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THE INDUSTRIALISATION OF SOVIET RUSSIA 2: THE SOVIET COLLECTIVE FARM, 1929–1930
THE INDUSTRIALISATION OF SOVIET RUSSIA 3: THE SOVIET ECONOMY IN TURMOIL, 1929–1930
THE INDUSTRIALISATION OF SOVIET RUSSIA 4: CRISIS AND PROGRESS IN THE SOVIET ECONOMY, 1931–1933
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By Stephen G. Wheatcroft

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE FAMINE IN PERSPECTIVE

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, large-scale famines took place in Asia and Latin America as well as in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. On very rough estimates, in the second half of the nineteenth century, 12–29 million people died in major famines in India, and between 20 and 30 million in China. In the twentieth century, India and China again suffered from major famines. The loss of life in the Chinese famine of 1958–61 was larger than in any other twentieth-century famine. In both India and China, the very low level of grain or rice output per head of population, and the small number of livestock providing meat and dairy produce, placed their populations permanently on the edge of famine. The lack of livestock in India and China meant that there were no ready reserves to fall back on in times of shortage.

Grain production per head in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union was much higher than in Asia. But the consumption of a high proportion of the grain by livestock (particularly by horses essential to grain cultivation) reduced the amount of grain available as food. Together with the great annual variation in yield caused by changing weather conditions, this provided conditions for the occurrence of famine if adequate steps were not taken to avoid it.

For the student of famines, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union have a major merit compared with twentieth-century Asia: a well-developed statistical machinery at both national and local level which registered births and deaths, and collected information on agricultural production and consumption. This advantage has placed the study of famine on a firmer footing – although a very wide range of error still remains in our conclusions.

Serious famines occurred in the Russian Empire and the USSR in 1891/92, 1918–22, and throughout 1930–33. The 1891/92 famine resulted in 400,000–500,000 excess deaths; and excess deaths in the famines of 1918–22 are estimated as many as 10–14 million. The estimates of excess deaths in the Kazakh famine of 1930–33, in the rural famine of 1932–33, and the accompanying urban food shortages, range from 4.5 to 8 million. As we explain below, our own view is that both these extreme estimates are implausible, and that excess deaths probably amounted to 5.5 to 6.5 million.

The rural famine of 1932–33, which is the central concern of this book, was not, of course, the last famine experienced on Soviet territory. During the Second World War, famine conditions existed over a large part of the USSR – the best-known famine taking place during the siege of Leningrad. Civilian excess deaths, resulting mainly from the deterioration in living conditions, may have amounted in all to as many as 14 million. In 1946–47 a further famine involved 1–1.5 million excess deaths, affecting the Moldavian republic, Ukraine and a large part of the RSFSR. It was only from 1948 onwards that the Soviet Union was free from large-scale famine.

All famines are to some extent culturally-constructed phenomena, not intrinsically different from other food crises in their causation. Their consequences are, however, strikingly different, involving mass death to an extent qualitatively different from mere food shortages. The use of the term 'famine' indicates that the food crisis has passed a certain critical level and has taken on, or is threatening to take on, extraordinary consequences. The declaration of a famine is a call for extraordinary measures of relief, in circumstances that are recognized as threatening to cause mass deaths. But often governments fail to recognize famine, or recognize it half-heartedly.

When mortality is rising significantly as a result of food shortages, we can, of course, make an external, 'objective' determination of famine. Several indicators are used traditionally to indicate the presence of major food crises that are likely to take on famine proportions. These include: sharp reductions in agricultural production; the reduction of food exports; reduction in livestock numbers (though this could have other causes); and rising food prices. Food consumption surveys and anthropometric data provide an indication of food

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1 See Davis (2001), 7.
2 Grain production per head was one-third of the Soviet level in India, and half the Soviet level in China of the 1950s (see vol.1, pp. 9-10).
3 See EAS, xvi (1994), 21, 680 (Ellman and Maksudov). This very preliminary figure does not include the 3 million Jews murdered by the Nazis, but does include 3 million deaths in labour camps and among the nations deported to the interior of the USSR.
5 There is a linguistic complication in Russian, as 'golod' means hunger and famine – the distinction is made clear from the context. In Ukrainian, the term 'golodomor', hunger involving death, is sometimes used to distinguish famine from hunger.
strain. Amartya Sen has shown that famines are not caused exclusively by a decline in the food available – inadequate 'entitlements' for certain groups (lacking purchasing power or access to rations) can often be critical. But Sen and others have counterposed ‘FAD’ (Food Availability Decline) too starkly to the non-availability of entitlements. Certainly in the Russian and Soviet cases, and perhaps more generally, both aspects of famines have to be taken into account in order to understand why and where they occurred, and what sections of the population were involved.

(A) FAMINES BEFORE 1930

(ii) 1891/92

This famine affected about 40 million people and resulted in 400,000–500,000 premature deaths. It was concentrated in the Volga region, where the death rate increased to 40 per cent above normal, though provinces north and west of the Volga were also affected. The disaster has often been attributed to the general backwardness of Russian agriculture, the immiserizing effect of the emancipation settlement, and in particular to the decline in per capita production of grain. One of the present authors has shown, however, that this is a statistical illusion, and that in the European part of the Russian Empire grain production per head of population tended to increase between the 1870s and 1890s.

In fact, the famine was caused by a combination of factors. First, poor weather in 1890 and severe drought in 1891 led to a dramatic decline in grain output in the Volga and central agricultural provinces. These were also provinces in which grain production had significantly declined in the 1880s, while in Ukraine and the North Caucasus it had risen sharply. Rural indebtedness was particularly high in the areas where grain production had declined, and during the famine it increased sharply. Simultaneously, because of the

decline in production, grain prices rose sharply in 1891, while rural wages declined. Peasants in these provinces who were employed in seasonal agricultural work were the most severely affected. The famine was thus a regional phenomenon. Severe drought affected the traditional areas of Russian agriculture, where rapid population growth without improvement in methods of crop rotation was already leading to a classic subsistence crisis. Mortality was increased at the time of the 1892 harvest by the outbreak of a cholera epidemic. This was particularly severe because, as a result of the famine, many people had moved to emergency, unsanitary accommodation in the Astrakhan area, which was the epicentre of the epidemic.

The famine was recognised publicly by the tsarist government soon after its outbreak, and a committee for famine relief under the future Nicholas II was established as early as October 1891. The effects of the famine were reduced considerably by the efforts of the government, supported by local agencies and charities. The number of people receiving food aid increased during the agricultural year 1891/92 from 573,000 in July 1891 to over 11 million in June 1892. In the main Volga area, 40 per cent of the population received food aid.

(ii) The double famine of 1918–22

A series of largely urban famines in 1918–20 was succeeded by a largely rural famine in 1921/22. This sequence of troubles was described by Lorimer as ‘the most catastrophic... since the Mongol invasion in the early thirteenth century’. Estimates of the number of excess deaths range from 10 million to 14 million.

The urban famines during the civil war reached their peak in the spring of 1919, both in northern towns such as Petrograd and Moscow, and in southern towns such as Saratov. The level of mortality was between 2.5 and three times the normal. High mortality recurred in the following year, and most of the identifiable deaths

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7 See Edmondson and Waldron, eds (1992), 55–8 (Wheatcroft) for a review of the different estimates. The range in values partly depends upon which years are selected as 'normal' – a general problem in measuring deaths from famine.
8 See Cambridge Economic History of Europe, vi, pt 2 (1966), 776 (Gerschenkron).
9 Mann and Mixter, eds (1991), 191–6 (Wheatcroft).
were attributed to infectious diseases rather than starvation. A large number of deaths was caused by the outbreak of cholera in 1918 and the world-wide influenza epidemic of 1918 and 1919. Dysentery, gastroenteritis and typhus were also widespread. Severe malnourishment was undoubtedly a major factor in the spread of these diseases.\textsuperscript{15}

The urban food shortages began to emerge during the First World War in 1916, and led to food riots in the spring of 1917. The shortages turned into a major crisis following the 1917 harvest. The Soviet government succeeded in collecting only a fraction of the grain which was transferred from village to town in normal years. For most of the period, the main grain-surplus regions were under anti-Communist control. In spite of harsh and often makeshift requisitioning, grain collections by the Soviet state declined from 8.3 million tons in 1916/17 to 1.2 million in 1917/18, and to 1.8 million in 1918/19.\textsuperscript{16}

The disintegration of the army in 1917–18 was largely caused by the food shortage. During the civil war, a high proportion of the urban population emigrated to the countryside – otherwise deaths in the towns would have been far higher.\textsuperscript{17} The shortages particularly affected sections of the population which were not entitled to rations.

Once the civil war was over, the situation temporarily improved. In 1920/21, the grain requisitions increased to 6 million tons, of which 4 million came from territory recently taken over by the Soviet government. In the spring and summer of 1921, the decision to move away from requisitioning and reintroduce the market looked as though it would set the scene for economic recovery. But at this point a new food crisis developed in the south and in the Volga regions. A severe drought in 1921, following poor weather and a poor harvest in 1920, was the immediate background to the famine. According to Soviet data, the grain harvest in 1920 was only about 60 per cent of the pre-war level, and it was even smaller in 1921. The decline was particularly severe in the Volga regions and Ukraine. Grain cultivation was

\textsuperscript{15} See Wheatcroft, SIPS no. 21 (1981), appendix 10b, and Table 49 in this vol.; and Cahiers du Monde russe, 38 (1997), 526-8, 544-6 (Wheatcroft).
\textsuperscript{16} See Cambridge Economic History of Europe, viii (1989), 993 (Davies).
\textsuperscript{17} See Wheatcroft, SIPS no. 21 (1981), appendix 2. The population of Petrograd declined from 2.41 million in 1916 to 0.74 million in 1920. The total population of towns and urban settlements is estimated to have declined by about one-fifth (see Davies, Harrison and Wheatcroft, eds (1994), 335 (Wheatcroft and Davies)).

made extremely difficult by the huge decline in the number of horses, to about 70 per cent of the pre-war level – a decline largely resulting from the persistent grain shortage.\textsuperscript{18}

The League of Nations report on the 1921/22 famine described it as 'the worst, both as regards the numbers affected and as regards mortality from starvation and disease, which has occurred in Europe in modern times'.\textsuperscript{19} A total population of 20–24 million people was affected, and in Saratov, one of the provinces worst hit by the famine, mortality in February–April 1921 rose to over four times the normal level.\textsuperscript{20} But available statistics do not enable us to make a reliable division of excess mortality in Soviet Russia as a whole between the 1918–20 and 1921/22 famines.

