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Panel: Famines in the Periphery. Famine, Violence and the State in Stalin's Kazakhstan

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The history of the Kazakh famine as a history of violence¹

I. Introduction

Violence is an integral part of any famine. The dynamics of social catastrophes, such as famines, cannot be understood without analysing the role and the place of physical violence in it. This holds especially true in cases where an uncontested power is lacking and actors in all social and spatial contexts are struggling against each other. Under such conditions, the recourse to violence tends to be the only reliable way for both individuals and groups to assure their particular positions in the competition for resources, power or simply physical survival. The latter was more often than not an important stimulus for violent actions during the Kazakh famine.

This paper is an attempt to explain some of the inner dynamics of the Kazakh famine in the years between 1931 and 1934 by using the category “violence” as the main analytical tool. The story to be told in the following is neither an attempt to tell *the* history of the Kazakh famine, nor a history of its causes,² but rather about examining a variety of episodes from different places and contexts during the famine that illustrate the significance of violence in it. The main argument of this paper is the following: Violence was one of the most important driving forces for the escalation of hunger in Kazakhstan. The use and the omnipresence of violence structured the everyday life of and the communication practices between all parts of the multi-ethnic Kazakh society during the famine, including Bolshevik officials, fleeing Kazakh nomads (the so-called *otkochevniki*)³, and European peasants. Hence, the paper does not address the problem why the Kazakh famine occurred, but tries in-

¹ Research for this paper was possible due to financial support by the Fritz-Thyssen-Stiftung.

² For a discussion of the causes of the Kazakh famine, see the paper presented at this workshop by Niccoló Pianciola.

³ The term *otkochevnik*, which can be roughly translated as „ex-nomad“, derives from the Russian word for nomad (*kochevnik*).

stead to give an answer to the question how people acted during the famine and what they did to secure their survival.

The nexus between violence and famine has often been noted by scholars of Soviet collectivization and the subsequent famines. But they concentrated first and foremost on state violence as an important tool for carrying out the campaigns of requisition and collectivization. Therefore, in these accounts, violence serves mostly as a necessary “prerequisite” for famine, but not as a genuine part of it.⁴

The term violence is understood here as physical violence, thereby avoiding more unspecific concepts such as Johan Galtung's „structural violence“ that tries to explain almost every relation between individuals and groups as violent.⁵ This does not deny that contexts exist where violence is not the “other”, but a common part of communication and culture. In such contexts, i.e. spaces like borderlands, institutions like the army or extreme situations such as famines, a “cultural normalization of violence” takes place.⁶ Here, everybody knows and expects violence, and is therefore acting accordingly. The Kazakh steppe was such a context, too. Violence is a resource accessible to everybody and it is a usual strategy for solving conflicts. Heinrich Popitz has defined it as a „power action that leads to the intentional physical harm of others“⁷ The human body is the main object, the place and the instrument of violence.⁸ The question central to this text is: „how does violence happen and how does it affect those involved in it?“⁹ By focussing on the violent action itself, we do not only learn more about the modalities of violence, but also about the dynamics of famine.

The paper concentrates on local contexts, because violence has a place. The German sociologist Ulrich Bielefeld has written about the locality of violence: “Neighbourhood plays an important role in the context of local violence. It is not the place to which state structures do not gain access. Quite the opposite: Neighbourhood belongs to the structure of local violence. The social meets the state,

⁴ See for example the seminal works by Sheila Fitzpatrick: *Stalin's Peasants. Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization*. New York 1994; James Hughes: *Stalinism in a Russian Province: A Study of Collectivization and Dekulakization in Siberia*. Houndsmills 1996; N. A. Ivnickij: *Kollektivizacija i raskulachivanie (nachalo 30-ch godov)*. Moskva 1996; Lynne Viola: *Peasant Rebels under Stalin. Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance*. New York 1996; Robert Conquest: *Ernte des Todes. Stalin's Holocaust in der Ukraine 1929-1933*. Berlin 1990. A notably exception is Catherine Merridale: *Steinerne Nächte. Leiden und Sterben in Russland*. München 200.

⁵ Johan Galtung: *Strukturelle Gewalt*. Beiträge zur Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. Reinbek bei Hamburg 1975.

⁶ Trutz von Trotha: Zur Soziologie der Gewalt. *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 57 (1997), p. 34.

⁷ Heinrich Popitz: *Phänomene der Macht*. 2., exp. ed., Tübingen 1992, p. 48.

⁸ Bernhard Waldenfels: Aporien der Gewalt. In: Mihran Dabag; Antje Kapust; Bernhard Waldenfels (Ed.): *Gewalt. Strukturen, Formen, Repräsentationen*. München: Fink 2000, pp. 9–24.

⁹ Trotha, Zur Soziologie, p. 20.

social actors and state actors (who are sometimes the same person) [...] intermingle, work together and clash.¹⁰

Hunger, as a permanent experience, affects every aspect of daily life.¹¹ The hungry become obsessed with the search for food, and lose any interest in sociability.¹² In his seminal study “Man and society in calamity”, the sociologist Pitirim Sorokin has put it this way: “The tendency of all the cognitive processes to be concentrated more and more upon the calamity and the phenomena that are directly and indirectly connected with it, together with increasing insensitivity (beginning with sensation and perception) toward extraneous elements.” [...] “Our mind and all its main cognitive processes tend to be increasingly monopolized by the calamity, which tends to drive out of the field of consciousness (and even out of the sphere of subconscious activities - for instance, dreams) all topics unrelated to it.”¹³

Famines are times of fundamental competition and periods of radical individualization. The hungry become enemies to each other, fight over scarce resources, steal from each other without mercy and even kill those who are regarded as rivals. Cohesion between individuals gets lost. Social networks, clans and even family ties tend to erode.¹⁴ The overall erosion of solidarity and compassion during a famine¹⁵ means a permanent state of emergency, which affects everybody. This has partly to do with the loss of trust within the famine-stricken society. Social cohesion is based on the trust that people do not act absolutely at random, but that their actions and deeds are expectable, at least to a certain degree.¹⁶ Hunger becomes not only a problem for those who are directly affected, but also for those who command over resources, regardless how small they might be. And this is why hunger poses a serious danger for those who try to execute power and authority, because keeping up stability becomes impossible in the chaos.

