

A Note on Demographic Data as an Indicator of the Tragedy of the Soviet Village, 1931-33 DRAFT: 12/7/2000 *

Stephen G. Wheatcroft

Perhaps one of the most revealing indicators of the nature of the tragedy of the Soviet village which has recently emerged from the Soviet archives is the wealth of demographic data providing a detailed regional and chronological indicator of the intensity of the tragedy.

Of course the registered mortality and natality data are not a perfect indicator of the tragedy. There is no such thing as a perfect indicator, and anyone who has worked on mortality and natality data related to any famine knows that the registration system generally begins to falter as society descends into famine. But the Soviet registration system was unlike most other registration systems and was far less affected by the social disruptions that were causing the famine. The technical problems of registering famine mortality were less than are commonly expected. But what was the situation regarding the political factors? Here again we need to consider the situation carefully with due regard to the precise dating of events. The level of political distortion experienced by the Soviet statistical and registration system in 1932 and 1933 was considerably less than it had been in 1929-31 when the statistical system had been incorporated into Gosplan, or than from 1934-39 when the NKVD had direct responsibility for ZAGS and the registration system and when they were actively pursuing wreckers and saboteurs in the registration system.

In 1929 Groman and many other statisticians were arrested and charged with attempting to wreck the plans by proposing low evaluations of grain production and industrial growth¹. The regular series of censuses were cancelled; TsSU stopped publishing detailed demographic data and in December TsSU was to lose its independence and to be merged with Gosplan. In September 1935 a notorious Party State decree under the signatures of Stalin and Molotov accused registration officials of being infiltrated by alien elements, kulaks, White guards and priests who were carrying out wrecking work by double recording deaths and under-reporting births². This campaign would subsequently lead to the purging of TsUNKhU in 1937 with the arrest of the Director Kraval' and many statisticians accused of wrecking the 1937 census.

But these developments were either before or after the main events of the famine. In 1932 and 1933 the atmosphere in the statistical services (or national accounting agencies as they were called at the time) was very different. This was a time of

* Intended as an appendix to Stephen G. Wheatcroft, On demographic evidence of the tragedy of the Soviet village in 1931-1933, in V.P. Danilov et al, eds. *The Tragedy of the Soviet Village: Collectivization and Dekulakization: Documents and Materials, 1927-39*, vol. 3, Konets 1930-1933, Moscow, 2001

¹ See N. Jasny, Names to be remembered, ch ref, and Menshevistskii protsess 1931 goda: Sbornik dokumentov v 2-kh knigakh, Kn. I, Moscow 1999, pp, 311-84, esp. pp. 313,325

² RGASPI, P,I 7, op.3, d.970, item 396, see also Yu, Sirka & M. Kurman, Plan, 1935, no, 21

growing statistical independence and confidence that was effectively a renaissance or reconstruction of statistical work in these years³.

The USSR and especially Ukraine were not impoverished third world countries that could not afford an effective statistical registration system. The Soviet Union had an unparalleled statistical service at this time and its level of work in Ukraine and general literacy of the Ukrainian population were of the highest level in the Soviet Union.

The reconstruction of Soviet statistical work in 1932 was the result of the establishment of a powerful new independent statistical agency- TsUNKhU under the leadership of an outspokenly independent and politically effective leader- Osinsky⁴.

Under Osinsky the policy was to reinstate the censuses, to collect more data on sensitive subjects and to guard against distortions. Nevertheless, politically embarrassing figures were still to remain secret and certain distortions, especially in operational figures were to remain.⁵ It is important to note the difference between providing a misleading picture of reality by falsifying the data, or by restricting the publication of the data, and by publishing misleading reports about the data. The main objective of the statistical service was to provide useful and accurate data for the government on how to govern and economically plan a complex social and economic structure. And for this they needed reliable data, even if these data were unpalatable, and not the kind of data that the government would publish. The easiest and most effective way of dealing with the problem of unwanted and politically embarrassing indicators was to make them secret rather than to falsify them or stop their production.

