "Soviet Peasants and Collectivization: Resistance and Adaptation"). Without any doubt, however, working conditions for peasants in 1933,

⁶ R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 441.

because of the more severe famine conditions, were much worse in 1933 than in 1932.

Given these inconsistencies, there remains one factor in explaining the cause of the small harvest of 1932 that can account for the improved harvest in 1933, and that is the complex of environmental factors in 1932. As I documented in a recent publication, the USSR experienced an unusual environmental disaster in 1932: extremely wet and humid weather that gave rise to severe plant disease infestations, especially rust. Ukraine had double or triple the normal rainfall in 1932. Both the weather conditions and the rust spread from Eastern Europe, as plant pathologists at the time documented. Soviet plant pathologists in particular estimated that rust and other fungal diseases reduced the potential harvest in 1932 by almost nine million tons, which is the largest documented harvest loss from any single cause in Soviet history (*Natural Disaster and Human Action*, p. 19). One Soviet source did estimate higher rust losses in 1933 than 1932 for two provinces in the Central Blackearth Region, which is a small region of the country (approximately 5 percent of the total sown area). Davies and Wheatcroft cite this and imply that it applied to the rest of the country (p. 131-132 fn. 137), but that source does not document larger losses from rust in 1933 anywhere else. Further, the exceptional weather and agricultural conditions of 1932 did not generally recur in 1933.

Consequently I would still argue, against Davies and Wheatcroft, that the weather and infestations of 1932 were the most important causes of the small harvest in 1932 and the larger one in 1933. I would also like to point out for the record here that the criticism they make (p. 444-445) of my harvest data is invalid and represents an unjustified statistical

manipulation of what are in fact the only genuine harvest data for 1932 (see "The 1932 Harvest").⁷

Tauger attributes more importance to climatic conditions, and less to communist party ideology, policies, incompetence, and/or brutality, than do Davies and Wheatcroft.

B. Collectivization caused the famine

Snyder also links the famine to collectivization. He writes:

...both regimes [i.e. the Nazi and Soviet] integrated mass murder with economic planning. (2009-2)

Eighty years ago, in the autumn of 1930, Joseph Stalin enforced a policy that changed the course of history, and led to tens of millions of deaths across the decades and around the world. In a violent and massive campaign of "collectivization," he brought Soviet agriculture under state control. (2010-5)

Once the agricultural sector of the USSR was collectivized, the hunger began. (2010-5)

...the shooting and deportation of the best farmers..." (2010-5)

After Mao made his revolution in 1948, Chinese communists followed the Stalinist model of development. This meant that some 30 million Chinese starved to death in 1958-1961, in a famine very similar to that in the Soviet Union. Maoist collectivization, too, was followed by mass shooting campaigns. (2010-5)

As we have seen above, Tauger believes that climatic conditions played a greater role in the famine than policy factors such as collectivization.

There have been hundreds of famines in Russian history, about one every 2nd or 3rd year. There were serious famines in 1920-

⁷ Mark Tauger. Review of R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. At http://eh.net/book_reviews/years-hunger-soviet-agriculture-1931-1933

1921, 1924, 1927, and 1928. The "Volga famine" of 1920-1921 is well known, in part because of the Nansen relief commission which took many horrifying photographs of the suffering. There was another weather-induced famine in 1924.

In 2001 Tauger published an article about the 1924 and 1928 famines titled "Grain Crisis or Famine?"⁸ Official Soviet Ukrainian primary sources prove that the 1928-29 famine was a serious famine, including in the Ukraine, which received more aid than it sent to other parts of the USSR. This disproves the "exploitation" theory of some Ukrainian nationalists. The 1928-1929 famine was caused by natural disaster, mainly drought. It was not induced by Soviet taxation or procurement policies. Moreover, government relief efforts and agencies organized the shortage to distribute very significant amounts of food to the poorest persons, undoubtedly saving many lives.

But the famines of 1924 and 1927-1928 are largely ignored. When they don't ignore them anticommunist researchers deny that these were "famines," calling them instead "regional and local problems." Evidently they do this in order to hide the fact that famines of greater or lesser intensity occurred in Russia very frequently. Anticommunist writers would like others to believe that such famines were rare until collectivization.