¹⁰ Ulrich Bielefeld: Gewalt, Nachbarschaft und Staat. Eine Soziologie lokaler Gewalt. In: *Mittelweg* 36, 36, 5 (2004), p. 8.

¹¹ Viktor Kondryashin: *Golod 1932-1933 godov. Tragedija rossijskoj derevni*, Moskva 2008, pp. 231ff.

¹² See for example the observations made by physicians during the „Minnesota starvation experiment“ during World War II. Joseph C. Franklin; Burtrum C. Schiele; Jozef Brozek; Ancel Keys: Observations on Human Behavior in Experimental Semistarvation and Rehabilitation *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 4, 1 (1948), p. 30ff.

¹³ Pitirim A. Sorokin: *Man and society in calamity: the effects of war, revolution, famine, pestilence upon human mind, behavior, social organization and cultural life*. New York: Dutton and Comp, 1942, p. 28.

¹⁴ This phenomenon has been described by Colin M. Turnbull in his heavily discussed study on the Ik, a tribe in Uganda: Colin M. Turnbull: *Das Volk ohne Liebe. Der soziale Untergang der Ik*, Hamburg 1973.

¹⁵ See for example the observations made by Mukhamet Shayakhmetov in his memoirs on this point: Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe: The Story of a Kazakh Nomad under Stalin*, London: Stacey International, 2006, p.162f.

¹⁶ Jan Phillip Reemtsma (2002): Über den Begriff "Handlungsspielräume". In: *Mittelweg* 36, 11 (2002) p. 9.

Theoretical considerations and insights are of low value if they are not connected to the empirical material. Therefore, after a short chapter that serves as an introduction into the pretext of famine, the main part of this paper presents three different violent contexts. The chapter analyses the position of Russian peasants, the situation of the *otkochevniki* and provides an explanation for the deeds of Soviet and Party officials during the famine. In the conclusion some conceptual remarks are made on the usefulness of using the analytical tool violence for explaining the social processes occurring in famine-stricken societies under State Socialism.

II. Contexts

The early Soviet Union was a state largely built on violence. Most of the members of the Stalinist elite believed in violence as the superior governance technique. This had partly to do with their cultural and social origins: Many came from rural contexts, where violence was a common occurrence. They had experienced the Civil War with its excesses which the Bolsheviks could only win because they were the predominant violent actors.¹⁷ The lessons they had learned during the time of war communism with its merciless grain requisitions in the villages had a lasting effect on them and shaped their perceptions of how to deal with peasants and rule a reluctant society.¹⁸

The Kazakh steppe had never been a peaceful place. But beginning in 1916, the region stepped in a continuum of crisis and violence that lasted for nearly 20 years, at least until 1934, when the collectivization famine came to an end. During these years, power in the region was constantly contested and violence structured the everyday life of the population in many parts of the steppe.

After the final Russian conquest in the second half of the 19th century and the establishment of a colonial regime in Central Asia, conflicts began to erupt again with the arrival of Russian and Ukrainian settlers in the beginning of the 20th century in the Eastern parts of the steppe. Since these peasants got the best allotments and land that had belonged to the nomadic cattle-breeders, the situation became more and more conflicting.¹⁹ In 1916, the tensions became severe, and an uprising of the nomadic population against Russian rule broke out that evoked a brute answer from European peasant-settlers and the Russian Army. This war in the steppe cost the lives of tens of thousands of

¹⁷ Jörg Baberowski, Robert Kindler, Christian Teichmann: *Revolution in Russland, 1917-1921*, Erfurt 2007, p. 38.

¹⁸ Peter Holquist: Violent Russia, Deadly Marxism? Russia in the Epoch of Violence, 1905-1921 *Kritika*, 4,3 (2003) pp. 627–652; Jörg Baberowski: *Zivilisation der Gewalt. Die kulturellen Ursprünge des Stalinismus*, Berlin 2005.

¹⁹ Still the seminal work: George J. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan, 1896-1916* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1969); For conflicts between Nomads and Russian settlers, see: Constantin Graf von der Pahlen, *Im Auftrag des Zaren in Turkestan, 1908-1909* (Stuttgart: Steingrüben Verlag, 1969).

people and made many more homeless.²⁰ After the military victory of the Bolsheviks in the Civil War²¹, the steppe became a contested ground between Kazakh nomads and European peasant-settlers. The conflicts between the two groups over land and water were one of the main problems in the eastern regions of Kazakhstan. Throughout the 1920s, this was the soil for violent clashes between Kazakhs and Europeans.²² Conflicts between Kazakhs and Europeans were not only a phenomenon of the countryside, but also a common occurrence within the Party hierarchy itself.²³ During the years of collectivization and famine, these ethnically motivated conflicts on all social levels were about to play an important role.

The collectivization of the Soviet countryside was a campaign against those whom the Bolsheviks saw as enemies of their order; an attempt to destroy traditional cultures.²⁴ Those who were regarded as „kulaks“ were either shot or deported.²⁵ From the perspective of the leading Bolsheviks, any resistance to their politics was a sign of the activity of political and social enemies. They were always aware of their minority status in Soviet society, they knew about their lack of real influence on the peoples' minds and they felt the discrepancy between their own rhetoric and reality.

Among the nomads of Central Asia the communists identified the *bai*, the traditional heads of the clans and *auly*, as their main enemies: They were considered exploiters, commanding over tradition and infiltrating the Soviet institutions.²⁶ Beginning in 1928, the Bolsheviks launched a campaign to “expropriate” the wealthiest among the *bai*. This measure marked the beginning of the expropriation of livestock and grain and the forced collectivization in the steppe. Plenipotentiaries reached into nomads' *auly*, arbitrarily fixed procurement quotas and terrorized the population. The methods used during these actions included arrest, beating, rape and the shooting of peasants, or at least the threat to do so.²⁷ The nomads not only had to fulfil extremely high quotas for the cattle and meat procurements, but they furthermore had to deliver grain, which they neither possessed nor cultiv-

²⁰ Daniel Brower: Kyrgyz Nomads and Russian Pioneers. Colonization and Ethnic Conflict in the Turkestan Revolt of 1916, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 46,1 (1996), pp. 41-53.