At this time (1932-3) statisticians were more likely to fall in disfavour for concealing the nature of reality from the State or for revealing state secrets to unauthorised people. There was less danger involved in producing indicators showing a dangerous situation that were kept secret. Kraval and his colleagues were arrested in 1937 primarily because they had provided the central government with inaccurate data⁶. Kurman, the head of the sector on population movements was arrested and sentenced for challenging the authority of figures cited by Stalin. Kurman had defended himself by attempting to prove that he and his colleagues had attempted to warn Kraval of what the real situation was. This did not save Kurman from the camps, but his offence was considered a lesser one than Kraval's. Kraval was shot, while Kurman was sentenced to the camps from where he survived to write record his memoirs.⁷

We now have access to many materials, apart from Kurman's memoirs, which show that internal statistical reports were providing dramatic accounts of the rising

³ See S.G.Wheatcroft & R.W.Davies, 'In the mirror of Soviet statistics', in R.W.Davies, M. Harrison, S.G.Wheatcroft, (eds.) *The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913-1945*, Cambridge, 1994.

⁴ See discussion of Osinsky and the creation of TsUNKhU in 'A Note on Soviet grain balances ..'

⁵ The general phenomena of operational distortions has been discussed in the previous appendix.

⁶ Ultimately this was the population evaluation for 1933 and 1934 which Kraval provided to the Mezhlauk commission in preparation for the 2nd FYP, and which were then cited by both Stalin and Molotov.

⁷ See A. Vishnevskii, 'Vospominaniya M.V.Kurmana', *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, vol. 34, no. 4, 1993, p. 600.

mortality that was occurring in the early 1930s. Below we will consider some of these secret evaluations, before we consider the reliability of these data, and what the justifications are for applying corrections to them. Only then will we proceed to discuss what they tell us about the scale of excess mortality and reduced natality during these years.

a) the scale of excess mortality as indicated by the basic registration data

The figures in tables 1a and 1b present the different sets of data on mortality and natality for urban and rural locations in the three main European Republics that were registered in various preliminary TSUNKhU accounts in 1934, and in subsequent more final reports in late 1934, 1935, 1936, 1939. The comparable figures for all (urban and rural) mortality for RSFSR and approximately for the USSR are also computed and compared with more recent reworkings of these data.

Table 1a. Mortality Different series of data

Table 1b. Natality. Different series of data

[\[See separate spreadsheet SGW-Note on demographic data tables1a&b\]](#)

Table 2. Rural mortality and natality , 1929-1933. Final data calculated in 1939

[\[See separate spreadsheet SGW Table 2 Rural Mortality and Natality1928-33\]](#)

The preliminary reports for RSFSR and BSSR had recorded a decline in mortality in 1933 in comparison with 1932. The preliminary report for UkSSR already listed a growth in mortality in 1933 by 0.53 million for the rural population, or by more than 100% in comparison with 1932 levels. The final reports indicated that for the rural areas of RSFSR mortality was registered to have risen by 0.7 million in the rural regions or by more than 60%. In these final reports Ukrainian mortality was registered to have risen by more than 1.1 million for rural areas or by more than 218%. Overall, excluding Soviet Centra Asia, the Transcaucasus and Kazakhstan, the three main republics of the USSR were recorded as experiencing more than 2 million more deaths in 1933 than in 1932.

The preliminary and incomplete registration reports for RSFSR recorded almost a halving in natality between 1932 and 1933 with a fall by 1.7 million. For Ukraine the preliminary registered decline was by 0.4 million or almost 60%. The more complete final figures showed that the decline in mortality had been significantly less: by 0.4 million or 15% in RSFSR, by 0.28 million or 45.4% in UkSSR and by 0.74 or 19.5% in BSSR.

A more detailed regional breakdown of the changes in registered rural mortality and natality data is provided in table 2. Monthly data for final registered mortality and natality for a number of major famine suffering regions are presented in table 3

Table 3. Monthly rural mortality and natality in RSFSR, UkSSR, Lower Volga and North Caucasus

[\[see separate spreadsheet SGW - Note on demographic data tables 3 4 & comp scholars\]](#)

What do these figures tell us about the level of excess mortality or reduced natality in these years and how reliable are these figures?