But in reality famines were common. Collectivization was in large part an attempt to solve this perennial problem. In a famous passage in his memoir of World War 2 *Hinge of Fate* Churchill quoted Stalin as saying:

"Ten millions," he said, holding up his hands. "It was fearful. Four years it lasted. It was absolutely necessary for Russia, if we were to avoid periodic famines, to plough the land with tractors. We must mechanise our agriculture. When we gave tractors to the peasants they were all spoiled in a few

⁸ Mark Tauger, "Grain Crisis or Famine? The Ukrainian State Commission for Aid to Crop-Failure Victims and the Ukrainian Famine of 1928-29." In Donald J. Raleigh, ed. *Provincial Landscapes. Local Dimensions of Soviet Power 1917-1953*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001, 146-170.

months. Only Collective Farms with workshops could handle tractors.⁹

Churchill wrote these volumes years later and his memory was probably far from precise. But no one has suggested that Churchill invented this passage about "avoiding periodic famines."

Therefore, collectivization was necessary not simply to fund industrialization, although it was indeed essential for that purpose. It was essential to put an end to periodic famines, during which a great many people died. Indeed, 1932-33 was the last famine, except for the postwar famine of 1946-1947, the basic cause of which was the worst drought in many decades combined with the immense destruction caused by the war. Stephen Wheatcroft's recent article convincingly demolishes the ideological anticommunists who tried to make this famine too a "man-made" famine to "punish peasants."¹⁰

This fact — that collectivization saved the Soviet people from further famines — is virtually always erased in discussions of the famine of 1932-33. Collectivization certainly caused deaths. *However, not to collectivize would also have caused deaths.* The status quo caused deaths — from famines. Continuing the NEP (New Economic Policy) would have caused deaths from famines. Poor peasants died from starvation even in non-famine years because they could not afford to buy enough grain.

The only alternatives to collectivization of agriculture were:

1. To permit famines to continue every 2-3 years indefinitely, as the Tsars had done;
2. To forego industrialization for decades, if not forever (if the Nazis had had their way all Slavs would have been killed or reduced to uneducated serfs).

In terms of the good that it did and the evils that it avoided, collectivization, with all of its problems and deaths, was one of the great triumphs of public policy of the 20th century. Had it been accom-

⁹ Winston Churchill. *The Hinge of Fate*. RosettaBooks LLC 2002 (orig. ed. 1950), 447-8.

¹⁰ Wheatcroft, Stephen G. "The Soviet Famine of 1946—1947, the Weather and Human Agency in Historical Perspective." *Europe-Asia Studies*, 64:6, 987-1005.

plished by a capitalist country it would probably have long since been generally acknowledged as such.

The Chinese Communists and Vietnamese Communists learned much from studying the Bolsheviks' experience with collectivization and industrialization. They resolved not to slavishly imitate the Soviet example, and they did not do so. But Stalin and the Bolsheviks were the first. They did not have the benefit of hindsight. It is to be expected that they would make many decisions that later turned out to have been mistakes. That is always the case with pioneers. During collectivization the Bolsheviks made many, many errors. But it would have been an immeasurably greater mistake not to try in the first place.

And here is the problem. It is unfashionable, "politically incorrect," to point these things out. The prevailing anticommunist, and specifically anti-Stalinist, orthodoxy among elites, East and West, make it literally unprintable. It's a fact, it's the truth — but "you can't say it."

Collectivization and the Famine of 1932-33: What Really Happened

This is a brief account of the 1932-1933 Soviet famine as supported by the primary source evidence now available. It is based upon the research of Professor Mark Tauger of West Virginia University. Tauger has spent his professional life of more than 20 years studying famines and is a world expert on Russian famines. He has written several special studies of the 1932-33 famine.¹¹

¹¹ For this brief introductory account I have drawn the following works by Mark Tauger:

"The Harvest of 1932 and the Famine of 1933," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (1991), 70-89. (Tauger 1991)

"Grain Crisis or Famine? The Ukrainian State Commission for Aid to Crop Failure Victims and the Ukrainian Famine of 1928-1929" in *Provincial Landscapes. Local Dimensions of Soviet Power*, ed. by D.J. Raleigh (Pittsburgh, 2001), 146-170, 360-365. (Tauger 2001a)

Natural Disaster and Human Action in the Soviet Famine of 1931-1933, Carl Beck Papers No. 1506 (Pittsburgh, Penn., 2001). (Tauger 2001b)

"Soviet Peasants and Collectivization, 1930-1939. Resistance and Adaptation." *Journal of Peasant Studies* (4) 2004, 427-256. Reprinted in *Rural Adaptation in Russia*, ed. Stephen K. Wegren. London and New York: Routledge, 2005, 65-94. (Tauger 2004)

Famines in Russian History

Famine has struck Russia hundreds of times during the past millennium. A 1988 account by Russian scholars traces these famines through historical records from the year 736 A.D. to 1914. Many of these famines struck Ukraine as well.