In these years, the Soviet government, like the tsarist government in 1891, recognised publicly the existence of famine. Lenin, while blaming 'the bourgeoisie and the wealthy' for the urban famine in Petrograd and elsewhere, acknowledged its existence as early as May 1918.\textsuperscript{21} In 1919, the attempt of the Norwegian explorer Nansen to provide international relief was accepted in principle by the Soviet side, but came to nothing in the conditions of civil war and international hostility to the new regime. Then, in June 1921, the Soviet authorities acknowledged the existence of the second famine, and accepted proposals from Nansen and others to organise international food supplies.\textsuperscript{22} In the spring of 1922, the number of people provided with food by international agencies reached more than 12 million, and this prevented the further rise in mortality which would otherwise have occurred in the months before the new harvest of 1922.\textsuperscript{23}

Poor harvests and food shortages occurred during the mid-1920s, but a new wave of chronic food shortage did not begin until 1928. Throughout the years 1928–33 food shortages plagued the population.

\textsuperscript{18} See Davies, Harrison and Wheatcroft, eds (1994), 286-9 (Wheatcroft and Davies).
\textsuperscript{19} League of Nations (1923), p. x.
\textsuperscript{21} P. May 24, 1918.
\textsuperscript{22} P. June 16, 1921. The Poliburo decisions on international aid may be found in RGASPI, 17/3/181, item 4 (session of June 29, 1921) and 17/3/182, item 2 (session of July 11).
\textsuperscript{23} See Carr (1950), 177-9, (1955), 341-3. Ten of the twelve million received food from the American Relief Administration headed by future US President Herbert Hoover, on which see Fisher (1927); Patenaude (2003).
weakened its health and caused the peasantry to disinvest its wealth (particularly in livestock). Starvation developed in different locations at different times, and soon reached famine proportions. Three separate famines can be distinguished:

(1) an urban food crisis which began in 1928, and turned in various locations into a famine by the spring of 1932, which continued till the harvest of 1933;
(2) the Kazakhstan famine, which began in the autumn of 1931, before the rural famine elsewhere, and continued till 1933; and
(3) the devastating rural famine in the main grain areas, which began in the spring of 1932, and then became much more intense in the months before the 1933 harvest.

(B) THE URBAN FOOD CRISIS OF 1928–33

The crisis of the state grain collections in the autumn of 1927 soon led to general urban food shortage. Rationing of major foods and some consumer goods was introduced piecemeal in the course of 1928 and 1929.\(^24\) By the end of 1930, over 30 million people were receiving food from what had become an elaborate rationing system (see vol. 3, pp. 289–300). The number of people receiving rations continued to expand, and reached 38 million by the beginning of 1932.\(^25\)

However, as a result of the pressures on the state grain collections from these increased numbers, and from the demands of industry and export, it became increasingly difficult to honour the approved rations. Some commodities were taken off the ration in 1931 (see vol. 4, pp. 61–3). At the beginning of 1932, some foods were also de-rationed. For all these goods, the urban as well as the rural population had to fend for itself. On March 23, 1932, a fateful Politburo decision substantially reduced the allocation of grain for 20 million people on the lower-priority ration Lists 2 and 3. The local authorities were supposed to make up the difference; but in practice the amount


\(^{25}\) The information in the following paragraphs is summarised from vol. 4, pp. 176–92, 530–3. These figures for those receiving rations exclude servicemen, the OGPU, those confined in prisons, camps and special settlements, the personnel of some special industries and activities, and those engaged in agriculture who received food allocations.

of bread received by this huge segment of the non-agricultural population was substantially reduced. In the months before the new harvest, the urban death rate doubled in the Lower Volga region, the North Caucasus and Ukraine (see vol. 4, p. 187n).\(^{26}\) Dissatisfaction was widespread. Serious food riots took place in the textile areas; and many workers who failed to receive food rations left their building sites. With the exception of some regions of Ukraine, the death rate in the towns was higher than in the countryside in the spring and early summer of 1932.

The decline in urban rations threatened the whole industrialisation and armament programme, and the authorities made considerable efforts to maintain the supply of bread to the towns. In the famine areas in the winter and spring of 1932–33 the urban population suffered much less than the rural. But rations in many towns were extremely low. In March 1933, Kosior reported to the USSR party central committee that workers in factories in small towns in Ukraine were supposed to receive List 3 rations, but these were ‘not supplied in practice’; workers were swelling up from hunger, though local food supplies had recently enabled some improvement.\(^{27}\) From the Dnepropetrovsk region, Khataievich reported that ‘there are in reality no bazaars’, so manual and office workers on List 3 had to manage with a ration of 200 grams a day and nothing else.\(^{28}\) The urban death rate continued to rise until the 1933 harvest. In June and July 1933 it was double the normal level in the RSFSR as a whole, and more than double that level in Ukraine. Nevertheless, the urban food crisis in these years was less devastating than in 1918–19. In those years, large numbers of people left the major towns. In 1928–32, however, the urban population expanded rapidly. During the famine period there was no mass exodus from the towns. In the spring and summer of 1932, some workers returned to the countryside because of the lack of food in the towns. But by the autumn of 1932 peasants were moving to the towns in search of food. The growth of the urban population ceased, and was partly reversed, only as a result of restrictions on movement and the introduction of an internal passport system.\(^{29}\)

\(^{26}\) For urban death rates, see RGAP, 1562/20/41. The monthly figures for 1932–34 are available on http://www.soviet-archives-research.co.uk/hunger.

\(^{27}\) See Golod 1932–33 (1990), 444 (dated March 13).

\(^{28}\) See Golod 1932–33 (1990), 465–7 (memorandum from Khataievich to Narkomzem of Ukraine, dated March 21).

\(^{29}\) See vol. 4, pp. 240–1 (for the departure from the towns in the summer of 1932), 390–1 (for the passport system).
(C) THE FAMINE IN KAZAKHSTAN

In Kazakhstan in 1929–31 livestock, a major source of food in the nomad areas, had been devastated (see pp. 321–4). As a result of the bad harvest in northern Kazakhstan in 1931, the nomad areas were not supplied with grain, and food problems had spread to between seven and ten districts by December.\(^{30}\) In January 1932, the OGPU reported that forty people from exiled \textit{bas} families, mainly children, had died from famine in a village in Pavlodar district.\(^{31}\) In the following month, five political exiles in the district, in a statement to TSK of the USSR, reported:

for the last month and a half Pavlodar has been flooded by starving, swollen people in rags, who are mainly Kazaks.

The local health agencies are being overwhelmed by people dying from famine. \textit{Famine is causing an epidemic}.\(^{32}\)

Fifty thousand Kazakh refugees flooded into the Central Volga region, which reported that they were "famished, and suffering from epidemic illnesses".\(^{33}\) By the end of February 1932, the famine had spread to thirty-three districts, and, according to incomplete data for the 232 places affected by 'sharp famine', 1,219 people had died from famine between December 1931 and March 10, 1932.\(^{34}\) In August, Issayev wrote directly to Stalin reporting that 10,000–15,000 Kazakhs had died from famine in the spring of 1932, and that the number of peasant households in the republic had declined by 23–25 per cent.\(^{35}\)

The severe famine continued until at least the summer of 1933. A secret report by the Kazakh statistical agency claimed that the rural population of Kazakhstan had declined from 5.87 million on June 1, 1930 to 2.49 million on June 1, 1933; the decline was as much as 1.9 million in the single year 1931–32.\(^{36}\) An OGPU report even claimed that the number of households had declined from 1.18 million to 0.84 million in the four months December 1, 1931,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Of which, Kazakhs</th>
<th>Kazakhs outside Kazakhstan</th>
<th>Total number of Kazakhs in whole USSR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 1926</td>
<td>6079</td>
<td>3465</td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1937</td>
<td>5120</td>
<td>2182</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1939</td>
<td>6151</td>
<td>3101</td>
<td>741</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the Kazakh population had increased at a normal rate after 1926, it would have reached almost five million by 1939. The population deficit as a result of the upheavals among the Kazakhs in the 1930s amounted to some 1.2 million. In addition, many Russians and other nationalities living in Kazakhstan also died from hunger. An unknown number of people emigrated to China; the remainder of the deficit resulted from premature deaths or the decline in the birth rate.