The scale of excess mortality caused by the famine is a complex question which is highly dependent upon what is accepted as 'normal' levels of mortality, and by what levels of correction are presumed to be needed for the mortality and natality figures for different years.

It is well known that the projections that TsUNKhU made concerning annual mortality and natality for the entire intercensal period 1926-37 exceeded the population growth recorded in the censuses of December 1926 and January 1937 by 8 million. This is often referred to as the 'Kurman' gap after the head of the sector of population registration statistics in 1937, who was the first demographer to identify and attempt to explain this gap⁸. There is less agreement however, as to how exactly the basic data should be adjusted to cover this gap⁹.

Several different proposals have been made as to how this gap could be covered, but all of these corrections refer to the entire area of the USSR with no distinction between rural and urban areas or geographical areas. There is a presumption that rural data on mortality and natality are far less reliable than the urban data, but since the main means of correcting the registration precludes the possibility of calculating separate urban or rural figures. The data have generally been corrected by comparing the census data with the registration data and by assuming that there was no movement in and out of the system. This assumption makes sense at the national level, where immigration and migration from the Soviet Union between 1926 and 1937 can be considered to have been negligible.¹⁰

Concerning mortality and natality in the different regions, similar problems arise in calculating regional corrections. It has normally been assumed that the data would be most incomplete in the areas worse affected, which would mean: Ukraine, Kazakhsatan, North Caucasus and Lower Volga. Such a presumption is certainly correct for a region like Kazakhsatan which initially had a fairly undeveloped registration system and where the famine did lead to a massive breakdown in the registration system, but it is not necessarily the case for a region like Ukraine, which earlier had a well developed registration system.

An investigation of the regional and monthly data for the separate rural raions of Ukraine, North Caucasus and the Volga regions do not indicate any major breakdowns¹¹. There are indeed numerous local reports of breakdowns in the

⁸ See V.V.Tsaplin, 'Statistika zhertv stalinisma v 30-gody', *Voorosy Istorii*, 1989, No.4 ,and S.G.Wheatcroft & R.W.Davies, 'Population', in R.W.Davies, M. Harrison, S.G.Wheatcroft, (eds.) *The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913-1945*, Cambridge, 1994.

⁹ This was pointed out by V.P.Danilov in 1988, and it remains true today. See V.P.Danilov, 'Diskussiya v zapadnoi presse o golode 1932-1933 gg. i "demograficheskaya katastrofa" 30-40-kh godov v SSSR', *Voprosy istorii*, 1988, no. 3, pp. 116-121.

¹⁰ The main exception to this is the migration of nomads and semi- nomads from Kazakhsatan between 1931-3 which will be considered separately below.

¹¹ Viktor Kondrashin who has carried out an extensive investigation of the data in the local ZAGS archives in the Volga pointed this out in his thesis, and Wheatcroft's investigation of Ukrainian raion data also shows this. See V.V. Kondrashin, *Golod 1932-1933 godov v derevne Povolzh'ya*. Diss..

registration system during the spring and early summer of 1933, when individual offices ran out of registration books. This would undoubtedly have effected the early 'conjunctural' figures produced at the end of each month. But the local statisticians and registration officials, who were responsible for making the detailed annual reports, were charged with correcting for these omissions, and do appear to have carried out these corrections. The claims made by Professor Conquest that there was a major breakdown in the demographic registration system, in the main areas of the USSR in these years¹² is not supported by our archival investigations. There are consequently more grounds for presuming that the available registration data (based on the final annual demographic reports) are more reliable and more indicative of real population movements than is often presumed.

Below we describe the different sets of corrections that have been proposed for these different data, and what they imply about changes in mortality and natality levels.