The year of the two Russian revolutions, 1917, saw a serious crop failure leading to an urban famine in 1917-18. In the 1920s the USSR had a series of famines: in 1920-1923 in the Volga and Ukraine plus one in western Siberia in 1923; in the Volga and Ukraine again in 1924-25, and a serious and little-studied famine in Ukraine in 1928-1929.

In 1920-1923 Russia experienced a devastating famine, often called the Volga famine — a misnomer since it affected at least the Volga region, Ukraine, and the North Caucasus — with accompanying typhus epidemic. The Soviet government requested and received considerable help from abroad, including from the famous commission headed by Norwegian explorer and humanitarian Fridtjof Nansen and Herbert Hoover's American Relief Administration.¹²

Another famine struck in 1924-1925. Again in 1927-1928 a terrible crop failure struck the Ukraine, the result of a combination of natural disasters.

"Stalin, Soviet Agriculture, and Collectivisation." In *Food and Conflict in Europe in the Age of the Two World Wars*. Edited by Frank Trentmann and Flemming Just. New York and Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 109-142. (Tauger 2006)

"Famine in Russian History." *The Supplement to the Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*. Edited by George N. Rhyne. Volume 10 (Gulf Breeze, FL, 2011) 79-92. (Tauger 2011)

I have also drawn upon two unpublished communications by Tauger of April 12, 2012 (Tauger 2012a) and April 13, 2012 (Tauger 2012b). I cite other works of Tauger's in the discussion of Snyder's version.

¹² The Nansen commission took many photographs of the dead, dying, and starving. Some of these have been used repeatedly by Ukrainian Nationalists to illustrate their works on the 1932-33 famine.

The Soviet Ukrainian government established a famine relief commission, the Uriadkom,¹³ the central government in Moscow transported food from the Russian Republic to Ukraine, and the Uriadkom distributed food to nearly 400,000 peasants, as well as livestock feed, farm equipment, and credits. (Tauger 2012a; Tauger 2001a)

This history of a thousand years of frequent famine and of a dozen years that witnessed three significant crop failures and subsequent famines is the essential context for understanding the famine of 1932-1933 and the response of the Soviet government to it.

The Ukrainian famine of 1928-29 was the third famine in the Soviet Union in seven years due to a natural disaster and was the most extreme part of a broader food-supply crisis that affected most of the country. This crisis did not result exclusively or even mainly from price policies. The Soviet Union clearly had an extreme vulnerability to natural disasters, and Soviet leaders interpreted this vulnerability in comparison to the West as a sign of agricultural backwardness.

For Soviet leaders, the Ukrainian famine was an important part of the argument that Soviet agriculture had to be changed. (Tauger 2001a 169-70)

Collectivization

The collectivization of agriculture was designed to end the cycle of famines that had tormented Russia and Ukraine for centuries. It was a reform — a significant improvement in the security and lives of the peasant population and therefore of the entire population. It was not undertaken to “tax” or “exploit” the peasants or to extract value from the countryside. On the contrary: during the

¹³ Abbreviation for the Ukrainian name “Uriadova komisija po dopomohi poterpilim vid nevrozhaiu selianam” - “State Commission for Aid to Peasants Suffering from the Crop Failure” (Tauger 2001a, 147)

decade 1929-1939 the Soviet government spent tens of billions of rubles on agriculture.

[T]heir primary goal was increasing food production by using what seemed to be the most modern and reliable methods available at the time. (Tauger 2004, 70)

Stalin and the Bolsheviks viewed collectivization as the only way to swiftly modernize agriculture, to put an end to the wasteful and labor-consuming cultivation of individual land holdings, often in tiny widely-scattered strips and put it on a large-scale basis. They used the large-scale, highly mechanized agriculture of certain American farms in the West as models for the *sovkhozy* (Soviet farms). They did not see collectivization as a means of exploitation or as “re-creating serfdom” and certainly not as deliberate killing or genocide. Nor was it.