²¹ The number of victims in the Kazakh steppes remains unclear. On the famine in Turkestan, see: Marco Buttino, Marco (1993): Politics and social conflicts during a famine. Turkestan immediately after the Revolution. In: Marco Buttino (Ed.): *In a Collapsing Empire. Underdevelopment, Ethnic Conflicts and Nationalism in the Soviet Union*. Milan 1993, S. 257–277.

²² See for example: Gosudarstvennyj Arkhiv Rossijskoj Federatsii (GARF), f. 393, op. 1a, d. 211, ll. 97-98ob.

²³ Rossijskij Gosudarstvennyj Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI), f. 17, op. 67, d. 82, l. 47. Conflicts between Kazakh communists, based on clan identities or networks were even more common. See for example: RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 87, ll. 19ff.

²⁴ Viola: *Peasant Rebels under Stalin*, p. 13ff.

²⁵ For an overview, see: Jörg Baberowski: Stalinismus "von oben": Kulakendeportationen in der Sowjetunion 1929-1933. In: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 46 (1998), pp. 572–595.

²⁶ V. Ryabokon: K voprosu o sovetizatsii aula, *Krasnyj Kazakstan* 1,1 (1926), pp. 35-62.

²⁷ See for example: Archiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazachstan (APRK), f. 719, op. 4, d. 73, ll. 23-25.

ated. Since the traditional exchange with the European peasant settlers was interrupted due to collectivization,²⁸ the nomads could not exchange cattle for grain and were forced to slaughter their livestock to avoid starvation. It was this aspect, the obligations to deliver grain and the breakdown of exchange relations that mainly contributed to the impoverishment of the Kazakh nomads.²⁹ Furthermore, the communists tried to implement the sedentarization of the nomadic population, a policy the First Secretary of the Kazakh Party organization, Fillip Goloshchekin labelled as “the way to socialism”. Even if the campaign failed to reach its ambitious goals,³⁰ it had enormous consequences for the nomads. Those who had been “sedentarized” were left in so-called “sedentarization points” (*tochki osedania*) without any means of production, livestock and food reserves.³¹

The Kazakh response to these campaigns consisted of two related reactions: flight and resistance. Beginning in 1928 all over the republic, people took their cattle and their belongings and left their home regions, moving to territories that they considered safe from Bolshevik terror.³² After the implementation of collectivisation and sedentarization, hundreds of thousands of Kazakhs fled the famine stricken regions.³³ Furthermore, during these years, an anti-Soviet movement emerged. Mounted warriors fought battles against Communists and other representatives of Soviet power. They raided towns, killed functionaries and Europeans, destroyed administrative buildings and erected the symbols of soon-to-come Muslim Khanates. In 1930-31, all over Kazakhstan, groups of hundreds and even thousands of people fled Soviet power and simultaneously fought units of the OGPU and the Red Army. In the long run, those resisting were not able to hold on against the better equipped and organized Soviet troops.³⁴

²⁸ For general accounts on relations between nomads and sedentary people, see: Anatoly M. Khazanov: *Nomads and the Outside World*, Madison 1994. On Kazakhstan, see: Rebecca W. Wendelken: *Russian Immigration and its Effects on the Kazak Steppes, 1552-1965*, in: Andrew Bell-Fialkoff (Ed.): *The Role of Migration in the History of the Eurasian Steppe. Sedentary Civilization vs. „Barbarian“ Nomads*, Basingstoke 2000, pp. 71-97.

²⁹ Niccolò Pianciola: *The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931-1933*, in: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3/4, 25 (2001), pp. 237-251, p. 244; Z. B. Abylkhozhin, M. K. Kozybaev: *Kazakhstanskaya tragediya*, in: *Voprosy Istorii* 7 (1989), pp. 53-71.

³⁰ For a detailed discussion of the problems occurring during this campaign, see the Stenogramm of the first meeting of sedentarization workers in December 1930, Central'nyj Gosudarstvennyj Archiv Respubliki Kazachstan (CGARK) f. 1179, op. 1, d. 3, l. 56. For the situation at a sedentarization point, see: M. K. Kozybaev (Ed.): *Nasil'stvennaja kollektivizacija i golod v Kazachstane v 1931-33 gg. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*. Almaty 1998, pp. 88-91.

³¹ Niccolò Pianciola: *Famine in the Steppe. The collectivisation of agriculture and the Kazakh herdsmen, 1928-1934*, in: *Caheirs du Monde russe*, 45,1-2 (2004), p. 156ff.

³² Isabelle Ohayon: *La sédentarisation des Kazakhs dans l'URRS de Staline. Collectivisation et changement social (1928-1945)*. Paris 2006, pp.236ff.; M. P. Malysheva, V. S. Poznanskij: *Kazakhi - bezhency ot goloda v zapadnoj Sibiri (1931-1934g.g.)*. Almaty 1999.

³³ See for example: Kozybaev, *Nasil'stvennaja kollektivizacija*, pp.105-107.

³⁴ Turganbek Allanijazov: *Shetskaja tragedija (Iz istorii antisovetskich vooruz^ennyh vystuplenij v Central'nom Kazachstane v 1930-31gg.)*. Almaty 2000; Turganbek Allanijazov: *Krasnye Karakumy. Oчерki istorii bor`by s anti-sovetskim povstancheskim dvizheniem v Turkmenistane (mart-oktjabr' 1931 goda)*, Almaty 2006. For an example, see: RGASPI, f. 62, op. 2, d. 2203, ll.124-125.

Taken together, all these factors constituted the context and the setting in which the Kazakh society faced the famine. Neither the procurement campaigns nor local attempts to “settle down” nomads were stopped as the disastrous results of these politics became obvious. At least until autumn 1932, the Bolsheviks tried to extract as much as possible from the population with no regard to the consequences.³⁵ The famine in Kazakhstan cost the lives of approximately 1.5 million people, furthermore hundreds of thousands fled the famine-stricken republic. Kazakhstan's principal economic basis, livestock, was almost completely destroyed during these years. Between 1928 and 1933, more than 90% of all kinds of livestock were lost. Numbers in nomadic regions were even higher.³⁶

III. Understanding Violence

Violent actions deserve explanations. People do not use physical violence without reason. Under certain conditions and in certain contexts, it makes sense to them to resort to it. Furthermore, a number of factors exist that make it easier for offenders to use violence. For analytical reasons is it not important if others can accept or tolerate the logic behind the violent action. But it is important to explain and to understand it. This chapter is an attempt to do so.