Kurman, (1937)

In March 1937, immediately after the preliminary results of the census had become available, it became apparent that the census was reporting a population that was about 8 million lower than the current population estimate that was being used in TsUNKhU and that had been reported to Stalin and Molotov. There were consequently two problems with the census result: 1) it showed a population figure lower than that projected in the plans; and 2) it showed a population figure lower than that which TsUNKhU had reported to Stalin and Molotov. The second problem was far more serious than the first. Kurman, the head of current population statistics in TsUNKhU was called upon to explain the discrepancy. According to Kurman the problem was the result of a whole series of errors. He explained that the internal official secret evaluation had failed to adequately account for: 2 million Kazakhs migrating to China, 1.5 million over-estimate from the 1926 census, 1 million under-estimate from the 1937 census; 1 million unregistered deaths in 1933; 1 to 1.5 million unregistered population in the NKVD system; and 1 to 1.5 million deaths not registered by ZAGS in other years.¹³ According to this estimate the level of famine mortality would be about 2.5 million registered excess mortality plus 1 million unregistered, ie. 3.5 million overall.

Lorimer, (1946)

Lorimer in America lacked access to any of the unpublished registration data. Yet he was still able to present two calculations of excess mortality in the intercensal period¹⁴ Regarding the population as whole he wrote about a deficit population of 5.5 million as a result of excess mortality. He assigned a third of this number to 1932. His second calculation concerned just those cohorts of the population that had been registered in the 1926 census. Lorimer calculated for them age specific coefficients of

kand. Ist. Nauk. M. 1991, Especially chapter 4 . For level of mortality by raion for Ukraine see RGAE, F. 1562, Op. 329, D. 18, ll. 1-16ob.

¹² According to R. Conquest death registrations ceased at the end of 1932 in famine regions. See R. Conquest, 'Obvinenie v antikommunizme lisheno osnovanii', *Voprosy Istorii* 1989, No.3, p. 187.

¹³ See V.v.Tsaplin, 'Statistika zhertv stalinisma v 30-gody', *Voprosy Istorii*, 1989, No.4 .p. 165

¹⁴ See F. Lorimer, *The Population of the Soviet Union: History and Prospects*, Geneva 1946.

life expectancy based on the data in the 1939 census.¹⁵ When compared with survival rates for normal years¹⁶ there was an excess mortality of 4.8 million.

Bekunova and Rodnoi, (1964)¹⁷

Bekunova and Rodnoi had access not only to the secret census materials of 1937 and 1939, but also to the recently completed 1960 anamnestic birth survey carried out by R. Sifman. They appear to have used the Sifman birth data to apply corrections to the birth data, and then to have adjusted the mortality data in line with the census returns and normal age mortality rates¹⁸. However, the corrections that B & R applied to the crucial 1933 registered mortality data were unaccountably lower than either the 1932 or 1934 corrections. ADK suggest that this had been done to partially mask the extent of the 1933 crisis.

Nevertheless the Bekunova and Rodnoi revised data indicated a level of excess mortality in 1933 of about 4.7-million¹⁹.

Maksudov (1989)

Maksudov also wrote before the appearance of archival information on the results of the 1937 census, on the precise age structure of the population according to the 1937 or 1939 censuses, on the unpublished registration data.²⁰

His evaluation of population losses is also based on estimates of the censuses and the registration data. He makes a number of estimations:

¹⁵ A detailed age breakdown for the 1939 census only became available in the early 1990s and so were unavailable for Lorimer, who had to use the much broader classifications of age that were published at the time.

¹⁶ See Novosel'skii and Paevskii's mortality tables. *Smernost' I prodolzhitel'nost' zhizni naseleniya SSSR 1926-27 gg. Tablitsy smertnosti*, M:L 1930.

¹⁷ There is a brief description of the calculations made by Bekunova and Rodnoi in E.M. Andreevskii, L.E. Darskii, T.L. Khar'kova, *Istoriya Naseleniya SSSR, 1920-1959gg.*, M., 1990, pp. 54-56.

¹⁸ See R. Sifman, *Dinamika rozhdaiemosti v SSSR*, M. 1974. R. Sifman had herself participated in the natality studies of the 1930s. She described her memory of these investigations in which women of different ages recalled the experience of the birth of their children. The results of these investigations were then applied on a national level.