Peasant Protests against Collectivization

Peasant protests did occur. According to an OGPU (police) report of March 1931, right in the midst of collectivization, about five per cent of the peasant population was involved in protests. This also means that the vast majority of peasants was not involved in such protests. Most of these protests were settled peacefully; the OGPU reported that they had recourse to force in fewer than 2% of them. Many peasants actively supported collectivization. This number increased when local activists were experienced or sensitive enough to patiently explain the purpose of collectivization to the peasants. Some peasants “spontaneously form[ed] *kolkhozy* and consolidated their fields.” (Tauger 2004, 75)

Tauger concludes that:

...the regime implemented collectivization coercively, violently and without adequate appreciation of or concern for its disruptive consequences. (Tauger 2004, 88)

Nevertheless, he concludes:

[C]ollectivization was a programme to achieve a clearly necessary goal - to increase food production

in a country plagued by famines - and that it was implemented after the apparently successful experiment of the sovkhoz project and with substantial governmental investments. (Tauger 2004, 88)

Many historians claim that peasant opposition to and even rebellion against collectivization was widespread, and thus that collectivization produced "famine and failure." Tauger believes the facts show otherwise:

[T]hese studies minimize or ignore the actual harvest data, the environmental factors that caused low harvests, the repeated recovery from the famine and crop failures, the large harvests of the 1930s, the mechanization of Soviet farms in these years, Soviet population growth, and the long-term increases in food production and consumption over the Soviet period. (Tauger 2004, 87)

In short, collectivization was a success for the Soviet and Ukrainian peasantry and for all of Soviet society which, of course, relied on the peasants' agricultural labor to feed it.

... collectivisation brought substantial modernisation to traditional agriculture in the Soviet Union, and laid the basis for relatively high food production and consumption by the 1970s and 1980s. (Tauger 2006, 109)

Many accounts of "dekulakization" and forcible grain procurements emphasize the violence that was often necessary to force determined opponents of collectivization off the land into exile, and the fact that peasants who were forced to give up grain during the famine experienced this force as cruelty. There must have been many incidents that could be described by anyone as "cruel". In Tauger's view "the cruel forced movement of population — dekulakization" or what Stalin called "the destruction of the class of kulaks", was "not necessarily the best means to achieve the regime's objective" of collectivizing agriculture.

I am not convinced by those who claim that the Soviets rejected "better" or "less cruel" methods of collectivization. The truth is

that collectivization was a massive enterprise that was unprecedented in history. Stalin and the Soviet leadership undertook it because they saw no other way to avoid devastating famines in the future. They made a plan and carried it out, and that meant disempowering any people who were determined to stop it.

The Soviet leadership was flexible. The plan was changed several times in response to feedback from local activists who worked directly with peasants. The most famous change in plan is that associated with Stalin's article "Dizzy with Success," published on March 2, 1930. This article re-emphasized the need to persuade rather than to force peasants to join collective farms.

When the famine occurred — not caused by collectivization but by environmental factors, as we discuss below — the Soviet leadership had to deal with that too. There was no choice but to take grain from peasants in the countryside in order to redistribute it in a more egalitarian manner, as well as to feed the cities and the army, which produced little food. Whatever excesses or cruelty took place were the inevitable result of errors in the plan for carrying out collectivization. Inevitable too was the unevenness in the abilities and characteristics of the tens of thousands of activists and of the peasants themselves. All were faced with a terrible situation under emergency conditions, where many people would inevitably die of starvation or its effects, simply because there was not enough food to feed the whole population.

No "perfect" plan is ever possible at any time. None was possible in 1932. A great many mistakes were made. It could not have been otherwise. But the biggest mistake would have been not to collectivize at all.

This evidence shows, in particular, that collectivisation allowed the mobilisation and distribution of resources, like tractors, seed aid, and food relief, to enable farmers to produce a large harvest during a serious famine, which was unprecedented in Russian history and almost so in Soviet history. By implication, therefore, this research shows that collectivisation, whatever its disruptive effects on agri-

culture, did in fact function as a means to modernise and aid Soviet agriculture. (Tauger 2006, 112)

The Famine of 1932-33¹⁴

Two incorrect explanations of this famine are widely accepted. The Ukrainian nationalist explanation claims that Stalin and the Bolshevik leadership withheld grain from Ukrainian peasants in order to export it; deliberately starved Ukrainian peasants to suppress Ukrainian strivings for independence; or both. The alleged motives vary because there is no evidence to support any of them.

This is the myth of the "Holodomor". Consciously modeled on the Jewish Holocaust it originated in the Ukrainian diaspora, among and under the influence of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and veterans of the 14th Waffen SS "Galizien" division and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (OUN-UPA). These forces had fought on the side of the Nazis and had fled to the west with German troops as the Red Army advanced. In true Nazi fashion early proponents of this "deliberate famine" myth blamed Jews for it.