a) PEASANTS

In August 1932, an alarming letter reached Stalin and other members of the Politburo. Its author, F. Aronshtam, wrote that in Kazakhstan exists “a badly hidden hatred against Kazakhs; my assertion is supported due to a number of [...] cases of purely zoological hate for the Kazakhs, cases of groundless murders of Kazakhs by Russians.” He continued: “The Krajkom Secretary comrade Kuramysov told me in one of our conversations that in one of the districts in the region of Karaganda, based on widely circulated rumours that the Kazakhs allegedly kill Russians, some *kolchozniki* killed, so to say, in advance (*advansom*) a Kazakh they had met in the Steppe.”³⁷ Aronshtam's observations revealed an important point: The famine was the heyday of ethnic conflict and ethnic-coined (s.o.) violence in Kazakhstan. Numerous reports bemoaned the wide spreading of “Great Power chauvin-

³⁵ On September 17th, 1932 the Politburo decided to help Kazakhstan with grain and voted for a significant extension of private ownership on cattle in the Republic. The decree is reproduced in: V. Danilov et al. (Ed.), *Tragediya sovetskoi derevni. Kollektivizatsiya i raskulachivanie. Dokumenty i materialy v 5 tomakh. 1927-1939, t. 3, 1930-1933* (Moskva: Rosspen, 2001): 483ff. Furthermore, the First Secretary of the Kazakh Party organization, F. I. Goloshchekin, lost his office and L. Mirzoyan took over in February 1933. See: RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 914, l.9.

³⁶ GARF f. 6985, op. 1, d. 6, l. 223. For a discussion of the economic effects of collectivization and famine, see: R. W. Davies, Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933*, London, 2004, pp. 321ff.

³⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 80, l. 84f.

ism” among the Russian population. Kazakhs were expelled from enterprises and state farms and had to fend on their own. Under the conditions of rampant famine, this was more often than not the death sentence for them.³⁸

From the perspective of the Russian peasants, violence against the Kazakhs was justified: The hungry *otkochevniki* stole grain from their plots.³⁹ According to Aronshtam, for those regions where the *otkochevniki* arrived, they constituted “a kind of locust, who eat everything. There is theft of crops, cattle theft and pilfering.”⁴⁰ The OGPU, prosecutors and the militia revealed hundreds of facts of insult, beating and murder.

A special OGPU report from March 1933 described one of those cases in great detail. In mid-1932, the report stated, the peasant Fedor Kochan became the Soviet chairman in the village of Chryashevka in Atbasarsk district. In the village predominantly populated with Russians lived a Kazakh minority. There may have been conflicts between the two groups before, but after Kolchan had taken over office, things got worse. According to the OGPU, he formed with local Russians a circle of men against the Kazakhs. The members were bound to each other by oath. Using the growing number of stolen cattle as an excuse, they began to catch and torture Kazakhs in a barn. Theft of livestock by Kazakhs had been a serious problem for Russian peasants for a long time; but under the conditions of famine and collective farms, a horse, a cow or even a sheep was not only of high value to its owner, but served as life insurance. A certain Kilienko, who was a witness to these events, said: “On the ground of allegedly stealing in the collective farm, Kochan arrested Kazakhs, sat them in the barn and killed them in an act of vigilante justice (*samosudom*), spreading rumours about their departure to the militia in Atbasarsk.” The barn's owner declared: “Approximately in June 1932 they sat three Kazakhs in my barn for the first time, allegedly for stealing cattle. Another three times thereafter, they brought three or four Kazakhs, maybe more. I do not know, because they did not admit me [into the barn, R.K.]. They killed all the arrested Kazakhs, but where they put them in the morning, I do not know.” One of the culprits described which methods had been used: “We beat them with sticks and fists, but Yashnyi [a peasant, R.K.] beat them on the breast with a ten-pound weight. Thereafter we tied their hands and legs with a rope, pulled them upwards and threw them on a rock, which had been prepared before. How to kill and sit them on the rock; this was lead by Yashnyj ... Having committed vigilante justice, we lay them in the barn and went home. We took them away in the evening [...] I went to the herd, took a horse, hid away with Babenko

³⁸ APRK f. 141, op. 1, d. 6017, l. 26.

³⁹ GARF f. 1235, op. 141, d. 1371, l. 269

⁴⁰ RGASPI f. 17, op. 120. d. 80, l. 88.

[another peasant, R.K.] and according to Kochan's order, brought them to the lake, where we left them. From the killed, I took for myself boots, a shirt and trousers and Babenko took boots and other things. As well as these two Kazakhs, seven or more other people were arrested, who Kochan also sat in the barn, but where they got I do not know, I assume that they were also killed by him.” The main defendant, Kochan, admitted that he had taken part in the killing of two Kazakhs, but that he was not involved in any other incident.

There are some aspects in this story worth considering: The whole village knew about the things going on with the “cattle thieves”. The acting personnel consisted of several men under the leadership of the local representative of Soviet power. Since their victims were mostly locals, they well might have known them. But this did not hinder them from torturing and killing them. Chryashevka became famous in the district for being a place to get rid of Kazakhs. Peasants brought suspicious Kazakhs they had caught in the steppe to the village. In at least one case, Kochan accused them: “Why do you bring them here, you should have cleared them on the spot, this is the whole inquiry and trial.” The methods used by the peasants showed them as being brute and competent. As the OGPU stated “there were many beaten Kazakhs, whom they beat thereby the beat them that way, that it was unlikely that any among them would stay alive or healthy. Kochan taught them to beat subtly and skilfully. In most cases they beat them on the back and on the breast, so that blows were not visible.”⁴¹

The brute violence used by the peasants transported several messages. It was a clear signal to the Kazakhs that they were no longer willing to accept them. Furthermore, by dispensing acts of *samosud* conducting self justice, the peasants signalled their deep distrust in Soviet institutions and structures. In their view, they were not able to take care of their needs and wishes in an appropriate and satisfying way . Experience had taught them not to trust the Soviet state, which, from their perspective, had given advantage to the Kazakhs for more than ten years.⁴² But violence not only transports a message to victims and audiences, but has a meaning for the offenders: Violence, conducted by several people, creates communities. The violent action binds them together, and every repetition further strengthens this bond . In some contexts, the jointly enacted violence even becomes the very purpose of community.⁴³ This was certainly true for Kochan's group, which was solely based on violence.