¹⁹ A level of mortality of 6.9 million in 1933 and 4.4 million in 1932 in comparison with 3.6 million in 1927/28. See table 1a.

²⁰ The earliest work of Maksudov came out in 1975 in a volume 'XX vek' edited by R. Medvedev, and then in French in 'Pertes subies par la population de l' URSS' in *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Sovietique*, 1977, vol. XVIII (3), Juil/Sept, pp. 223-265; then in English as 'Losses suffered by the population of the USSR, 1910-1958 in R. Medvedev, ed., *Samizdat Register*, vol. 2, London, Merlin Press, 1981pp. 220-276. A reworked variant came out in New York the following year, M. Maksudov, *Potery naseleniya SSSR v 1931-38 gg.*, in *SSSR vnutrennie protivorechiya*, New York, 1982, No. 5, pp. 104-191. Maksudov also played a significant role in the preparation of a 1986 Ukrainian volume, M. Maksudov, 'Ukraine's demographic losses, 1927-1938, in R. Serbyn, V. Kravchenko, eds., *Famine in Ukraine, 1932-1933*, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1986. The last version of Maksudov's calculations were published as S. Maksudov, *Potery naseleniya SSSR v gody kollektivizatsiya, Zven'ya*, 1991, no. 1, pp. 65-110. Below we cite from this 1991 publication.

- a) To calculate the expected population in 1939 he uses the 1926 census data for the age by sex structure of the population and applies the normal (1926/27) age specific mortality rates for the separate age by sex groups. Then he compares this estimate with those who were still living at this time. This is a similar approach to that used by Lorimer. Maksudov applies the same methodology to the evaluation of the Soviet population as had done the French demographer J.N.Biraben.²¹ Whereas Lorimer's level of excess mortality for the group of population already born before the 1926 census was 4.845 million (3.544 million males and 1.301 million females), Maksudov's figures were overall 5.668 million with 3.801 million males and 1.867 million females.²² Apart from this, Maksudov proposes a probable correction of plus or minus 3 million.
- b) According to Maksudov the excess mortality of the population born after 1927 was 4.1 million (2.1 million males and 2 million females). Maksudov does not indicate how he has calculated these figures other than to say that he has applied a general mortality rate to those born in these years.
- c) Excess mortality for the whole population from 1927 to 1938 is calculated by Maksudov to be 9.8 million (5.9 million males and 3.9 million females)

The Maksudov estimates are based on the same data that was available to Lorimer in 1946. He uses basically the same methods, but reallocates the correction in a way to place greater emphasis on the famine year of 1933.

Tsaplin (1989)

The Tsaplin estimate is basically just a comment on the Kunnan estimate, with the suggestion that the 1937 data was less under-estimated than Kunnan had suggested and that the level of unregistered famine mortality was higher. Tsaplin therefore adds this additional million to the level of unregistered famine deaths which rises from 1 million to 2 million, which with the recorded famine level of mortality growth of 2.5 million results in a total famine mortality of 4.5 million. He also uses the 1960 retroactive birth data calculated by Rosa Sifman²³

Maksudov also made some proposals concerning the geography of famine by considering the fall in births in those years in different regions in as far as it could be calculated from the data on the age by sex structure of the regional population recorded in the 1959 census (ie. 25 years later and after World War 2). Of course these calculations need to be checked, but in circumstances when other sources of information were not available, it did play a positive role. According to Maksudov's calculations the level of excess mortality in Ukraine was 4.4 million, in Kazakhstan

²¹ See J.N. Biraben, 'Naissance et repartition par age a l' empire Russe et l' Union Sovietique', *Population*, 1976, vol. 3, Mars-Avril pp. 441-478.

²² S. Maksudov, *Potery naseleniya SSSR v gody kollektivizatsii*, pp. 101, 103.