(D) THE RURAL FAMINE OF 1932–33

(6) Areas affected by the famine

Serious food difficulties developed in some villages and rural districts in the winter of 1931–32.\(^{40}\) In the spring of 1932, unmistakable signs

\(^{37}\) Published in TSD, iii, 426–7 (dated July 1932).
\(^{38}\) Kryskulov's report of October 6, 1932; for this report see p. 325.
\(^{39}\) Estimated from data in \textit{Vozrozhdeniya peredstva}... 1937 (1991), 46–7, 84, 96; and \textit{Vozrozhdeniya peredstva}... 1939 (1992), 22. In this table, the number of Kazakhs in Kazakhstan in December 1926, in the area comparable with 1937 and 1939 areas, has been estimated by using the same proportion as given in the 1920 census; that is, 3708/6500 = 57 per cent. Since the total number of Kazakhs in the whole USSR remains the same, the number of Kazakhs outside Kazakhstan can be derived as a residual.
\(^{40}\) See, for example, the report from Bashkir kolkhoz union: RGASPI, 631/5/75, 22–29 (February 1932), published in TSD, iii, 270–3.
of famine appeared in many villages in Ukraine. In April, registered rural mortality (the crude death rate) increased above its normal level and remained high until August.\textsuperscript{41} At the beginning of July, in preparation for Molotov's visit to Ukraine for its party conference, a list was prepared of the thirty-three 'heavily affected' districts requiring food assistance in Ukraine as a whole. Simultaneously, the Kharkov region alone submitted a list of twenty-five districts which required assistance.\textsuperscript{42}

Following the 1932 harvest, registered rural mortality in Ukraine returned temporarily more or less to normal. By November 1932, however, it was already 30 per cent above normal, and it continued to increase. In June 1933, on the eve of the 1933 harvest, it was as much as thirteen times as high as the normal level. All the Ukrainian regions were affected. Kiev and Kharkov regions suffered most. Mortality in the more northerly districts of Ukraine, where food other than grain was available in greater quantities, was somewhat lower. In North Caucasus, the harvest was reasonable in 1931, and the region was much less affected by severe food shortages than Ukraine in the spring of 1932. But the rural death rate increased sharply in September 1932, two months before Ukraine. By June 1933, it reached nearly seven times the normal. On February 23, 1933, the bureau of the regional party committee prepared a list stating that 48 of the 75 grain districts in the region were suffering from famine, including 20 of the 34 districts in the Kuban.\textsuperscript{43}

The Lower and Central Volga regions, including the German ASSR, together with the Bashkir ASSR to the east of these regions, were also strongly affected by famine. The population of these regions was about 14 million, and they covered an area equal to the territory of Ukraine.\textsuperscript{44} The rural death rate rose to nine times the normal level in the Lower Volga region, and to three times the normal level in the Central Volga.

In the Central Black-Earth region, not generally listed as a famine area, the rural death rate reached over four times the normal level by July 1933.\textsuperscript{45} Serious food difficulties were also reported from the Ural region and the Far East. And the famine continued, and even intensified, in Kazakhstan.

Even excluding the Urals, Siberia and the Far East, the famine areas included over 70 million of the 160 million people in the USSR. The mortality figures for these areas are so large that it is difficult to see them in perspective. Most countries in the world would consider a rise in annual mortality of 10 per cent caused by food problems to be a famine. All regions, even the urban districts of Moscow region, experienced a rise in mortality of over 20 per cent above the normal level for an extended period. For rural areas in the Russian republic as a whole, including areas not greatly affected by famine, there were eight months in 1933 (February–August, and October) when mortality was more than 20 per cent above normal. In rural areas of Ukraine, mortality more than 20 per cent above normal was registered for April–July and November 1932, and for all the first eight months of 1933.

The famine areas also experienced a sharp reduction in the birth rate, occurring roughly nine months after the peak of the famine. In Ukraine and the North Caucasus, the birth rate declined sharply from November 1932 onwards, and by April 1934 it had fallen to a mere 20 per cent of the normal level. It fell almost everywhere in the USSR to a lesser extent. In the Russian republic as a whole it was less than half the normal level in April and May 1934.

Famine conditions did not come to a complete end with the harvest of 1933, however. Many reports of malnutrition, swelling up and deaths from famine were compiled by local GPU's between January and July 1934. Such reports referred to Ukraine, Gor'ki (Nizhni-Novgorod) region, the Urals, the Central Black-Earth region, the Tatar and Bashkir ASSRs, the Far East and Central Asia.\textsuperscript{46} These reports referred to only a small number of villages.

\textsuperscript{41} For the registered death rates cited in these paragraphs, see Table 48. Note that they are considerably lower than the true rate, especially in 1933.

\textsuperscript{42} Published in Vasil'ev and Shapoval, eds (Kiev, 2001), 226–8.

\textsuperscript{43} Godolemon (Kiev, 1995), 115–16 (Osok'klov); thirteen of these districts were classified as 'especially unfavourable', and twenty as 'unfavourable'. The list was based on information supplied by the GPU. For the famine in the North Caucasus, see Osok'klov (Rostov, 1991), and Penner (1998).

\textsuperscript{44} Godolemon (Kiev, 1995), 129 (Kondrasin). For the Central Volga famine, see Kondrasin (1991).

\textsuperscript{45} For an OGPU report on famine in this region, dated April 1, 1933, see TSD, iii, 601–2. For a general study of famine in the region, see Zagorski (Voronezh, 1938).

\textsuperscript{46} See, for example, the reports published in TSD, iii, 888 (Gor'ki region, dated January 15); and TSD, iv, 69 (Ukraine, dated February 19); 93–4 (Sverdlov region, the Far East, the Tatar and Bashkir ASSRs and Central Asia (dated April 3); 118–9 (Azov-Black Sea region – formerly North Caucasus, dated May 19); 124–5 (Ukraine,
and, except in the Central Volga region, where a higher death rate continued until October 1934, the registered death rate everywhere, including Ukraine, returned to the normal level in 1934 (see Table 48).

(ii) Deaths from the famine

The total number of deaths from the famine is extremely difficult to estimate. The number of deaths officially registered in 1932 and 1933 was much higher than in a normal year. In the whole USSR, with the exception of Kazakhstan, the total amounted to nearly 3 million, compared with deaths as an average of the two years 1926 and 1927. To this total must be added the deaths from famine in Kazakhstan, where no registration system existed. The number of Kazakhis who died from famine in 1931–33 was probably more than one million, and, together with the deaths of Russians and other nationalities inhabiting Kazakhstan, the total probably amounted to 1.3–1.5 million. Many exiles also died from famine in the labour camps and the special settlements; the deaths in 1932–33 recorded in the Gulag accounts exceeded the 1934 level by nearly 300,000. The number of excess deaths in 1932–33 (plus the excess deaths in Kazakhstan, which began a year earlier, and the deaths in the OGPU system) therefore amounted to some 4.6 million (2.9 + 0.3 + 1.4 million).

Many deaths were not registered in the course of 1933, as both the archival reports and oral testimony bear witness. Thus, on March 12, 1933, the Kiev GPU reported that deaths were ‘considerably underestimated, because the district machinery of the GPU does not record the number of people who are hungry and swollen up, and often the village soviet also does not know the real number dying from hunger’. On June 3, the deputy Ukrainian people’s commissar for health reported to the Ukrainian party central committee that in the Kiev region ‘the figures for death are considerably underestimated’. He cited a district in which more than 3,000 people had died by March 1, although the number of registered deaths was only 742. Two days later, the Kharkov GPU reported to the Ukrainian GPU that ‘mortality has become so extensive that a number of villages ceased to register the dead’. Similar reports were submitted in regions outside Ukraine.

It is not generally realised, however, that the current monthly mortality figures were revised substantially after the end of the year (in mid-1934). A document in the archives shows that the figures for deaths in Ukraine and the RSFSR in 1933, which are normally cited in the archive documents, and which we have used in this book, were increased substantially compared with the earlier monthly figures. The number of deaths was increased by 27 per cent in the RSFSR, and 13 per cent in Ukraine.

These figures were nevertheless still too low, as emerged when the annual revised data for deaths were compared with the results of the 1937 population census. The census gave the total population as 162 million, compared with 147 million in the previous census of 1926. However, if the net increase in population (that is, births minus deaths) shown by the official registrations is added to the 1926 population, the 1937 total becomes not 162 but 168 million.

\[46 \text{TDAGOU, 1/20/6276, 2.} \]
\[47 \text{Gold, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 530–5.} \]
\[48 \text{These revisions were part of the normal seasonal reporting cycle, although the incompleteness of the 1933 monthly data seems to have been much greater than normal. The following table compares the current 1933 data with the later more complete annual data (thousands).} \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>1933: revised registration*</th>
<th>1933: current registration</th>
<th>1933: revised registration*</th>
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<td>RSFSR</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>All deaths</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>2927</td>
<td>1726</td>
<td>2713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1058</td>
<td>1678</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All deaths</td>
<td>1309</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[\text{Sources: The sum of the early monthly registration data received in the month following the event: RGAE, 1562/329/107, 181. Revised annual series produced in the year following: RGAE, 1562/329/108, 6.} \]

\[\text{Note: * Excludes Kazakhstan. The internal discussions which took place in connection with this revision will be discussed in a forthcoming article by Wheather.} \]

dated May 20; 196–9 (various regions, dated July 8) and 201–4 (various regions, dated July 8); Zagorodnits (Voronezh, 1998), 114–29 (Central Black-Earth region, first six months of 1934).

\[47 \text{Gold, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 429–37.} \]
The difference between these two estimates is known as the ‘Kurman gap’, and was given as 6.3 million.\textsuperscript{51}

Part of this gap must be attributed to the excess deaths in Kazakhstan (1.4 million)\textsuperscript{25} and part to the recorded excess deaths in the OGPU system (0.3 million). What about the remaining 4.7 million of the Kurman gap (6.3 - 1.4 - 0.3)?\textsuperscript{55} At one extreme, three Russian demographers, known as ADK from the initials of their surnames, concluded, after various adjustments, that these unregistered deaths were concentrated in the years 1932 and 1933, and their estimates lead to the conclusion that excess deaths in 1930–33 amounted to 8.5 million, of which as many as 7.3 million occurred in 1933.\textsuperscript{53}

This estimate is implausibly high. Among other defects in their calculations, ADK fail to take into account the two adjustments proposed by Lorimer in his classic study of the Soviet population, written long before the archives were opened.\textsuperscript{54} Lorimer argued that throughout the inter-censal period 1926–37 both deaths from infant mortality throughout the USSR and all deaths in the non-European republics of the USSR had been underestimated. Both factors are likely to have been present, and estimating their extent can only be a matter of intelligent guesswork. Using common-sense assumptions, we have concluded that they may well have accounted for 3.6 million of the 4.7 million gap.\textsuperscript{55} But we should emphasise that this is a guessestimate: the 3.6 million can be increased or decreased by using different assumptions. If the ‘Lorimer corrections’ are set sufficiently high, the 4.7 million gap can disappear altogether.