⁴¹ For the OGPU report, see: APRK f. 719, op. 4, d. 667, l. 63-68.

⁴² For conflicts between Russians and Kazakhs, see for example: GARF f.1235, op.121, d.240.

⁴³ Felix Schnell: Der Sinn der Gewalt. Der Ataman Volyneec und der Dauerpogrom von Gajsin im Russischen Bürgerkrieg (1919), in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, Online-Ausgabe, 5,1 (2008), <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Schnell-1-2008> Last Visit: 26.02.2009.

It was not only the peasant population that acted against the Kazakhs, but Soviet and Party officials on the local and regional level joined and often lead these actions. In the district of Taldy-Kurgan, a group of ten people, lead by a member of the district party committee and consisting of local communists, Komsomol members and militia men (all of them Russians), was searching for a band of Kazakh cattle thieves. Since they could not find them, they invaded a nearby Kazakh *aul* and “carried out a regular pogrom.” They cried “beat the Kazakhs”, shot in the air and beat the inhabitants and pilfered their yurts. As the OGPU arrested them, other members of the local party cell tried to free them.⁴⁴

b) ОТКОЧЕВНИКИ

The famine in the steppe forced the nomads to flee their home regions. In the years from 1931 to 1933, hundreds of thousands of people went to other regions inside Kazakhstan, to neighbouring Soviet republics and abroad, mainly to China.⁴⁵ Most among these so-called *otkochevniki* did not command over any resources or food, and since their cattle had been either confiscated or slaughtered, they had no means of subsistence. They were totally dependent on external help, begging or theft.

Many among them moved to the cities and train stations (a common survival strategy of the rural population in any famine). They brought with them not only diseases and poverty, but also the desperate violence of those at the brink of death. State farms, the building sites of the Five Year plan, enterprises and factories; all these places were also flooded with Kazakhs, who looked for work or at least for shelter. Two reasons were responsible for this situation: Firstly, the ambitious sedentarization program foresaw the inclusion of significant parts of the Kazakh population in the industrial production process, in order to “forge the Kazakh proletariat”.⁴⁶ Secondly, the refugees moved in great numbers to these places.

In February 1932, authorities estimated that more than 300.000 Kazakh households, approximately 23% of the total population, had left their home regions.⁴⁷ One year later, reportedly 114.000 households, or 450.000 people, were roaming through Kazakhstan, searching for food and shelter. These

⁴⁴ RGASPI f. 17, op. 120, d. 80, l. 84ob.

⁴⁵ O. V. Zhandabekova (Ed.), *Pod grifom sekretnost: Otkochevki kazakhov v Kitaj v period kollektivizacii, reemigracii, 1928-1957gg. Sbornik dokumentov* (Ust'-Kamenogorsk: Gosarchiv Vostochno-Kazakhstanskoj oblasti, 1998).

⁴⁶ For other attempts to transform nomads into proletarians, see: Matthew Payne: *The Forge of the Kazakh Proletariat? The Turksib, Nativization, and Industrialization during Stalin's First Five-Year Plan*. In: Ronald G. Suny; Terry Martin (Ed.): *A State of Nations. Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. Oxford 2001, pp. 223–252. On (plan) numbers, see: GARF f. 5446, op. 13, d. 2451, l. 22.

⁴⁷ GARF f. 5446, op. 13a, d. 1280, l.6.

numbers did not include those who had left the republic and they were far from being exact, since the statistical system on the regional and local level was not able to deal with the permanently moving population. Out of these, more than 75.000 people were stranded at train stations, most of them starved and in urgent need of food and medical help.⁴⁸

The figure of the refugee poses several threats: He is the herald of harm, whose presence points to the decay that may break into one's own life. His appearance transmits the signals of danger of disease and contagions. Finally, he represents a threat to property and life. Those who are confronted with refugees do everything to get rid of them or at least to exclude them as far away as possible from their surroundings. Therefore, the refugee is also a threatened figure: Everybody can offend against him almost without sanctions. The refugee has lost the right to be treated as an individual. The single human exists only as part of an undifferentiated perceived mass.⁴⁹

Permanent and extreme hunger affects the body in several ways. People lose weight and look like skeletons. Their skin is grey, dry and without elasticity. The signs that characterize the differences between the ages are not longer recognizable. Hair and nails do not grow, wounds do not heal, but fester constantly. The hungry move slowly and bowed, because their muscles are atrophied. Many among them have large oedemas on their faces and legs. They suffer from heavy and uninterrupted diarrhoea.⁵⁰ Furthermore, they become totally apathetic, lose any interest in their surrounding and stop communicating.⁵¹

Of course, not every famine victim experiences all of these symptoms, and not everybody is affected by them in the same way. But taken as a whole, the famine-stricken population is seriously sick and apathetic, people stink and lose the outer signs of their personality. Those spots where hundreds and thousands of these people camped and vegetated became places of the dehumanisation of the individual. The single person was no longer recognizable for outsiders, he was now part of a mass that evoked only aversion and disgust. The symptoms of dystrophy marked them as creatures

⁴⁸ GARF f. 5446, op. 14a, d. 409, l. 37.

⁴⁹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Moderne und Ambivalenz: Das Ende der Eindeutigkeit* (Frankfurt/M., 1995, pp. 73ff.; Zygmunt Bauman, *Verworfenes Leben: Die Ausgegrenzten der Moderne*, (Bonn, 2005, pp.107ff.

⁵⁰ This description is based on observations, made by physicians among concentration camp inmates immediately after World War II. See: Per Helweg-Larsen; Henryk Hoffmeyer et al.: Die Hungerkrankheit in den deutschen Konzentrationslagern. In: Max Michel (Ed.): *Gesundheitsschäden durch Verfolgung und Gefangenschaft und ihre Spätfolgen. Gesundheitliche Folgen von Gefangenschaft, Deportation, Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslagern; von Hunger, Furcht, Übermüdung, Bedrohung und Zwangsarbeit; vom Leben in der Gefahr und vom Leben in der Illegalität; von seelischer und körperlicher Überlastung, psychischem Druck, Katastrophenwirkung und Verzweiflung*. Frankfurt am Main, 1955, p. 170.