²³ R. Sifman, *Dinamika rozhdemosti v SSSR*, p. 43

and Central Asia 1.3 million, in North Caucasus 1.1 million, and in other parts of the RSFSR 3 million

In its time the work of Maksudov was cited by Mace and Conquest, claiming that the famine caused more than 10 million deaths. Mace wrote that according to Maksudov's accounts, in Ukraine alone the level of deaths was more than 5-7 million.²⁴

Conquest was a little more careful than Mace in his evaluations. According to him deaths from famine in 1932-33 for the whole of the USSR was 7 million (of whom 5 million were from Ukraine, 1 million from North Caucasus, and 1 million from other regions.) But he also writes that there were also about 1 million Kazak deaths, and another 6.5 million peasants dying as a result of collectivisation. This already numbers 14.5 million peasants, of whom roughly 3.5 million died in the camps between 1930 and 1937.²⁵

Although Conquest and Mace claim to be basing their calculations on the work of Maksudov, he (Maksudov) clearly does not agree with them, making his own estimate of 9.8 million excess deaths which included deaths from famine, but also from Collectivization, prison and camps, and during the Ezhovshchina at the same time that Conquest and Mace cite this figure but excluding deaths from Camps and terror. Commentating on this evaluation of Conquest's Maksudov wrote, 'To some degree the authors are prisoners of the large numbers that have already been published in the book *The Great terror*, and their quantitative evaluations are unfortunately the weaker side of that remarkable work.'²⁶

Tsaplin (1989)

The estimates of Tsaplin²⁷ are in essence just a simple commentary on Kurman's estimates amounts to the situation that the data of the 1937 census was lower and that the level of unregistered deaths from famine were a bit higher. And then Tsaplin adds another million to unregistered deaths from famine the number of which increases from 1 to 2 million so that altogether the total level of deaths from famine was 4.5 million.

Andreev, Darskii and Kharkova, (1990)

Andreev, Darski and Kharkova, working in Goskomstat USSR were able to produce an authoritative re-evaluation of the data in 1990. They argued that imperfections in mortality registration were probably accompanied by imperfections in natality registrations and that many of the children of these unregistered births would also die, and that consequently significantly larger corrections were needed. They believe that

²⁴ J.E.F.Mace, 'Survey of Sources', R. Serbyn, B. Kravchenko, eds., *Famine in Ukraine*, p. 50

²⁵ R. Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*, London, 1986, p. 306.

²⁶ See S. Maksudov, *Potery naseleniya SSSR v gody kollektivizatsii*, p. 107, footnote 21.

²⁷ See footnote 8

famine mortality and associated reductions in birth and conceptions only occurred in 1933. They argue that the recorded decline in births before 1933 (in fact before the summer of 1933) were statistical illusions caused by poor record keeping. They tend to concentrate most of their corrections on the single year 1933 and consequently provide an estimate of over 7 million additional deaths in 1933²⁸.

Wheatcroft's criticism of Andreev, Darskii and Kharkova, (1995-2000)

At a major International Conference on Soviet Demography of the 1920s and 1930s, organized by Professor Robert Johnson and held in Toronto in 1995, Wheatcroft expressed serious doubts about the ADK methodology i) about assuming that there had been relatively little decline in mortality before 1933, and ii) about loading so much of the correction into the single year of 1933.

In 1998 ADK produced another book with figures related to the area of the RSFSR, which offered a response to these criticisms.²⁹ They again stated that they thought that famine mortality was concentrated in 1933, that extremely high corrections were required to both recorded mortality and natality, and that the recorded decline in births in 1933 did not reflect reality.

'Our calculations can be interpreted as showing that only 30% of deaths as a result of famine were registered. The general scale of under-estimation of deaths in 1933 was more than 56%.'³⁰

'The catastrophic increase in deaths did not begin anywhere [in the RSFSR excluding Kazakhstan, SGW] before the spring of 1933 we consider that the growth in deaths took place mainly in 1933 and was concentrated at this time to a much greater degree than was earlier suggested.'³¹

'The famine broke out in spring and summer of 1933; it is difficult to see how it could have effected the number of conceptions in 1932 and the number of births in 1933.'³²

With reference to the criticism of their earlier estimates they wrote:

'From our point of view we do not agree with Wheatcroft (1990 and 1995), who has expressed important arguments in favour of accepting that the reduced registration of births in 1933 was a result of a real reduction in the level of births, than the result of the unregistered death of children in their first months of life. Reduced fertility during the

²⁸ E.M. Andreev, L.E.Darskii, T.L. Kharkova, *Istoriya Nase Ieniy SSSR. 1920-1959gg.*, Moscow, Goskomstat, 1990

²⁹ E.M. Andreev, L.E.Darskii, T.L. Kharkova, *Demografichesk*

³⁰ E.M. Andreev, L.E. Darskii, T.L. Kharkova, *Demograficheskaya istoriya Rossii: 1927-1959*, Moscow 1998, p. 82

³¹ E.M. Andreev, L.E. Darskii, T.L. Kharkova, *Demograficheskaya istoriya Rossii: 1927-1959*, Moscow 1998, p. 79

³² E.M. Andreev, L.E. Darskii, T.L. Kharkova, *Demograficheskaya istoriya Rossii: 1927-1959*, Moscow 1998, p. 83-4

famine undoubtedly led to a reduction in births at the end of 1933 and mainly in 1934, but the fall in the number of registered births at the time of the peak of the famine, cannot be explained in this way, in as much as the situation 9 months before the peak of the famine would not allow us to predict such an event. It is impossible to explain why the number of realized pregnancies began to sharply decline so long before the peak in mortality, and why the number of realized pregnancies began to intensively grow directly after the fall in mortality.³³

ADK quote with approval a statement by S. Maksudov, (1987, p. 137) that the population of the USSR at this time, and especially the rural population, did not have any means of limiting childbirth and was not prepared for this.³⁴ They did admit that data are available on abortion in Moscow and Leningrad but regretted that similar data were not available for other areas.

Tables 4 and 5 presented below indicate that ADK are incorrect both in their claims that the Moscow and Leningrad data show a leap in abortions only after 1933, and in their statement that no data are available for abortions in other broader regions (including rural areas) for these years. The data show that the 1932 level of abortions in Moscow and Leningrad was more than a 100,000 larger than ADK claim, and that instead of these figures only rising in 1933, they actually fell in 1933.

Table 4. General national data on abortions in the RSFSR, UkSSR and USSR in comparison with data for Leningrad and Moscow (Number of abortions for 100 births)

Table 4: National data on abortions in RSFSR, UkSSR and USSR in comparison with data for Leningrad and Moscow

	Abortions per 100 births		RSFSR			UKSR			USSR		
	Leningrad	Moscow	Urban	Rural	All	Urban	Rural	All	Urban	Rural	All
1924	20.8	19						7.5			
1925	42.4	31						12.5	27	1	5
1926/7	86.6	55						20.1			
1929	166.7										20.5
1930	158.9	160.6									
1931	173.9	159.2									
1932	160.9	180	93.7	7.8	27.3						
				10.							
1933	167.8	217.3	130.4	5	34.6	175.1	36.1	71.3			
1934		271			23.1						
1935		221									

Sources:

³³ E.M. Andreev, L.E. Darskii, T.L. Kharkova, *Demograficheskaya istoriya Rossii: 1927-1959*, Moscow 1998, p. 84-5

³⁴ ADK, 1998, p. 84

Moscow & Leningrad see table 5
 RSFSR and UkSSR, 1932-3: RGAE, F. 1562, op. 20, d. 41, 11.
 13-14.
 UkSSR 1924-1926/7 Calculated from SA Tomilin in *Profilakticheskaya Meditsina*;
 no. 1, 1929, p. 41.
 (cited by Uralnis, Moscow 1963, p. 27) with population and birth numbers from *Stat
 pravochnik SSSR*
 1926, Moscow 1929, p. 74, 79, 81.
 RSFSR: 1934 in *Izvestiya* July 12, 1936
 USSR, 1925: A.G. Gens, *Aborty v 1925g.*, Moscow 1927, pp. 53,
 64
 USSR: 1929: N.A. Semashko, *Health Protection in the USSR*, London
 1934, p. 86