Thus the outcome of these calculations is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimates of excess deaths from famine, 1930–33 (millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan famine: approximate:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excess deaths in OGPU system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered excess deaths, 1932–33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimate 1 Low estimate (total of above), approx.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimate 2 ADK estimate of all excess deaths, 1930–33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimate 3 Our estimate, after ‘Lorimer corrections’,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

approx. (4.6 above + 1.1 million from the Kurman gap)

Whichever estimate we adopt, or even if we use only the officially registered deaths, this is an enormous figure. In the twentieth century, this number of deaths from a famine was exceeded only in China after 1958.

(iii) Excess deaths by region

What was the incidence of the famine deaths in the different regions and republics? The registered excess deaths, excluding Kazakhstan and the camps and special settlements, were distributed as follows (millions):\textsuperscript{56}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1932</th>
<th>1933</th>
<th>1932–33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Caucasus</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Volga</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Volga</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Black-Earth</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other regions and republics</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{51} Kurman was the head of the population department of TsentrNIKHU. For the text of his memorandum of 1937, see Sociologicheskie issledovaniya 6, 1990, 22–4. Kurman argued that the gap would increase to 8 million if births had also been under-recorded.

\textsuperscript{25} The 4.7 million estimated remainder from the Kurman gap should not, of course, be confused with our estimate of 4.6 million registered deaths (including an estimate for Kazakhstan and the Gulag returns).

\textsuperscript{55} See Davies, Harrison and Wheatcroft, eds (1994), 26, and Istoriia statistiki, 7, 1990, 41 (Andreev, Darskii and Kharkova). According to ADK, excess deaths, taking deaths in 1929 as the norm, amounted (in thousands) to 152 (1930), 369 (1931), 654 (1932) and 7,312 (1933).


\textsuperscript{55} On these assumptions, infant mortality in 1926–37 was underestimated by 1.4 million, and deaths in the non-European USSR by 2.2 million. For details see http://www.soviet-archives-research.co.uk/hunger. A further allowance needs to be made for excess deaths in the camps and special settlements in 1934–36, but this is unlikely to have been very large.

\textsuperscript{56} For details, see http://www.soviet-archives-research.co.uk/hunger.
Using our estimate for the Lorimer corrections, the unregistered deaths (excluding Kazakhstan, and the camps and special settlements), amounted to about 1 million; on the ADK estimate, they amounted to over 3 million. Some of these deaths certainly took place in Ukraine, the North Caucasus and the Volga regions. But it also seems likely that there were unregistered famine deaths in the Central Asian and Transcaucasian republics. The registered crude death rate increased in nearly all regions of the European USSR in 1933: even in the favoured Moscow region, for example, it increased by 24 per cent. But in Uzbekistan it declined by nearly 15 per cent, and in Azerbaijan by as much as 30 per cent. This is implausible.

The extreme lack of food was reflected in the quite thorough sample survey of the utilisation of grain in seven major regions in 1933. This shows the disastrous position in January–June before the new harvest. The grain consumed per person amounted to only 350 grams a day in the seven regions as a whole, and a mere 210 grams in the Kiev region and 160 in the Odessa region. Monthly data for the Kiev region show that grain consumption fell below the starvation level in May–July, and then rose dramatically with the onset of the new harvest.

The famine conditions were also reflected in the dramatic rise of prices on the kolkhoz market. In Kiev, the price of rye flour was already sixty times higher than in 1926–27 by June 1932, and it more than doubled by June 1933. In the Central Black Earth region, prices quadrupled between June 1932 and June 1933. They doubled even in the better-off Moscow region, though there the absolute price was only 58 per cent of the price in the Kiev region in June 1933.59

Grain consumption per day in Kiev region per adult equivalent, by months, 1933

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grams</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(See *Cohiers du Monde russe*, xxxviii (October–December 1997), 352 (Wheatcroft)).

57 See SS, xlii (1990), 361 (Wheatcroft), citing RGAE, 1562/20/42, 76.
58 The equivalent amount of bread is approximately 40 per cent higher than these figures, or about 500 grams in the seven regions, 300 in Kiev region and only 220 in the Odessa region.
59 The famine conditions were also reflected in the dramatic rise of prices on the kolkhoz market. In Kiev, the price of rye flour was already sixty times higher than in 1926–27 by June 1932, and it more than doubled by June 1933. In the Central Black Earth region, prices quadrupled between June 1932 and June 1933. They doubled even in the better-off Moscow region, though there the absolute price was only 58 per cent of the price in the Kiev region in June 1933.

In large parts of the famine-stricken regions, grain or flour were not available at all at the height of the famine.

(iii) Excess deaths by social group

During the famine, certain (mainly urban) sections of the population were spared the harshest consequences of food shortage by their entitlements through the rationing system. Some tens of thousands of top officials and their families received special rations; 21,000 of these were registered in Closed Shop No. 1 in Moscow (see vol. 4, p. 453). Below this privileged stratum, at the beginning of 1932, 26 million people, including dependents, received adequate rations on the Special List and Lists 1 and 2. The number of people registered on these lists increased by four million in the course of 1932 (see vol. 4, p. 530). For the remaining 120 million citizens, this was a time of hunger. This was a FAD (food availability decline) famine, modified by entitlements for a minority of the population.

The table below lists the social origins of the 5 million urban and rural people whose deaths were registered in 1933. Only 3.5 million, or 70 per cent, were classified according to social origins. The peasants made up 2.5 million, or 71 per cent, of these, but there was no indication of the split between kolkhoz and individual peasant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Group</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manual worker</td>
<td>170419</td>
<td>260204</td>
<td>430623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical worker</td>
<td>55643</td>
<td>89024</td>
<td>144667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary and domestic work</td>
<td>37479</td>
<td>25162</td>
<td>62641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in agriculture (apart from workers)</td>
<td>1209219</td>
<td>1322608</td>
<td>2531917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other independent</td>
<td>172134</td>
<td>62919</td>
<td>235053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>41959</td>
<td>408295</td>
<td>450254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1686853</td>
<td>2168302</td>
<td>3855155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the forms clearly provided space for collective farmers and individual peasants to be listed, no figures were included in these categories in the tables that we have seen.

RGA, 1562/329/16, 30.
The evidence on which groups of peasants suffered most from famine is in some respects contradictory. On February 28, 1933, a report prepared by the Ukrainian party apparatus claimed that the victims of famine were mainly peasants who had not earned many labour days. It even asserted that 'the overwhelming majority of those suffering from hunger are lazy people, who disrupt the development of the kolkhozy.' But other reports insisted that the famine did not spare hard-working collective farmers. On the same day as the report for Ukraine as a whole, February 28, the Dnepropetrovsk regional soviet executive committee stated that 'a check of a number of villages and districts by GPU staff has revealed that to a considerable extent those suffering from lack of food are collective farmers active in production who have earned 300–900 labour days' (this was well above the average). In the following month this view was confirmed by Khataevich, who informed the Ukrainian party central committee that, in the Dnepropetrovsk region, 'a very high percentage of collective farmers who have earned a large number of labour days have swollen up [from hunger], or completely lack grain.'

In other respects, a pattern of deprivation emerges fairly consistently from the reports. Large families, old people and children were all unable to earn enough labour days, and when these were the criteria for the possession of food, they became victims of famine. Data supplied to the GPU of the Kiev region at the beginning of March indicate that a large number of children suffered from hunger: 112,000 children as compared with 94,000 adults. Children continued to predominate among the victims in March and April. However, the extensive food assistance supplied to hungry children may have changed this pattern later (see pp. 221–2, 425). Moreover, according to some reports, the pattern was changed by the actions of some of the hardworking, fit people themselves. In the Lower Volga region, 'children, old people, invalids and sick adults' received no grain, but collective farmers from their families felt obliged to 'hand over part of their miserable bread ration to them.' In some cases, this sacrifice to the children resulted in the deaths of collective farmers aged 20–40. Several reports claimed that most of the adults who died were men rather than women.

The available data for the RSFSR show that the victims of the famine by age were primarily children aged four and under, and adults aged fifty or over. They also confirm that more men died than women. However, we do need to note that infant mortality was extremely high even in normal circumstances, and that, in percentage terms, there was a lower rise in infant mortality than in the mortality rates for other ages.

Registered mortality in RSFSR in 1933

(a) by age (in per cent of total)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–4</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–14</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–49</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) by sex (thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Urban Thousands</th>
<th>Urban Per cent</th>
<th>Rural Thousands</th>
<th>Rural Per cent</th>
<th>Total population Thousands</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>457.6</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>1164.8</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>1622.4</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>327.1</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>930.5</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>1257.7</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>784.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>2095.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>2880.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

69 Gol'd, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 390–1, 394 (report of information and sowing group). See also a similar GPU report from Kiev region dated February 16, published in TSD, iii, 642–3.
66 Gol'd, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 397
65 Gol'd, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 427 (dated March 12). He attributed this to the 'zealous removal' of the advances in kind issued to them during the harvest.
64 See Gol'd, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 390–1 (large families), 378–80 (old people), 427 (children); on children, see also Kaganovich's diary in the North Caucasus for the end of January 1933, reporting information from Sheboldaev (RGASPI, 813/215, 74, published in TSD, iii, 689).
63 Report from the head of an MTS politodek, dated May 17, published in TSD, iii, 674.
62 Report from a Lower Volga politodek, dated June 4, published in TSD, iii, 676.
61 See, for example, report of the OGPU on the North Caucasus, dated April 7, published in TSD, iii, 664–5; and report from politodek in German ASSR dated May 21, published in TSD, iii, 673.
60 GARF, 374/23/229.
The famine also hit individual peasants more severely than collective farmers. In April, Chernyavskii reported to Kosior that, in Vinnitsa region, 'in its overwhelming majority [famine] affects individual peasants, especially from the central and south-eastern districts of our region, where the individual peasant is much weaker than in the frontier districts' 73. Similar reports were issued from other regions. 74

In the North Caucasus region, the amount of bread issued from food loans had proved inadequate, because the worst-off districts had no other food; even cabbage, gourds and potatoes were rare. Registered mortality in February and March, even in the best-placed stanisely, had been double that in the same period of 1952, and in the worst-placed stanisely it had trebled or quadrupled – without taking account of unregistered deaths:

The sick die first. . . The children die, and barbarism has reached the point where the parents eat, and do not feed the children . . .