⁵¹ Franklin, *Observations on Human Behavior in Experimental Semistarvation*, pp.30ff.

that once had belonged to the human world. But now they were something different: beings without personality. And as such they were treated.

Local administrations did not particularly care about the situation at those places where the enfeebled had stranded; their main goal was always to get rid of the refugees as soon as possible.⁵² If it proved to be impossible to send the hungry away, they tried to isolate them. Conditions in these camps were terrible almost everywhere. The barracks (if they existed at all) were overcrowded and filthy. Those inmates who were still barely alive lay among human excrements and corpses. Sufficient food supplies were lacking, nobody took care of the ill, and each day, many among the exhausted died from hunger and diseases.⁵³

In March 1933, authorities in Karaganda “cleaned” the city from the *otkochevniki*. Most of them were forced to move back to their home regions, but some 100 families were settled in two houses in a village nearby. After some time, the responsible district committee decided to withhold any further food supply, the officials left the village to return to Karaganda, and the *otkochevniki* had to fend for themselves. In the result, several people died from hunger and exhaustion. Others fell victim to cannibalism.⁵⁴ In the city of Semipalatinsk, in the eastern part of the republic, the local committee of the Bolshevik party established at the outskirts a barrack for *otkochevniki* and other “elements”. An inspector for the state Health Administration, reported that mortality rates among the inhabitants were extremely high because of unhygienic living conditions, filth and a lack of nourishment. It even proved impossible to register the causes of death.⁵⁵ In the city of Turkestan in the south of Kazakhstan, the refugees were squeezed into some empty houses on the edge of town. These lodgings had neither windows nor doors, food supplies were extremely bad and mortality among the inhabitants was high. These conditions were no secret to local cadres, but as stated in a report about the situation: “until recently the prevailing opinion was that they need not take care of the *otkochevniki*, but rather [to think] of how to get rid of them as quickly as possible.”⁵⁶

It was not only the dehumanising effect hunger had on the bodies of the *otkochevniki*, but also their behaviour which made violence against them easier. In April 1933, authorities in the city of Akmolinsk allowed the opening of a local *kolkhoz* market. A few days later, the local newspaper “Akmolinskij udarnik” published the following anonymous “letter to the editor”: “The Red market begins, which can be called red only, because red blood pours there daily. *Otkochevniki* steal in groups or

⁵² Tsentralnyj Gosudarstvennyj Arkhiv Respublik Kazakhstan (TsGARK), f. 1179, op. 5, d. 7, l.25.

⁵³ GARF f. 6985, op. 1, d. 41, ll.74-75.

⁵⁴ APRK f. 719, op. 4, d. 675, ll.2-3.

⁵⁵ TsGARK f. 44, op. 14, d. 871, ll. 36-37.

⁵⁶ TsGARK f. 1179, op.5, d. 7, l. 26-27.

alone from the hands of the vendors and from the buyers' products; of course, they beat the victims (the thieves, R.K.) bloody, beat them half dead and sometimes to death." The OGPU took immediate action and confiscated this issue of the paper.⁵⁷ But the fact could not be hidden that Akmolinsk, as any other Kazakh city was flooded with hungry *otkochevniki*. Because of the inability of local authorities to provide for the *otkochevniki*, in many places public order was collapsing.⁵⁸ The public sphere became extremely dangerous. The hungry not only stole from bazaars and stores, but attacked passers-by in public. For example, in Karaganda, several of them formed gangs to commit organized raids.⁵⁹ Tradesmen and consumers lynched the thieving Kazakhs, the hungry initiated bloody brawls over a piece of bread in the streets⁶⁰, and the danger of an outbreak of disease was growing due to the unburied corpses. The authorities largely lost control in the cities that became places of anomic violence in the face of the growing number of refugees.

Violence was omnipresent and not only directed against the starving, but also used by them to secure their survival or to satisfy material needs. Besides the threat of falling victim to thieves, people feared cannibalism, which was widespread during the famine. As in other famine situations, a certain part of the hungry population ate human flesh in order to survive. Sometimes the desperate took only parts of corpses, but in many cases, they killed people in order to eat them: "In the night to March 4th [1933, R.K.], an unknown Kazakh woman with two children, 6 and 8 years old, came through the *aul* Karamunij, in Taldy-Kurgansk district. She asked to spend the night in the house of Tojgembayev [a local, R.K.]; the latter, with a group of six people, killed her and her children at night. The hearts and the lungs were cooked and eaten at night, and the remaining flesh (*mjaso*) was put away, which was found on March 4th. [...] On March 13th in the village of Gulyayevko a murdered man was found [...], a 30-year old Kazakh, the chest had been opened and the heart and kidneys cut out. A man and a woman from *aul* Nr. 21 have been arrested in relation to this case; their hands up to the elbows were full of blood, but it was impossible to interrogate them, since they were both extremely emaciated."⁶¹

Cannibalism is potentially directed against everybody, there is no way to detect the "cannibal" in advance. It is an omnipresent threat. But even more important is something else: Cannibalism is more than just injuring or exhibiting the dead body as a symbolic humiliation. Those who eat human flesh (and kill people in order to do so), violate a taboo, which is fundamental to human culture

⁵⁷ APRK f. 719, op. 4, d. 719, l. 279.

⁵⁸ S. Abdirajmov (Ed.), *Golod v kazachskoj stepi (Pis'ma trevogi i boli)* (Almaty: Kazak Univerziteti, 1991), 117-19.

⁵⁹ APRK f. 141, op. 1, d. 5774, l. 9.

⁶⁰ RGASPI f. 82, op. 2, d. 148, l. 192.