Two Ukrainian quislings of Moscow, D. Shumsky and M. Khvylovyj, who believed that Moscow as working for a better communist Ukraine but eventually realised that she was only expanding her empire, committed suicide. They were replaced by L. Kahanovych as Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine and I. Shelehess, A. Shlihter, Y. Rahkis, among others, as assistant secretaries. All of them were Jews. The following Jews held positions in the Ministry of Police - V. Balicky, Karlsom, M. Latsis, F. Koch, C. Fuchs. ...

L. Kahanovych realised he would have a monumental task in bringing the Ukrainian villagers to heel. They were hard-working farmers, fiercely proud of their livelihood and land and would defend these to the death. Moscow's plan was to take all the land

and reduce the villagers to virtual serfdom under the guise of collectivisation.

To achieve this, Kahanovych and the politburo organized a man-made famine in which 7 million Ukrainians died.¹⁵

When Ukraine became independent in 1991 these forces flooded into the country and exercised a determining influence in historical-ideological questions. They promoted the status of the OUN-UPA forces, guilty of immense mass murders of Jews, Poles, and Soviet citizens generally, as "heroes" who were "fighting for independence". (The assumption here is that "patriotism" and "nationalism" somehow excuse mass murder.)

Thus the myth of the "Holodomor" was never based upon any evidence. Rather, it was politically motivated from the beginning. It has been officially adopted by the Ukrainian state and is now compulsorily taught in Ukrainian schools and promoted by Ukrainian academics. Since there is no evidence at all to support it, it is simply "taken for granted". It is unofficially "taboo", forbidden to dissent from this view in the public sphere in Ukraine (and in the Ukrainian diaspora as well). A law threatening anyone who publicly dissented from this view with criminal penalties was briefly considered under the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010), a leader of the "Orange revolution."

A more "mainstream" but still politicized interpretation states that the famine was due to the collectivization of agriculture, and excessive state grain requisitions, which led to disruptions, mismanagement, and peasant rebellion, and ultimately to famine and starvation. This is the official position of the Russian government. Neither of these explanations is borne out by primary source evidence.

¹⁵ See Jurij Chumatskij, *Why Is One Holocaust Worth More Than Others?* Baulkam Hills, NSW, Australia: Business Press Printing Pty, 1986, 31. The title page informs us that it is "Published by Veterans of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army." In today's Ukraine, dominated by pro-Nazi "nationalist" ideology, this group (often called by its Ukrainian initials UPA, for *Ukrains'ka Povstans'ka Armia*) is praised as "fighters for independence."

¹⁴ This section is largely taken from Tauger 2001b.

Environmental Factors Caused The Famine

The main causes of the 1932-33 famine were environmental factors that led to a poor harvest. These factors were: drought in some areas; unusually heavy rainfall in others; serious infestations of the crop diseases rust and smut; plagues of pests, including Asian locusts, beet weevils, meadow moths, and caterpillars; and a huge infestation of mice. The harvest was so small that the amount of food available in the USSR was apparently less than was necessary to feed the whole population.

Contributing factors were due to the interaction of human agency with these environmental causes. There was a widespread and serious problem of weeds, caused by a shortage of labor to weed the fields due to population flight and the weakness of many remaining peasants. Much land remained unplanted or unharvested due to labor shortages caused by population losses both from peasants moving to towns and cities and from peasants weakened by or dying of starvation.

Horses were the chief draught animals used for plowing and other agricultural tasks. Many horses had been lost or were already severely weakened by a famine in 1931-32 and by desperate peasants eating oats, the horses' fodder. The Soviet state imported some tractors and manufactured others. This did have some effect but not enough to overcome the loss of draft power from horses. (Tauger 2001b)

Much of the land had been planted in grain for years in a row. This resulted in soil exhaustion that severely reduced fertility. Farms and agricultural officials were finding it hard to find additional land in the established agricultural regions. The increased area put the peasants under considerable strain. Nevertheless there was sufficient labor to bring in a good harvest in 1933 and so put an end to the famine. That means there had been enough labor in 1931 and 1932 as well. That the harvest in those years was fatally small was mainly due to the environmental factors listed above.

The Soviet leadership did not fully understand these environmental causes. Nor did their informants, the OGPU and local Party leaders. Therefore, they tended to blame human factors like

mismanagement, faulty leadership, and, to some extent, peasant resistance and kulak sabotage. Not understanding, at least for many months, the primary importance of environmental causes, and believing reports that the harvest should have been a good one, the only logical alternative was that the famine was caused by various kinds of sabotage: direct sabotage by Ukrainian nationalists; peasants withholding grain; peasants and others hoarding grain for sale; peasants unwilling to work the fields; Party, *kolkhoz*, and other officials collaborating in these efforts, and so on.