Naturally individual peasants, and collective farmers with a small number of labour days, die in larger numbers. The slogan 'he who does not work, neither shall he eat' is adopted by rural organisations without any adjustment – let them perish. 75

***

Descriptions of the famine are amply available in émigré and other memoirs. 76 OGPU and other reports now declassified in the former Soviet archives differ from these primarily in their view of the causes of the famine. While émigré memoirs tend to present it as being deliberately organised for political reasons, the secret internal documents, like the Soviet publications, tend to attribute all the difficulties in agriculture to the machinations of class enemies and to inefficient organisation. Outstanding, features of the famine described in these documents are summarised in sections (v) to (x) below.

73. TsDAGOU, 1/20/6277, 152–157 (dated April 16).
74. See, for example, TsDAGOU, 1/20/6277, 179 (report of district party secretary in Dnepropetrovsk region – March 1933).
76. See especially Conquest (1986); Pidhainy, ed. (1953, 1953); Hearing (1984); Commission (1988); Cahiers du Monde russe, xxx (January–June 1989), 5–106 (Graziati–Italian diplomatic reports). See also the reports of Gareth Jones (adviser to Lloyd George) at http://colley.co.uk/garethjones/soviet_articles.htm

The Rural Famine of 1932–33

(a) Use of food substitutes

In 1932–33, as in other times of acute food shortage, peasants suffering from hunger sought out every kind of substitute. In the Dnepropetrovsk region, for example, they ate cats and dogs, and dug up the corpses of horses. In one district in the region, dogs for food were sold for 12 rubles, and horses for 6–8 rubles per kilogram. 77

In Vinnitsa region, as well as eating cats and dogs, they also ate ‘carrion and garbage . . . and concoctions from weeds and potato peelings’. 78

Sholokhov informed Stalin that, in the North Caucasus, peasants had been eating boiled and grilled gophers, as well as horses which had been shot because they were diseased, and dogs and cats. 79

When substitutes proved inadequate, or were no longer available, peasants swollen with hunger travelled in search of work and food to neighbouring villages and towns, and to other districts and regions. Many who could not find work became beggars and tramps. The North Caucasus regional party bureau reported as early as February 22, 1933, that railway stations were ‘overcrowded with elements [of the population] without homes, passports, or means of existence, a large number of which are dying in the railway coaches and the stations’. 80

(b) Cannibalism

As in 1921–22, there were many cases of cannibalism by peasants desperate for food; both cannibalism in the strict sense – that is, murder for food (known as byodoestvo – eating people) and corpse-eating (trupodestvo). On January 28, a dramatic ‘special communication’ prepared by a deputy head of the Ukrainian GPU was entitled ‘Cases of Cannibalism in Uman district, Kiev Region’. It described how, on January 15, a 24-year-old peasant killed his wife and ate her. The report carefully emphasised evidence that his action was due to desperation resulting from hunger. The culprit was a collective farmer who was a poor peasant, and whose grain was used up. He claimed

77. Gudok, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 409 (report of regional GPU to Ukrainian GPU, March 5, 1933).
78. TsDAGOU, 1/20/6275, 45–56 (report by Chernyavskii to Kosior, March 17, 1933).
80. See Gudokomar (Kiev, 1995), 115–16 (Oskol’kov).
to have been starving for a long time, and he looked 'extremely wasted.' In the North Caucasus, GPU reports described cases of famine from January 29 onwards. Cannibalism was also reported from the Lower Volga region. By March, the Kiev GPU was receiving ten or more daily reports of cannibalism, in at least one district in the majority of occurrences is even becoming "normal"; in villages affected by cannibalism the opinion is growing every day that human flesh can be used as food. In a typical case: A mother or father kill a child, the meat is used for food, and their own children are fed with it. Many prepare "stocks" of human flesh and salt the meat in barrels. In a district in the Dnepropetrovsk region, the flesh of two murdered people was put on sale.

Some secret reports displayed a grim fascination with these events. For example:

A kulak woman aged about 50, dekulakised from Zelenka village in Bogushev district [Kiev region], who hid in the Kuban in 1932, returned home with her grown-up daughter. On the way from Gorodische station to Korsun she ambushed a passing 12-year-old boy and killed him with a knife. She put the internal organs and other body parts in a sack.

In Gorodische village, citizen Sherstyuk, an inhabitant of this place, allowed these citizens to stay the night. By means of deceit, pretending that the meat of the boy was meat of a calf, the old woman gave the liver and heart to citizen Sherstyuk's family to boil and grill, fed his family and [she and her daughter] ate the food themselves.

At night citizen Sherstyuk, intending to use some of the meat from the old woman's sack, found there the hacked-up body of the boy. The criminals have been arrested.

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81 TsDAGOU, 1/20/6274, 32 (report by Karlson). A brief account of this episode appeared in a report dated January 22, sent by a divisional military commander to the political head of the Ukrainian military region (TsDAGOU, 1/20/6274, 6).
82 See Penner (1999), 44. An OGPU report about cannibalism in the region is published in TSD, iii, 648–9.
83 See OGPU report published in TSD, iii, 646–9 (dated March 7), and report from MTS polichtd en in TSD, iii, 677 (dated August 5, 1933, but evidently referring to earlier events).
84 Gaid, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 433–7 (dated March 12). According to this report, cannibalism had already taken place in the region in the spring of 1932.
85 Gaid, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 409 (dated March 5).
86 Gaid, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 480–1 (report of information and sowing group of Ukrainian party central committee, dated April 1, 1933).
87 TsDAGOU, 1/20/6276, 58 (report of head of Kiev MTS political sector, dated June 14).
89 Golod, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 399–401; the cases of cannibalism and corpse-eating occurred in 22 of these districts.
90 Ibid., 510–1 (report of health commission dated May 17).
91 This instruction is published in the émigré publication Pidhainy, 1953, 230, and appears to be genuine; see also Conquest (1966), 257. Cases involving murder, though covered by the criminal code, were also to be transferred to the OGPU.
92 TsDAGOU, 1/20/6276, 48–50, 38 (OGPU report dated June 10, 1933).
93 Golod, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 434 (report of GPU of Kiev region to Ukrainian GPU, dated March 12).
94 TsDAGOU, 1/20/6275, 225 (report of chair of Khar'kov soviet executive committee, dated May 30).
The Famine in Perspective

worst-affected villages, ‘many families sit without moving ... not leaving the house, awaiting death’; ‘people are deadened, and absolutely fail to react to death or cannibalism.’ Eventually, many or all of the population of a village died, or the whole population left, and the cottages were boarded up.

(ii) Food assistance

Republican, regional and district authorities made desperate but quite inadequate efforts to seek out food for the hungry. They appealed, sometimes successfully, sometimes unsuccessfully, to Komzag in Moscow, and to the Politburo and Stalin personally, for grain and other food loans (these central loans are discussed on pp. 214–23). When these proved insufficient, or were not forthcoming, they hunted for untapped local sources of food. Here are a few examples of their activities. In several districts of the Vinnytsia region, grain and other food supplies were assembled to feed hungry adults and children. The consumer cooperatives in the region organised ‘decentralised collections’ of grain, potatoes, meat and fat from the better-off districts, but they were unable to secure even the minimum necessary assistance for districts in an extremely difficult position with food. The Kiev GPU sent the republican GPU a list of the quantities of bread, sugar, jam, vegetables and other foods which had been ‘mobilised’ for the hungry. It also claimed that, in addition to these local transfers, an average of 10–15 tsentners of grain had been collected by each kolhoznik for redistribution within the kolhozy. In Odessa region, the party committee complained to its districts that ‘decentralised collections have simply not been developed’, and established troiki (including a representative of the GPU), in the ‘most unfavourable’ districts to seek out food. The committee also insisted that district health inspectors, and district staff concerned with food supplies, should not be diverted to other activities.

The Famine in Perspective

The importance of feeding children was strongly emphasised in distributing both the food loans from central supplies (on which, see p. 221), and the local supplies. Food was distributed to children through the schools; existing créches and children’s homes were greatly expanded; and emergency children’s homes were established to accommodate the large number of homeless children who had been separated from, or been discarded by, their hungry parents. Thus, in the Dnepropetrovsk region, following a ‘sharp reduction in school attendance’ in many districts, the regional executive committee called for an increase of 70,000 in the number of children attending créches, for the provision of food aid for 50,000 of the 250,000 children of pre-school age, and for 50,000 of the 450,000 children of school age. In the Kharkiv region, the number of children in créches run by the regional executive committee increased by the end of May from 10,300 to 24,500; but 27,800 remained to be placed. Special centres were established to feed undernourished children. In the Kiev region, 317,000 children were receiving food help by April 15 through feeding points, schools, hospitals and créches. But, for the same date, the Ukrainian People’s Commissar of Health reported that the number of children suffering from famine in the Kiev region had reached 262,000, and called for further food assistance. The créches in which hungry children were placed in Kharkiv region lacked food, and they had to be fed with substitutes including grasses, and illness and death resulted.