Table 5. Archival data on abortions in Moscow and Leningrad in comparison with claims of Andreev, Darskii and Kharkova

	Abortions		Births			Abortions in M & L Acc to ADK
	Moscow	Leningr	M&L	Moscow	Leningr	
1930	86,576	65,941	152,517	53,904	43,399	97,303
1931	101,154	88,594	189,748	63,556	50,949	114,505
1932	132,549	89,844	222,393	73,645	55,852	129,497
1933	135,608	78,445	214,053	62,404	46,744	109,148
1934	154,548		328,900			241,800
1935	155,000		241,800			158,000

Sources: RGAE, F. 1562, Op. 20, D.41, L.12; E.M. Andreev, L.E. Darskii, T.L. Kharkova, *Demograficheskaya Istoriya Rossii: 1927-1959*, M. 1998, p. 84, citing: A. Avdeev, A. Blum, I. Troitsskaya, 'L' avortement et la contraception en Russie et dans l' ex-URSS: histoire et present. *Dossiers et Recherches* 41. Paris, 1993, pp. 62-63.

We consequently advise against accepting uncritically the claims by the demographers ADK. We agree that some adjustments are needed to the basic data to cover the 'Kurman' gap, but we do not agree that the adjustments are as large as ADK claim, nor that they need to be so heavily based on 1933. We suggest that a higher proportion of the correction be applied to those years where we have grounds to believe that the registration data was suffering distortions, ie. 1929-1931 and 1934-6.

Of course, it is clear that the basic registration data does need some basic correction , this is understandable for any historical demographic statistics connected to a period of famine. However the level of this correction for the European part of USSR (including Ukraine) for the famine year of 1933 must be significantly lower than proposed by Andreev, Darskii and Kharkova.

For the rural population the level of registered mortality in the famine year of 1933 was about 2.3 million more than in 1932. The corresponding indicator for increased mortality for the urban population was about 0.4 million. These are huge figures even before we add 1 or 2 million unregistered deaths as was recommended by Kurman, Lorimer, Bekunova/Rudnoi, Maksudov and Wheatcroft, not to mention the 7 million

additional deaths proposed by Andreev, Darskii and Kharkova. In table 6 below we show the corresponding figures for the main regions.

Table 6: Increased mortality in the USSR, RSFSR and UkSSR in 1933 in comparison with 1932 (In million)

	Registered deaths			Unregistered deaths		All	
	Rural	Urban	All	Var. A	Var ADK	Var A	Var ADK
USSR	2.3	0.4	2.7	1.3	4.3	4	7
RSFSR	0.8	0.3	1.1	0.5	1	1.6	2.1
UkSSR	1.1	0.1	1.2	0.6	3	1.8	4.3

Sources: See table 1a. We have used the final evaluations of 1935 as being more reliable than the earlier preliminary evaluations or the data of 1939.

Note: Variant A is the minimal correction, which according to Kurman, Lorimer, Bekunova/Rodnoi, Maksudov, Wheatcroft and others is necessary to cover unregistered deaths. Variant ADK is the maximal variant according to the version of ADK.

It must be emphasised that this is only the figure for increased mortality in 1933 in comparison with 1932. And in 1932 the level of registered mortality was already significantly higher than in 1931 (In Ukraine by 150,000); and we have already suggested that unregistered mortality in these previous years, was in all probability higher than is often claimed. And therefore the level of mortality from famine in the famine years from 1931-1933 must have been somewhat higher. For Ukraine alone it must have been about 3 to 3.5 million additional deaths and for the USSR as a whole about 6- 7 million.

Although this may seem that my conclusions are in the end not that different from those of ADK, there is a significant difference. If those investigators had been right, we would be forced to accept that there were very serious distortions in the registration data for 1933 that would make it almost impossible to use them for serious analytical work. However, as has been shown above , our analysis of regional and annual data given in tables 1-3 allows us to claim that they can be used to reveal in some detail the tragedy of the Soviet village.