⁶¹ APRK f. 719, op. 4, d. 673, l. 19.

and society. In almost every culture, this taboo marks the red line between the world of the “human” and the “animal”. To cross it means the final exclusion from the community. This is why people react with extreme anger if cannibals get caught: In March 1933 in the district of Turkestansk in South Kazakhstan, locals caught a group of six people who had tried to survive by cutting off pieces from corpses they had found lying in the steppe. They arrested them in a cold hut and closed the doors. One of the arrested died and the others were on the brink of death.⁶²

c) SOVIET OFFICIALS

In a report to authorities in Alma-Ata, a shocked communist wrote about systematic maltreatment towards the *otkochevniki* in a state farm in Karatalsk district. All leading officials took part in the beating of the Kazakh workers who were forced to live under the open sky under terrible conditions.⁶³ As a group of refugees arrived at this farm, the director, a certain Druz, assigned them a place for living far away from their workplaces, “so that the air on the road will not be polluted by the awful stench of these people.” At this spot no drinking water was available, only a salt lake. More than hundred people died from drinking this water. Some officials on the regional level tried to bring this man to trial, but failed, since Druz had made friends among high-ranking Bolsheviks in the region.⁶⁴ Druz' behaviour was not unusual. With his attitude, he could rather serve as the ideal type of a *sovkhos* chairman or manager of a large enterprise all over Kazakhstan during the famine. His colleague from the *sovkhos* of Altyn-Emel was so busy that he did not find the time to deal with a horrible object that was found on his territory: the cut-off head of a Kazakh man. As why he did not pay attention to this occurrence, he answered: “You know, I am so busy, right up to the neck, that it did not come to this.”⁶⁵ At a construction site of a sugar factory in Merkenski district, cadres deported those who camped in growing numbers around the factory canteens. They placed a bucket with leftovers on a truck; as soon as the hungry had boarded the truck, the driver sped off, then abandoning the people in a faraway and deserted area. “There have been several of those trips. What happened to the abandoned people could not be established yet”, the report about this incident concluded.⁶⁶

Why did the destiny of the starving *otkochevniki* not evoke compassion and solidarity among those who were (at least theoretically) able to help them? The maltreatment of the helpless cannot be

⁶² APRK f. 719, op. 4, d. 719, l.115.

⁶³ GARF f. 6985, op. 1, d. 27, l. 144-145.

⁶⁴ APRK f. 141, op. 1, d. 6403, l. 255.

⁶⁵ RGASPI f. 17, op. 120, d. 80, l. 85.

⁶⁶ APRK f. 141, op. 1, d. 6017, l. 26.

solely explained in terms of ethnicity or ethnic conflicts. Many among the officials who conducted such actions were Kazakhs themselves, and Russians were among the victims. Soviet sources used to blame the “bureaucratic attitude” of officials and authorities who did not care about the emerging situations. Comrades in leading positions did not feel responsible, others did not have the power to resolve the problems and some did not care at all. Feeding the exhausted was not a priority for them, and they knew that they would be measured by their successes in other political fields. Seen from their perspective, the delivery of scarce food resources to the starving would have been irrational. It furthermore seemed irrational to use the few remaining horses and camels for this purpose. Yet to explain the deeds of officials only within the logic of the Soviet system, means providing an explanation that is unsatisfactory. Violence cannot be understood if we do not touch some issues that are more fundamental than political systems or economically determined reasons. I argue that there are at least four aspects which must be included in an analysis of such violent practices as described above. These include aspects already mentioned, such as the threatening figure of the refugee and the dehumanising effect of permanent hunger, but also the problem of compassion with those who suffer from pain and hunger, and finally the fact that people get accustomed to the existence of starving individuals. Taken together, these factors made it easier for officials and populations to remain indifferent, and they might help us to understand the logic of famine better.

Hunger, as an injury, hurts. But the pain and the suffering an individual experiences, cannot be communicated. The sight of people who suffer from violence or hunger or to talk to them is not enough to understand them. The experience of pain isolates them from others. Telling them about one's own suffering is impossible. This is the reason why the suffering victim of violence does not evoke compassion in others, but leaves them indifferent.⁶⁷ In addition to the impossibility to understand the victim's pain, people get used to the view of the hungry and the dead. If the disaster is omnipresent it loses its sensational character. As nobody cared about the corpses of starved women in the very centre of Semipalatinsk⁶⁸, officials found nothing special about the terrible situation in the barracks in Chu. Indifference was further intensified by the behaviour and the appearance of the barracks inmates that were both so different from the norms that it was easy to ignore their needs.

As long as no authorities from outside reached their realms and controlled their actions, officials at the local and district level were in a position of almost absolute power. It was a common practice among them to establish strong ties among each other, in order to protect and to secure the positions

⁶⁷ Trotha, *Zur Soziologie der Gewalt*, pp. 29f.

⁶⁸ RGASPI f. 82, op. 2, d. 148, ll.192ff.

of their particular groups. Methods included binge drinking, the sharing of women and prostitutes, the reallocation of food and other material resources⁶⁹ and last but not least jointly committed violence. These practices also included acts of sexual violence. In most cases, these groups not only consisted of local cadres, but included (at least to a certain degree) friends, relatives and acquaintances from outside the apparatus. A typical example was a group of “responsible workers”, all ethnic Kazakhs, in the *aul* of Akir-Tjubinsk in the south of Kazakhstan. A special OGPU report from August 1933 described their deeds: They “were engaged in systematic beatings of the *kolkhozniki*. Hard beatings were the only methods of influence on the *kolkhoz* masses. They beat for not going to work, for the attempt to pilfer *masak*, and sometimes being drunk – without any reason.” For example, a brigadier was beaten for “the lack of discipline in his brigade.” Some women from the collective farm, who were collecting grain in the fields, were beaten [...] thereafter they brought thistles and forced them to sit on these (the secretary of the *aul* soviet, Isakulov, straightened the thistles so that they “reached the destination”). After the beating they forced them to work, though they [the women, R.K.] were not able to work for several days.” Since the offenders were all Kazakh, they had intimate knowledge of Kazakh customs and the symbolic meaning of certain deeds. Therefore, as seven women did not follow the working discipline, one of the local officials cut their braids, which according to Kazakh custom was the strongest insult against a woman's dignity.⁷⁰

To commit violence means to execute power, which is almost absolute during the violent act. This feeling of power is strongly connected to excitement and arousal and extremely satisfying. The violent action serves as a reassurance of one's power. This is the reason why violent actors do not stop their deeds, even if their victims have stopped or never showed any sign of resistance in the first place. Offenders like the officials from Akir-Tjubinsk could feel omnipotent by resorting to violence. They received pleasure from the assaults on women and the beating of helpless Kazakhs. The only problem they had to solve was how to remain undiscovered by authorities.

Officials in Yany-Kurgansk district found a solution for this problem by using a double strategy that was common to many cases: threat and integration. The Bolsheviks in the district administration were notorious for their binge drinking, feared by the local population for their violent and rude behaviour and had a bad standing due to the unsatisfactory fulfilment of the plan. As a plenipotentiary from the *oblast'* came to the district and began to ask local peasants about the situation, the suspected “persuaded the *kolkhozniki* to refuse from testimony, and promised them grain for this. The

⁶⁹ See for example: APRK f. 719, op. 4, d. 675, ll. 49-53.