These various directives often had an air of unreality and desperation. When the widespread nature of the famine became obvious, the Ukrainian Politburo instructed the regions: ‘do not leave a single case of famine without immediate measures to localise it’, and required them to provide evidence within seven days that local resources had been mobilised to this end. Following this instruction, the Dnepropetrovsk regional party committee insisted that district authorities should ‘immediately take decisive measures so that

95 TdAGOU, 1/20/6276, 24 (OGPU report about Kharkiv region, dated June 10); 1/20/6276, 55–57 (report of Kiev MTS political sector, dated June 14).
96 TdAGOU, 1/20/6275, 51–54 (report from Chervenavsk to Postyshev, dated March 17).
97 Gudel, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 401 (early March 1933); this was the same report as that which listed cases of cannibalism in the districts of the region. For another report on the mobilisation of local resources in the region, see ibid., 459–63 (dated March 20).
98 Gudel, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 470 (dated March 27).
99 See Osokol’kov (Roslaw, 1991), 74, 78 (North Caucasus).
100 Gudel, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 397–8 (dated February 28).
101 TdAGOU, 1/20/6275, 223–225 (report of chair of regional executive committee).
102 TdAGOU, 1/20/6276, 3.
103 TdAGOU, 1/20/6276, 1–10 (dated June 3).
104 TdAGOU, 1/20/6276, 48–50 (OGPU report dated June 10, 1933).
our region does not continue to have even a single case of swelling and death from hunger of conscientious collective farmers'.

This was in February, when the disaster was just beginning. A few weeks later, the Kiev regional party committee ordered the courts and the GPU to expose those officials in village soviets and kolkhozy who failed to mobilise resources to assist the hungry, and instructed district party committees to arrange to supply every child with half a glass of milk a day. It also decided that officials who failed to hospitalise people who were in a supine state be prosecuted. But by this time the resources available were hopelessly inadequate. The number of starving peasants and their children continued to grow.

(f)ii) Movement control

The Moscow authorities imposed severe measures to restrict the flood of refugees from the famine areas into other regions. On January 22, Stalin and Molotov noted in a telegram to the key regions that 'the party central committee and Sovnarkom have been informed that in the Kuban' and Ukraine a mass movement of peasants 'for grain' has begun – to the Central Black-Earth region, the Volga, the Moscow region, the Western region and Belorusussia'. The telegram claimed that a similar movement in the previous year had been 'overlooked' by the authorities; this must not be repeated in 1933. Instead, the party and Soviet authorities in North Caucasus, and Ukraine must prevent mass departures to other regions, including movement from Ukraine to North Caucasus, and North Caucasus to Ukraine. In the regions to which the peasants were moving, such as Moscow and the Volga regions, the OGPU must arrest those coming from Ukraine and the North Caucasus, take away 'counter-revolutionary elements' and send the other peasants back.

Characteristically, the telegram attributed the peasant movement not to hunger but to an organised attempt of 'enemies of Soviet power, SRs and Polish agents to agitate in the northern areas of the

USSR "via the peasants" against the kolkhozy and more generally against Soviet power'. To cast doubt on the authenticity of the peasant refugees, the telegram even referred to them in inverted commas as 'peasants'.

As a result of this telegram, by March 13, 220,000 people had been arrested by the OGPU; 187,000 were sent back to their villages and the remainder put on trial or located temporarily in 'filter points'.

The republican and regional authorities also sought to bring the floods of hungry famine victims under control. On May 6, 1933, the Ukrainian central committee adopted a resolution on tramps and homeless children. It established a commission attached to the Ukrainian Sovnarkom with a deputy head of the Ukrainian GPU in the chair. The commission included representatives of the commissariats for health, education, labour and railways. Similar commissions were instituted at the regional level. The commission was instructed 'to adopt within the next ten days decisive measures to cleanse Kharkiv, Kiev, Odessa, Dnepropetrovsk and other towns from tramps'. The tramps were to be organised into labour battalions, which were directed obligatorily to road construction, stone breaking and to the sovkhzozy. Strict labour discipline and supervision would be imposed, to prevent 'wrecking actions', but those who worked conscientiously would be transferred to the normal labour force. Those in charge of them, who must be reliable party members, young communists or shock workers, would receive 'increased wages by reducing the wages of the members of the battalions'.

Children were dealt with less brusquely. The resolution claimed that some district party and soviet executive committees were sending homeless children to the large towns, and were failing to refute provocative rumours to the effect that the large towns were admitting children into children's homes without hindrance. Henceforth these homeless children were forbidden to travel on the railways or to be taken to the towns. Regions and districts were to organise food assistance in the villages and the kolkhozy for abandoned and orphaned children, both at school and, where necessary, after school.

RGASPI, 17/42/81, 103–105 (dated February 10, signed by Kharaevich), published in TSD, iii, 641–2.

RGASPI, 558/11/45, 109, 109a (signed personally by Stalin: Molotov's signature was missing), published in TSD, iii, 634–5. This was followed within a few days by appropriate directives in Ukraine and the North Caucasus (published in TSD, iii, 633–8).

Ivanishkii (2000), 313 (no source given).
The resolution allocated 6 million rubles, and specified amounts of flour and other food, to maintain the children. The commission, together with the education and health agencies, was instructed to try to find the parents of the children and send them back to the villages from which they came.111

During and after the famine, people from other regions were moved to the deserted villages to resume cultivation. Some of these villages were those from which peasants had been exiled for failing to complete the grain collections; in others, the whole population had died, or had moved away in search of food. Between December 1932 and April 1933, 2,300 Red Army families were settled in Pottava stanitsa in the North Caucasus, from which the population had been exiled. The stanitsa was renamed 'Red Army village' (Krasnoarmeiskoe selo). The operation was strictly controlled: 40 per cent of those settled were to be party members, and 20 per cent members of the Komsomol; the settlers were not to include soldiers who came from North Caucasus or Ukraine.112

At the end of August 1933, the Politburo and Sovnarkom began the resettlement of the villages abandoned because of the famine. They authorised the resettlement of 14,000 soldiers and junior officers in the North Caucasus, including the Kuban.113 Then, in October 1933, they decided to resettle in Ukraine 21,000 collective farmers from Ivanovo and other overpopulated regions. This was a military and police operation. Plenipotentiaries from the party central committee and from Sovnarkom were dispatched to select the collective farmers. Resettlement was supervised by the OGPU, and in the charge of a senior army officer with experience of resettlement in the North Caucasus. The groups (cheslenya) of collective farmers were in the charge of 250 OGPU staff from its transport department, each with two assistants. Mobile kitchens were set up on the trains, and food was supplied by the Military-Cooperative

Administration of Tsentrosoyuz. Once the immigrants arrived, those short of food were supplied by a Fund under Sovnarkom of Ukraine.114 Other immigrants moved to Ukrainian villages of their own accord, but Ukraine was refused permission to grant them the same privileges as the official settlers.115

(ix) Disease

Famine was accompanied by widespread sickness and disease. As soon as people in the famine areas began to eat substitutes for normal food, cases of food poisoning were reported by the GPU. In Dnepropetrovsk region, for example, 354 cases were reported by March 5, including forty-two deaths. The victims had used in their food weeds, cotton seeds, byproducts from brewing beer, and apricot and cherry stones. Children died from eating poisonous weeds within 24 hours, adults in 3–5 days. In one case, a village shoemaker died after eating meat from the corpses of his mother and brother, who had died from starvation.116 Cases of poisoning, illness and death from eating treated grain seed were also reported frequently (eating grain set aside for seed was, of course, strictly forbidden). Poisoning from eating infected horses was also frequent.117 But perhaps the most common cause of food poisoning was eating mouldy grain. In some cases, the mouldy grain could develop as full blown ergotism, and there do appear to have been some cases of that.118 In other cases, mould and mildew would result in less spectacular toxic illnesses.

All major types of disease, apart from cancer, tend to increase during famine as a result of undernourishment resulting in lower resistance to disease, and of insanitary conditions. As the famine developed, the GPU and the political authorities frequently reported the spread of infectious and other diseases. In the Central Volga

111 Golod, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 505–8.
112 See the documents from the military archives published in Romano and Tarkova, eds (1996), 468–84. The initial directive was signed by Tukhachevsky as head of the Revolutionary Military Council.
113 RGASPI, 17/3/929, art. 154/153 (Politburo resolution, adopted by poll, dated August 27); GARE, 5446/1/470, 179–180 (Sovnarkom decree, art. 1819/402s, dated August 29). On October 11, 1933, a further Politburo decision authorised the resettlement of 14,000 demobilised soldiers in the North Caucasus; these were presumably additional to those in the August resolution (RGASPI, 17/162/15, 100–101, art. 112/89).
114 RGASPI, 17/3/933, 15, 47–48 (art. 73/53, dated October 22, approved by poll); GARE, 5446/1/471, 254–266 (art. 2323, dated October 25).
115 RGASPI, 17/3/935 (art. 67/48, dated November 23, 1933, approved by poll).
116 Golod, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 408–9 (Dnepropetrovsk GPU to Ukrainian GPU). See also ibid., 405 (report by Khatatevich dated March 9).
117 See, for example, Golod, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 479–81 (report on Odessa region from information and saving group of Ukrainian party central committee, dated April 1, 1933).
region, cases of typhoid fever had already been reported in February. On March 12, Khaitaevich reported from Dneprpetrovsk region that ‘the widespread development of all kinds of diseases, and of large-scale morbidity resulting from the increase of all kinds of epidemic diseases’. In April, cases of typhus were reported from the Kiev region, and the growth of oedematous diseases generally was reported from the Khar’kiv region. In the same month, the regional party secretary in Vinnytsia region reported ‘an explosion of epidemics in the region, which we have only limited resources to deal with’. Many cases of typhus, typhoid fever, smallpox and scurvy occurred in the Urals; these were ‘to a considerable extent encouraged by undernourishment’.

In the years 1932–34, the largest rate of increase was recorded for typhus (see Table 49(a)). Typhus is spread by lice. In conditions of harvest failure and increased poverty, the number of lice is likely to increase, and the herding together of refugees at railway stations, on trains and elsewhere facilitates their spread. In 1933, the number of recorded cases was twenty times the 1929 level, which was the lowest number of cases ever recorded in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union until that year. The number of cases per head of population recorded in Ukraine in 1933 was naturally considerably higher than in the USSR as a whole (see Table 49(b)). Monthly figures for cases of typhus occurring on the railways show that Ukraine had a lower incidence than the USSR as a whole at the beginning of 1933, but by June of that year, the incidence in Ukraine had increased to nearly ten times the January level, and was higher than in the rest of the USSR taken as a whole (see Table 49(c)).