Nevertheless the Soviet government did greatly reduce exports of grain. It also began to ship aid in food and seed to Ukraine and other hard-hit areas. Tauger (2004, 82-3) writes:

By early 1933 the USSR was in the throes of a catastrophic famine, varying in severity between regions but pervasive. After efforts in January to procure more grain, the regime began desperate efforts in February to aid peasants to produce a crop. The political departments (*politotdely*), which the regime introduced into the state farms (*sovkhozy*) and the machine tractor stations (MTS) in early 1933, played a crucial role in these efforts. These agencies, composed of a small group of workers and OGPU personnel in each MTS or *sovkhoz*, removed officials who had violated government directives on farm work and procurements, replacing them with *kolkhozniki* or *sovkhoz* workers who they thought would be more reliable, and organized and otherwise helped farms to produce a good harvest in 1933. They were supported by draconian and coercive laws enforcing labour discipline in the farms in certain regions, but also by the largest allocations of seed and food aid in Soviet history, 5.76 million tons, and by special sowing commissions set up in crucial regions like Ukraine, the Urals, the Volga and elsewhere to manage regional-level aspects of organization and supplies to the farms.

Historians seldom discuss the role of these *politotdely*. Tauger believes they made a significant contribution to the efforts to organize production and overcome the famine. He summarizes at some length a report of December 1933 from the Central Blackearth Oblast' (south of Moscow and directly north of Ukraine) about the important role these bodies played in helping the peasants bring in bringing in the good harvest of 1933:

The report first describes the crisis conditions of early 1933: peasants starving and dying, horses exhausted, dying and neglected, tractors repaired poorly or not at all, labour discipline weak among *kolkhozniki*, tractor drivers and individual peasants, with frequent cases of refusals to work and avoidance of responsibility. The *politotdely* began by talking with and organizing the *kolkhozniki*, and by purging *kolkhozy*, MTS, and other local agencies of what it termed kulak and counter-revolutionary elements. According to the report *kolkhozniki* participated in these actions and developed enthusiasm for work from them. With *politotdel* help, MTS and *kolkhozy* finished sowing 15 days earlier than they had in 1932, and sowed 3.4 million hectares instead of the 2.85 million hectares they had in 1932. They used fertilizer for the first time and sorted seed, they treated more seed against plant diseases, they weeded crops sometimes two and three times, and they took measures against insects. They completed harvesting grain crops in 65 days, versus 70 in 1932, and threshing in December 1933, a process that in 1932 had lasted in the region into March 1933. They completed grain procurements in November 1933 (those of 1932 had lasted like threshing into spring 1933), paid off all of their seed loans, formed the necessary internal funds in *kolkhozy* and still managed to distribute to *kolkhozniki* much more in labour-day payments than the previous year, thereby ending the famine in the region. The *kolkhozniki* also provided all their

livestock with basic fodder, and built granaries, livestock shelters, clubs and other buildings....

As a result of these efforts, the CBO harvested some 24 per cent more grain in 1933 than in 1932 [Tauger, 1991b: 81]. While weather conditions played a role in these successful results, clearly peasants worked harder and differently in 1933, during the peak of the famine, than they had earlier, and management by the *politotdely* contributed to this. (Tauger 2004, 84)

Tauger cites evidence that many peasants who hated or did not like the *kolkhozy* nevertheless worked hard in them, while many other peasants "worked willingly during the whole period ... siding with the system." (Tauger 2004, 85)

As a result, on the whole peasants accepted collectivization:

All of this is not to deny that some peasants in the 1930s, especially in famine years, used the 'weapons of the weak' against the *kolkhoz* system and the Soviet government. The issue is how representative evidence is of peasants generally, which is another way of asking how important such incidents were. Certainly resistance was greater and more important in 1930 and possibly 1932. But any analysis of this must also take into account natural disaster, the diversity of peasants' responses, and overall results of their work. Studies conducted in the mid-1930s found that *kolkhozniki* actually worked harder than non-collectivized peasants had worked in the 1920s, clear evidence of significant adaptation to the new system. (Tauger 2004, 87)

The Question of Grain Exports

Like the Tsarist governments the Soviet government exported grain. Contracts were signed in advance, which created the dilemma Tauger describes as follows:

The low 1931 harvest and reallocations of grain to famine areas forced the regime to curtail grain exports from 5.2 million tons in 1931 to 1.73 million in 1932; they declined to 1.68 million in 1933. Grain exported in 1932 and 1933 could have fed many people and reduced the famine: The 354,000 tons exported during the first half of 1933, for example, could have provided nearly 2 million people with daily rations of 1 kilogram for six months. Yet these exports were less than half of the 750,000 tons exported in the first half of 1932. How Soviet leaders calculated the relative costs of lower exports and lower domestic food supplies remains uncertain, but available evidence indicates that further reductions or cessation of Soviet exports could have had serious consequences. Grain prices fell in world markets and turned the terms of trade against the Soviet Union in the early 1930s, its indebtedness rose and its potential ability to pay declined, causing western bankers and officials to consider seizure of Soviet property abroad and denial of future credits in case of Soviet default. Failure to export thus would have threatened the fulfillment of its industrialization plans and, according to some observers, the stability of the regime.

At the same time that the USSR was exporting it was also allocating much more grain to seed and famine relief. Tauger documents the fact that the Central Committee allocated more than half a million tons to Ukraine and North Caucasus in February, and more than half a million tons to Ukraine alone by April 1933. The government also accumulated some 3 million tons in reserves during this period and then allocated 2 million tons from that to famine relief. Soviet archival sources indicate that the regime returned five million tons of grain from procurements back to villages throughout the USSR in the first half of 1933 (Tauger 1991, 72; 88-89). All of these amounts greatly exceed the amount exported in this period.

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

The severity and geographical extent of the famine, the sharp decline in exports in 1932-1933, seed requirements, and the chaos in the Soviet Union in these years, all lead to the conclusion that even a complete cessation of exports would not have been enough to prevent famine. This situation makes it difficult to accept the interpretation of the famine as the result of the 1932 grain procurements and as a conscious act of genocide. **The harvest of 1932 essentially made a famine inevitable.** (Tauger 1991 88; 89. Emphasis added)

Grain delivery targets (procurement quotas) were drastically cut back multiple times for both collective and individual farmers in order to share the scarcity. Some of what was procured was returned to the villages. (Tauger 1991, 72-3) It is these collection efforts, often carried out in a very harsh way, that are highlighted by promoters of the "intentionalist" interpretation as evidence of callousness and indifference to peasants' lives or even of intent to punish or kill.

Meanwhile the regime used these procurements to feed 40 million people in the cities and industrial sites who were also starving, further evidence that the harvest was small. In May 1932 the Soviet government legalized the private trade in grain. But very little grain was sold this way in 1932-1933. This too is a further indication of a small 1932 harvest. (Tauger 1991, 72-74)

About 10 per cent of the population of Ukraine died from the famine or associated diseases. But 90 per cent survived, the vast majority of whom were peasants, army men of peasant background, or workers of peasant origin. The surviving peasants had to work very hard, under conditions of insufficient food, to sow and bring in the 1933 harvest. They did so with significant aid from the Soviet government. A smaller population, reduced in size by deaths, weakened by hunger, with fewer draught animals, was

nevertheless able to produce a successful harvest in 1933 and put an end to the famine. This is yet more evidence that the 1932 harvest had been a catastrophically poor one. (Tauger 2004)

Government aid included five million tons of food distributed as relief, including to Ukraine, beginning as early as February 7, 1933;¹⁶ the provision of tractors and other equipment distributed especially to Ukraine; "a network of several thousand political departments in the machine-tractor stations which contributed greatly to the successful harvest in 1933" (Tauger 2012b); other measures, including special commissions on sowing and harvesting to manage work and distribute seed and food aid.

This interpretation of the 1932-1933 famine as the result of the largest in a series of natural disasters suggests an alternative approach to the intentionalist view of the famine. Some advocates of the peasant resistance view argue that the regime took advantage of the famine to retaliate against the peasants and force them to work harder. Famine and deaths from starvation, however, began in 1928 in towns and some rural areas because of low harvests and of some peasants' unwillingness to sell their surpluses. The food supply generally deteriorated over the next few years, due not only to exports in 1930-1931 but also to the crop failures of 1931-1932. The harsh procurements of 1931 and 1932 have to be understood in the context of famine that prevailed in towns as well as villages throughout the Soviet Union by late 1931; by 1932-1933, as noted above, workers as well as peasants were dying of hunger. If we are to believe that the regime starved the peasants to induce labor discipline in the farms, are we to interpret starvation in the towns as the regime's tool to discipline blue and white collar workers and their wives and children?

¹⁶ See the document here:
<http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/aidtoukraine020733.pdf>

While Soviet food distribution policies are beyond the scope of this article, it is clear that the small harvests of 1931-1932 created shortages that affected virtually everyone in the country and that the Soviet regime did not have the internal resources to alleviate the crisis.