⁷⁰ APRK f. 719, op. 4, d. 675, ll. 69-71.

kolkhoz chairman said to those who did not agree to do so: 'Whoever among you considers accusing us will no longer live in Yany-Kurgansk; whoever he may be. If you don't want to be dead – keep your mouths shut'" Furthermore, the district officials had established good connections to the regional prosecutors, to whom they delivered meat and grain from their stocks, thereby compromising them.⁷¹

VI. Conclusion – Violence, a useful approach to study famine?

In this paper, I have argued that violence was the main driving force in social relations during the Kazakh famine. By looking at stories of violent behaviour by different actors in different contexts, a picture emerges that supports this view. But does the sole concentration on violence not distort our understanding of the overall situation? What about solidarity, self-sacrifice for others, “human” gestures like giving a piece of bread to the hungry or at least the desire to inform authorities about a situation they allegedly did not know about? Pitirim Sorokin has warned that "those who observe only the negative - the demoralizing and desocialising effects of hunger in the behaviour of the minority - grossly exaggerate the power of this factor [...]"⁷² In a certain way, Sorokin was right. People did indeed feel sorry for the hungry, they were shocked when they were confronted with the tragic situation in the steppe, at the train stations or in the towns. And of course, some of them did help. For example, Mukhamet Shayakhmetov remembered in his memoirs the strong sense of solidarity within his family, the endless help and compassion for each other.⁷³ Many among the begging *otkochevniki* would not have survived if passers-by hadn't helped them with food or money. Ordinary people, Russians and Kazakhs alike, wrote letters to authorities to inform them of the catastrophe, thereby claiming that immediate help was needed.⁷⁴ Others, like the Russian teenager Tatyana Nevadovskaya found other ways to deal with the situation: she wrote poems about the famine, thereby expressing her compassion for the Kazakhs.⁷⁵ And many among the representatives of Soviet institutions, delegated to Kazakhstan in the beginning of the 1930s, were shocked when they found out about the omnipresence of violence and hunger.⁷⁶ Moscow workers, who had been deleg-

⁷¹ APRK f. 719, op. 4, d. 675, ll.41-44.

⁷² Sorokin, *Man and society in calamity*, p. 82.

⁷³ Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe*.

⁷⁴ Rossijskij Gosudarstvennyj Arkhiv Ekonomiki (RGAE), f. 7486, op.37, d.236, ll.23-26.

⁷⁵ <http://www.sott.net/articles/show/171385-Remembering-the-Kazakhstan-famine-in-1930s>. Last visit: 29.12.2008

⁷⁶ RGASPI f. 82, op. 2, d. 148, ll. 192f.

ated to help in Kazakh collective farms and enterprises informed their colleagues about the situation, who allegedly went even to Kaganovich in order to find out what was going on there.⁷⁷

But it is important to keep in mind that acts of solidarity and compassion were exceptions from the rule. People didn't remember acts of generosity accidentally as something exceptional and special. Under the conditions of hunger, solidarity with the fate of others might easily lead to individual death. This omnipresent threat does not mean that everybody resorts to violence, but it does mean that everybody has to expect it anywhere and anytime. This knowledge structures peoples' deeds and actions. And it structures their thinking about their particular place in society.

It is true, the people and the situations described in this paper could not have existed without the context in which they acted and occurred. This context was the system the Bolsheviks had created. In one way or another, everybody was bound to the existence of the Soviet state, to its political, social and cultural realities. But does this necessarily mean that those, who were the formal representatives of this system acted according to its rules? The answer is yes and no. On the one hand, from a judicial point of view, the maltreatment of *otkochevniki*, physical violence against peasants or the beating of the helpless consisted a crime. The numerous reports that denounced such behaviour by officials are a testimony to that. On the other hand, it is no secret that the law was only of minor importance to functionaries on all levels, including the very leaders. They all considered violence an appropriate method to rule the country, to solve problems and to implement decisions. Therefore, measuring the behaviour of officials by judicial standards leads to distortions. We have to understand the fact that the Soviet Union under Stalin was based on excess. Physical violence, conducted by the representatives of the system was normality. This "state violence" was confronted with the violent practices of different strata of the population. The result was an escalation of violence. Of course, this did not happen all the time and everywhere, but under extreme conditions, such as the Kazakh famine, violence became omnipresent.

The inevitability and omnipresence of violence forces us to think about the usefulness of the categories we use. In cases like the ones described in this paper, they stem from the sources available. But the distinctions between "communists", "officials", "Russians" "Kazakhs" and "peasants" are obviously only of little value, if at all. We cannot understand the actions of these men simply by ascribing certain roles, to them, mainly for three reasons: Firstly, the available sources do not illuminate their personalities or at least their biographies. They appear only in their role as violent actors and disappear from our focus thereafter. Secondly, we can only judge their actions from the

⁷⁷ APRK, f. 141, op. 1, d. 6403, l. 174.

characteristics applied to them by Bolshevik officials who wrote those documents we find now in the archives. And finally, in most cases the context of an act of violence remains nebulous. Therefore, the violent action as such deserves our attention. Violence has a meaning and a message, which is included and embedded in the act of violence itself. It is our task to find, to describe and to interpret this message. To do so, deserves a description of the violent act in detail.⁷⁸ But this does not mean that writing about physical violence is filling pages with horrible stories. It rather demands using the theoretical and methodological insights of different disciplines in order to understand the reasons, the modalities and the outcome of violence.

What do we get from such an approach? First of all, it provides us with the opportunity not only to describe but to understand situations that are usually just labelled as “tragedy” or “catastrophe”. By using violence as a “probe” into the multifaceted famine-stricken society, we can make sense of human behaviour under extreme conditions. The history of violence, as it is provided in this paper, is basically a history of its executors. It is a history of the offenders. By studying them, we understand the logic of the violent act, which in turn broadens our knowledge about the people who conduct violence. In other words, we learn more about the ways *how* people acted and thereby why they did so. And this is the key for an understanding of the dynamics of famine.

⁷⁸ Schnell, *Der Sinn der Gewalt*.