The rate of increase in other recorded disease, except smallpox, was lower than in the case of typhus (see Table 49(a) and (b)). The cholera epidemics which broke out in the summer of 1892 (see p. 403), and to a lesser extent in 1918–20, do not appear to have recurred during the 1930s.

Malaria was an exception to the general pattern. It is spread by mosquitoes. In the early 1930s, the huge decline in the number of livestock led certain kinds of mosquitoes that fed on both cattle and humans to feed more on humans. The malaria cycle takes a few years to develop, and in the Soviet Union the peak was reached in 1924, following the 1922 famine, and in 1934, following the 1932–33 famine.

Disease played a smaller role in the early 1930s than in the 1918–22 famines. The annual number of cases of typhus was about a quarter of those in 1918–22, cases of typhoid fever were less frequent, and the number of cases of relapsing fever was extremely small.

The lower incidence of disease during the 1932–33 famine seems to have been to a considerable extent a result of improved medical provision. By 1932, the number of doctors, hospital beds and other facilities serving the countryside, though still small by later standards, was much greater than in 1913, and very much greater than in the period of chaos during and after the civil war. The lower incidence of disease during the famine also resulted from exogenous factors, such as the absence of a world pandemic of cholera, and from the reduction in the uncontrolled movement of refugees.

The outbreak of epidemics was a frequent topic on the agenda of the Politburo and Sovnarkom in the months after the famine. The first item on the agenda of the Politburo session of August 1, 1933, was ‘Epidemic illnesses in the Urals’. During the following months, doctors and quinine were despatched to the areas worst affected by malaria, and the Politburo authorised the import of quinine. Throughout 1934 the Politburo adopted a number of decisions designed to prevent the spread of disease.

With respect to disease and epidemic illnesses, the 1932–33 famine thus followed the pattern of recent famines in other countries: sickness was less important than in earlier famines.

(E) CAUSES OF THE FAMINE

(i) Background

In the second half of the 1920s, the Soviet Union embarked on rapid industrialisation, enforced through the consolidation of the

109 Golod, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 19 (Konradshin).
110 Golod, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 429 (report from the Dneprpetrovsk regional party committee to the Ukrainian central committee).
111 Golod, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 465–6 (report of Kiev regional party committee, dated April 1); 487–8 (report from a district in the Khar’kiv region, also dated April 1).
112 Golod, 1932–1933 (Kiev, 1990), 491 (Chernivetski to Kosor, dated April 16).
114 See Sots. str. (1934), 426–32.
115 RGASPI, 17/3/927, 1.
116 RGASPI, 17/2/929, 26 (art. 126/105), and RGASPI, 17/162/15, 14 (both adopted on August 26, 1933); RGASPI, 17/162/15, 99 (dated October 9); GARF, 546/1/452, 158–160 (art. 2628/607a, dated December 5, 1933).
centralised planning system. In 1927, the first substantial increase in investment upset the delicate balance of the New Economic Policy – the market relationship between the state and the peasantry introduced in 1921 after the civil war. Peasants were unwilling to sell grain to the state at the prices offered; and in January 1928 the state used coercion to obtain the grain. Inflationary pressures originating primarily from the investment programme soon spread throughout the economy. To cope with them, the state reinforced price controls, and introduced rationing of food and industrial consumer goods.

The first five-year plan, approved by the party and government in the spring of 1929, sought to increase the production of food and consumer goods pan passu with the growth of capital goods. This would provide incentives for both peasants and workers. In agriculture, the increased production would enable both the peasants and the non-agricultural population to receive more food. This policy failed completely, as the example of grain illustrates (million tons):\(^{127}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1927/28</th>
<th>1928/33</th>
<th>1929/33</th>
<th>1930/33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>Actual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(from grain</td>
<td>(from grain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>budget IV)</td>
<td>budget III)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain production</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-rural grain</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.2(^{a})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remainder in country side</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>41.6(^{a})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The amount retained by the peasants for food in 1932/33 was estimated from the grain-fodder budgets at between 20 million and 25 million tons, compared to 27 million tons in 1927/28.\(^{128}\)

\(^{127}\) Sources: 1927/28 Actual and 1928/33 Plan: P'yatiletnii plan, ii, i (1929), 133. 1932/33 Actual: see p. 447.

Note: \(^{a}\) Grain collections plus sales on kolkhoz market amounted to 19.3 million tons (19.5 in grain budget III), but 4.1 million tons of this was returned to the countryside as seed and food loan, allocations to timber, peat and fisheries, and special allocations to agriculture.

\(^{128}\) The grain budgets give grain consumed for food as 18.4 million tons (budget IV), or 22.5 million tons (budget III), but this figure excludes grain sent back to the countryside from the grain collections; the allocation of food grains to the food loan, allocations to timber, peat and fisheries, and special allocations to agriculture amounted to 2.7 million tons (estimated from data in the grain allocation report for 1932/33: RGAE, 8040/8/8, 572-576, dated December 29, 1933).

The lower figure is much more plausible, as is confirmed by the data on food consumption. The grain consumption per head of the rural population declined substantially, and the consumption per head of meat and dairy products declined even more rapidly.\(^{129}\)

The state also failed to secure adequate food for the towns. The five-year plan had proposed that, as a result of the increased availability of grain, extra-rural sales would double between 1927/28 and 1932/33. The additional 10 million tons in the hands of the state would be used for export (8 million tons) and for establishing reserve stocks (2 million tons). State grain collections in 1932/33 were less than double the collections in 1927/28, but did increase by about 7 million tons. But peasants in grain-deficit areas could no longer obtain grain on the market. As a result, in 1932/33 about 3.5 million tons of the state collections were returned to the countryside as food for the peasants, fodder for the animals, and seed for the 1935 harvest; a further 1.6 million tons were exported; and about half a million tons were allocated to reserve stocks.\(^{130}\) The allocations to exports and stocks were far lower than the 8 million and 2 million tons proposed in the first five-year plan. The food grain available to feed the non-agricultural population in 1932/33 from central supplies amounted to about 8.3 million tons compared with 5 million tons in 1927/28, an increase of 66 per cent.\(^{131}\) But during this period the urban population had increased much more rapidly.

\(^{129}\) The famous table reproduced from the archives in Mosklov (1966), 136, shows average consumption per head per year by the agricultural population as follows (in kilograms):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grain in grain equivalent</th>
<th>Potatoes</th>
<th>Meat and fish</th>
<th>Butter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932 (preliminary)</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grain in grain equivalent</th>
<th>Potatoes</th>
<th>Meat and fish</th>
<th>Butter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>157</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>192</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: RGAE, 1562/3/147, 16; 1562/3/201, 8-9.

These figures do not show consumption at the height of the famine in the first six months of 1932: for this, see p. 416 and Tables 42 and 43.

\(^{130}\) Estimated from data in Table 15. The size of the allocation to stocks in 1932/33 is rather a mystery; see p. 229.

\(^{131}\) Estimated from the results for 1932/33 shown in the grain allocation budget dated December 29, 1933 (see note 128 above).
than planned. Grain per head of urban population remained the same, or may even have declined, and the consumption of meat and dairy products greatly declined.  

These are crude figures, and do not show the considerable regional disparities which we have examined elsewhere in this volume. But they show that the absolute lack of food was the background to the famine. Shortage of grain and other foods in the towns resulted in widespread malnourishment; the acute shortage of grain in the countryside resulted in widespread starvation.

(ii) Why did agricultural production decline so precipitately?

The fundamental cause of the deterioration of agriculture in 1928–33 was the unremitting state pressure on rural resources. Following the grain crisis in the winter of 1927–28, investment in industry, which already exceeded the pre-war level, approximately doubled between 1927/28 and 1930 (see vol. 3, p. 490). Simultaneously, state grain collections increased from 11 million tons after the 1927 harvest to 16 million tons after the 1929 harvest, even though the 1929 harvest was lower than the harvest of 1927.

According to the five-year plan, the urban population would increase from 26 million in 1927/28 to about 32 million in 1932/33 (Pyatletchnii plan, ii. i (1929), 159); in fact, the urban population in 1932/33 reached about 30 million (the official estimate of the urban population on January 1, 1933 was 39.7 million (Pamyat', i (1934), 427, but this assumed a figure for the total population which was far too high). The number of gainfully-employed people in the non-agricultural sector increased from 11.8 million in 1927/28 to about 20 million in 1933 (see vol. 4, p. 539).

A. Moshkov's table shows the following consumption per urban person per year (in kilograms):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grain (equivalent)</th>
<th>Potatoes</th>
<th>Meat and</th>
<th>Butter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932 (preliminary)</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Moshkov (1966), 136).

Revised figures in the TsUNKhU archives show a more unfavourable situation with grain:

<p>| | | | |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>190*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>172/160*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>169*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: * RGAB, 1562/3/148, 1–2.

RGAB, 1562/3/147, 16; 1562/3/201, 8–9.

(see vol. 1, pp. 419, 427). To obtain this increase, an elaborate system of coercion was established. The removal of grain from the countryside was a major factor in the decline in livestock, which began in 1929 and continued until 1933.

While there is no doubt that the investment plans of 1929–32 were far too ambitious, how far forced industrialisation was 'necessary' for the survival of the Soviet Union in a hostile capitalist world will always be a matter of controversy. In our opinion, rapid industrialisation, even at a more feasible pace, was bound to strain the relation between the state and the peasantry. In 1929, against the background of the tension between peasant and state, the Soviet authorities concluded that the implementation of the industrialisation programme would be impossible if agriculture was not brought under firm control. Mikoyan, who was responsible for the grain collections, declared, frankly and publicly, in June 1929: 'If grain were abundant, we would not at the present time have set ourselves the problems of kolkhoz and sovkhoz construction in such a broad way.'