Finally, this essay shows that while the USSR experienced chronic drought and other natural disasters earlier, those which occurred in 1932 were an unusual and severe combination of calamities in a country with heightened vulnerability to such incidents. ... The evidence and analysis I have presented here show that the Soviet famine was more serious and more important an event than most previous studies claim, including those adhering to the Ukrainian nationalist interpretation, and that it resulted from a highly abnormal combination of environmental and agricultural circumstances. By drawing attention to these circumstances, this study also demonstrates the importance of questioning accepted political interpretations and of considering the environmental aspects of famines and other historical events that involve human interaction with the natural world. That the Soviet regime, through its rationing systems, fed more than 50 million people, including many peasants, during the famine, however poorly, and that at least some peasants faced with famine undertook to work with greater intensity despite their hostility to the regime in 1933, and to some extent in previous years as well, indicate that all those involved in some way recognized the uniqueness of this tragic event. (Tauger 2001b, 46, 47)

Snyder has adopted the Ukrainian nationalists' "intentional" interpretation — the "Holodomor" myth, though Snyder chooses not to use this term. He strives to give the impression that the Soviet government cut the Ukraine off completely, making no effort to

relieve the famine. Snyder ignores environmental causes — which were in fact the primary causes — and fails to mention the Soviet government's large-scale relief campaign which, together with their own hard work under the most difficult conditions, enabled the peasants to produce a large harvest in 1933. In Tauger's judgment:

[T]he general point [is that] the famine was caused by natural factors and that the government helped the peasants produce a larger harvest the next year and end the famine. (Tauger 2012b, 3)

This is the polar opposite from what Snyder and the Ukrainian nationalists contend. The so-called "Holodomor" or "deliberate" and "man-made" famine interpretation is not simply mistaken on some important points. Its proponents misrepresent history by omitting evidence that would undermine their interpretation. It is not history but political propaganda disguised as history, what I have called elsewhere "propaganda with footnotes."

Tauger's view is also significantly different from that of R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, who attribute the famine to several causes, including collectivization.¹⁷ In their opinion environmental factors played only a secondary role. Davies and Wheatcroft believe the Soviet government could have saved many, perhaps millions, of lives if collectivization had not been undertaken and mitigated if the Soviet government had not handled the famine in a "brutal" manner. The official position of the Russian government and academic establishment is similar: that the famine was caused by excessive grain requisitioning and by collectivization.

This hypothesis is mistaken. The reality is that collectivization put an end to famines in the Soviet Union, except for a serious famine in 1946-47. Wheatcroft, author of the most recent study of this famine, has concluded that this famine too was due to environmental causes.¹⁸

¹⁷ *The Years of Hunger. Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933*. Palgrave Macmillan 2009 (2004).

¹⁸ Wheatcroft, Stephen G. "The Soviet Famine of 1946—1947, the Weather and Human Agency in Historical Perspective." *Europe-Asia Studies*, 64:6, 987-1005.

Chapter 2.

The Famine of 1932-33 "Deliberate"?

Snyder's "Seven Points" of Proof

The central section of Snyder's first chapter is his attempt to prove that he has "evidence of clearly premeditated murder on the scale of millions" in the Ukraine. As evidence he outlines "seven crucial policies" that "were applied only, or mainly, in Soviet Ukraine in late 1932 or early 1933," each of which "had to kill" (42)

Snyder must have been aware that no one else — none of the bevy of Ukrainian nationalist or Russia anticommunist scholars who claim that Stalin intended to kill Ukrainian peasants by intentionally starving them to death — has proven this claim. Snyder also knows that the Western experts on this question, Tauger and Davies-Wheatcroft, as well as many other historians of the Soviet Union including bitterly anticommunist writers like Nicolas Werth, reject the notion of a "deliberate famine."

Yet Snyder must claim the deaths were the result of "premeditated murder" because, without the five million famine deaths, the whole thesis of his book, that "the Nazi and Soviet regimes murdered some fourteen million people," falls to the ground, and with it goes the "Stalin — Hitler" comparison so treasured by ideological anticommunists.

Our analysis of Snyder's first chapter begins with a detailed study of each of what Snyder calls the "seven crucial policies." Snyder does not outline these seven points until the last third of his chapter. But the whole chapter, and indeed Snyder's whole book, depends upon these seven points. They are Snyder's "proof" that the several million Soviet citizens who died as a result of the famine of 1932-33 were "murdered" by Stalin and the Soviet leadership. It will be shown that in every case Snyder falsifies his claims and his evidence.