Collectivisation, coupled with dekulakisation, brought agriculture under state control. But its introduction brought with it enormous difficulties. These were partly inherent in the huge operation of moving 25 million individual peasant economies into a quarter of a million socialised collective farms. The difficulties were made worse by the inability of most communists, from Stalin to the party members sent into the countryside, to understand agriculture and the peasants, and offer sensible means of coping with the transformation of the countryside. In 1930, collectivisation proceeded at a breakneck pace, and impracticable schemes were enforced for the wholesale socialisation of livestock as well as grain. Even with a good harvest, the collective farmers were not guaranteed a minimum return for their work. Although some of the Utopian policies of 1930 were soon abandoned, in both 1931 and 1932 Stalin and the Politburo overestimated the harvest and imposed collection plans based on their misjudgment. Most agricultural difficulties were not attributed to mistakes in policy, or even treated as a necessary cost of industrialisation. Instead, the machinations of kulaks and other enemies of the regime were blamed for the troubles, and the solution was sought in a firmer organisation of agriculture by the state and its agencies.

See vol. 1, p. 120.
The chaos in administration and in agriculture, and the demoralisation of many peasants, were the context in which grain production deteriorated.

The first five-year plan proposed to achieve the expansion of crop production, both by extending the sown area by 22.2 per cent and by a more intensive use of the sown area, which would increase yields by 25.4 per cent.

The plans for technical improvements which would raise yield aimed to introduce in the course of five years changes which had been introduced in Western Europe over five centuries. Some significant changes did take place. The use of artificial fertiliser supplied by industry increased; but it remained at quite a low level, and was far outweighed by the decline in the supply of manure caused by the reduction in livestock.

The one technological improvement that was more or less successful was the mass application of improved sorted seed. Within five years, the proportion of the area sown to grain which was sown with sorted seed had increased from 5 per cent to over 25 per cent, roughly as envisaged in the plans.\footnote{Pyatishchni plan, ii (1929), 337; Sel. khod. 1935 (1936), 367.} This was a remarkable achievement, resulting from a considerable effort to build special seed farms and to establish procedures to exchange seed on a mass scale. The basis for such operations had been laid down by the pre-revolutionary local authorities, and was extended in the 1920s before the onset of mass collectivisation. The subsequent developments had a firm base. But this achievement utterly failed to compensate for the agrotechnological failures.

Four groups of problems were ignored or underestimated by the political authorities, who assumed that technological improvements could easily be achieved.

\textit{(1) Over-extension of the sown area} The sustained attempt to extend the sown area was a major factor in the deterioration of agricultural technology. The five-year plan intended to achieve part of the increase in grain output through the development of sovkhozy on virgin lands; and in terms of sown area a substantial increase was achieved.\footnote{See data in Sel. khod. 1935 (1936), 715; this early virgin lands campaign is discussed in Ob, 2, 1990, 55–7 (Zelenin).} This was part of a general trend. In 1929, 1930 and 1931, in the hope of increasing grain production, the sown area was increased drastically, and fallow land reduced (see Table 5(a)). The intense pressure to increase the sown area added to the disruption of existing land arrangements brought about by the two collectivisation drives of 1930 and 1931, and by the retreat from collectivisation in the spring of 1930. Rational crop rotation disappeared in many villages and districts. In 1932, the spring-sown area was planned to increase further, but the plan was not fulfilled (see pp. 121–2). Nevertheless, the sown area in 1932 was still greater than in any previous year apart from 1931.

Ukraine was affected particularly badly by the expansion of the sown area. It already had a much lower level of uncropped arable than in all other regions of the USSR, with the exception of the highly commercial Leningrad region. According to the planning documents, the Ukrainian level of fallow was equal to 27.7 per cent of the sown area in 1927/28, and was projected to fall to 18.1 per cent in 1932/33.\footnote{Pyatishchni plan, iii (1929), 556–7.} The USSR average was 59.1 per cent, projected to fall to 41.7 per cent. An external factor considerably complicated the situation in Ukraine. Bad weather led to exceptionally large winter killings of the autumn sowings for both the 1928 and 1929 harvests, and, to compensate for these, spring sowing was considerably increased. By 1929, rational crop rotation had been seriously undermined; and the increase in the sown area in 1930 and 1931 squeezed the fallow land still further.

Throughout the USSR, the reorganisation of the land, and the expansion of the sown area, disrupted the traditional arrangements for the cultivation of the soil, but for several years they were not replaced by an improved cropping system.

It was not until the autumn of 1932 that the restoration of proper crop rotation received the strong support of the authorities (see pp. 231–4). Meanwhile, much damage had been done. Such a dramatic expansion of sown area and reduction of fallow, without improved crop rotation and the careful introduction of alternative means for rejuvenating the soil with fertilisers or manure, was bound to lead to the reduction of yields and an increased likelihood of crop diseases. By 1932, in many regions, and particularly in Ukraine, soil exhaustion and crop diseases were widespread.

\textit{(2) Decline in draught power} Another major factor leading to poor cultivation was the very considerable reduction in the ‘draught
The lack of horses carried with it other troubles. Both collective farmers and individual peasants had great difficulty in conveying the grain to the collection points. And fewer horses meant less manure and therefore poorer soil.

(4) **The poor weather**  A further major factor in the poor harvests of 1931 and 1932 was the weather. We have shown that the harvest of 1932 was probably harmed by the weather as much as the harvest in the drought year of 1931 (see pp. 119, 128).

The fluctuations in the annual level of temperature and rainfall on the territory of the USSR are greater than in major grain-producing areas elsewhere in the world. The weather pattern is highly continental, and is complicated by the frequent but irregular dry winds (sukhovet) which blow from Central Asia across the Volga region, North Caucasus and Ukraine in the growing months of late spring and early summer. Moreover, the critical insufficiency of humidity makes a large territory particularly susceptible to drought, resulting in high temperatures and low rainfall. In normal times, changes in the weather are the main cause of the large annual fluctuations in yield per hectare.

In addition to general drought factors, the weather at the time of the flowering of the grain in late May and early June seems to be critical, and in this regard the hot weather in early June 1932, followed by high rainfall, appears to have been particularly damaging.

It is often assumed that good-weather years tend to cancel out bad-weather ones, so that over a five-year period fluctuations can be ignored, but this is not the case. The weather was largely responsible for the above-average yield over the whole five years 1909–13. In 1925–29 the weather was only slightly worse than average. But in 1930–34 the weather was poorer than usual over the five years, with particularly bad conditions in 1931 and 1932. This was a factor over which the Soviet government had no immediate control. But the attitude to the weather of the political leaders and the principal planning officials compounded what was already a serious problem. Although the inevitability of fluctuations in the weather from year to year was well known, every year the Soviet government gambled on good weather – and was often unlucky. Official optimism was reinforced by the events of 1930. In 1930, the year in which collectivisation was launched, the weather – and the harvest – were particularly favourable. The good harvest in a year of turmoil undoubtedly strengthened the illusion among the political leaders that agricultural difficulties would easily be overcome.
Confronted by the poor harvest of 1932, the Soviet authorities were in great difficulty. Even before the harvest, their partial recognition of the parlous state of agriculture led in May 1932 to the introduction of the policies known as ‘neo-Nep’, including a reduction in the grain collections below the amount planned for 1931. At this time the Soviet leaders followed their usual practice of overestimating the harvest. But as early as the end of June 1932 they already conceded that it would amount to only about 75 million tons (see p. 126). This was far below the 90 million tons planned in January 1932, and still further below the five-year plan target of 106 million tons. This put the reduced collection plan of May 1932 in jeopardy. Our work has confirmed – if confirmation were needed – that the grain campaign in 1932/33 was unprecedentedly harsh and repressive. Within this dominant context, state policy was more ambiguous and confused than is generally believed. In response to pressure from the local authorities and the peasants, the Politburo reluctantly made large, though insufficient, reductions in planned collections between August 1932 and January 1933, amounting to as much as 4 million tons. Eventually, 5 million tons less than planned were collected.

The reduced collections were 4 million tons less than in the previous year, and this confronted the state with very considerable problems. The plan to increase grain stocks by nearly 3 million tons was largely abandoned. The annual export plan was reduced, though far from sufficiently. From the beginning of 1933, grain exports were curtailed drastically: in January–June 1933 far less grain was exported than in the same months in the previous three years.

In spite of these cuts in planned distribution, the amount of grain available for internal use was still substantially less in 1932/33 than in the previous year. The Politburo decided that the grain must be concentrated on the hungry towns, and ruled firmly that no allocations from the state collections would be made available to the countryside for seed, food or fodder. But, in fact, in a very large number of piecemeal Politburo decisions, nearly 2 million tons were issued for these purposes, including 330,000 tons for food (about 194,000 tons of which was for Ukraine).

In spite of the reduction in the collections, and the issue of grain to the countryside, the grain available in Ukraine, the North Caucasus

and the Volga regions was not sufficient to prevent the deaths of several million people from famine. In 1891/92 and in 1921/22 the worst consequences of the grain shortage were avoided by publicising the famine: food assistance was obtained from other parts of the country, and especially from abroad. In 1933, this escape route was closed. The Soviet press was silent about, and even denied, the existence of the famine: an appeal for foreign help was by this time unthinkable (see pp. xiii–xiv).

Our study of the famine has led us to very different conclusions from Dr Conquest’s. He holds that Stalin ‘wanted a famine’.142 That the Soviets did not want the famine to be coped with successfully,143 and that the Ukrainian famine was ‘deliberately inflicted for its own sake’.144 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.145

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. Above all, they were a consequence of the decision to industrialise this peasant country at breakneck speed.

142 Hearing (1984), 45 (seminar at American Enterprise Institute).
143 Hearing (1984), 61.
144 Conquest (1986), 96.
145 Conquest (1986), 344. In correspondence Dr Conquest has stated that it is not his opinion that ‘Stalin purposely inflicted the 1933 famine. No. What I argue is that with resulting famine imminent, he could have prevented it, but put “Soviets interest” other than feeding the starving first – thus consciously abetting it’ (September 2003).