

Abstracts

Jana Sverdljuk: Introduction: Rediscovering Ukrainian Famine Archives in Norway – Recreating History

Although the narrative about Norwegian aid during famine in Ukraine in 1921 and 1933 has become well-established in Ukrainian research, Norwegian historiography has not been addressing these tragic events as a theme on its own. The international research on Holodomor too is lacking a detailed chapter on the involvement into humanitarian help of Norwegian actors, while taking up controversies and unresolved questions concerning their political and ideological positions. Almost three decades after the independence of Ukraine and after the 85th anniversary of Holodomor, the National Library of Norway re-discovers its archives on Ukrainian famine, revitalizing suppressed historical memories.

Oksana Zabuzhko: The Abandoned Secrets: Family Stories Versus Memoricide Politics in Constructing Holodomor Narratives

The major challenge for a writer exploring the Ukrainian Holodomor of 1932-33 is the legacy of the forced silence that covered up the subject for three generations (it was not until December, 1987 that the very fact of the mass starvation was, for the first time, officially allowed to be recognized in public by Soviet authorities). Moral and psychological consequences of such a long-lasting ‘information terror’ – which for decades to come inflicted upon Western media politics the “Gareth Jones vs. Walter Duranty” dilemma – remain dramatically underexplored in contemporary culture, and, on more than one occasion, have been blatantly ignored in contemporary politics.

The only narrative form in which memory of the Holodomor in Ukraine survived Soviet times, has been oral history: the fragmented survivors’ stories secretly passed and kept within families. How these stories can be used to portray the subliminal effects of the silenced past upon the present, and – more broadly – how literature works with a national trauma of such a gargantuan humanitarian scale, is illustrated with examples from the author’s internationally recognized novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, as well as from other works by 3rd generation Holodomor survivors.

Stanislaw Kulchytskyj: Why Moscow blocked foreign charity organizations to help starving Ukrainian peasants in 1921

American Relief Administration, the International Russian Relief Executive (Fund) headed by Fridtjof Nansen and other charity organizations launched assistance to the starving peasants of Volga region from August 1921. In the South provinces of Ukraine these mentioned organizations were admitted only in January 1922, when hundreds of thousands peasants had been already perished by starvation. There was only one reason: on South of Ukraine anti-Soviet uprisings raged in 1920-1921. The Kremlin used famine as a means of suppressing the anti-Soviet rebellions.

Lesja Onyshko: Holodomor-genocide vs Europe: humanity and double standards

The Holodomor of 1932-1933 (Ukrainian famine-genocide), despite being one of the major tragedies in Ukraine and world history, is still relatively unknown. Nowadays about two dozen countries recognized Holodomor as the crime of genocide. This is not surprising as Russian Federation officials have actively opposed international recognition of the Ukrainian Holodomor. The modern historiography has proved the fact: the governments of European countries were informed in 1932-1933 about famine in Ukraine but they were guided by the principle of political expediency.

Thanks to the position of the President of the League of Nations, the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway Dr. Johan Ludvig Mowinckel the Famine in Ukrainian SSR was reviewed in September 1933 by the members of League of Nations. But Soviet Union denied a massive hunger and refused to get helping hands from the international organizations.

The famine was directed against the part of the Ukrainian nation, the peasants, who were not only the repository of the traditions, folklore and music, the national language and literature, the national spirit of Ukraine, but also formed the social base of Ukrainian national resistance. Therefore 80 percent of the population who formed the base of the Ukrainian national movement, were peasants. Nowadays, it is time for wider international recognition of the genocidal nature of the Holodomor, in order to develop democratic institutions and help Ukraine to resist Russian violence in Eastern Ukraine. It's also very important to unite the world community for promoting Ukrainian's integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. From other side, because of its moral aspect, Holodomor cannot go unrecognized, uncondemned and unpunished.

Pål Kolstø: The famine in Ukraine 1933-4

In 1933-4 large parts in the Southern USSR and in particular Ukraine were hit by a severe famine during which many millions of people perished. The main cause behind this catastrophe was clearly

not crop failure, but the policies of the communist regime. But why should political leaders want to kill their own population? The scholarly community has been divided over the interpretation of this tragedy. Researchers focusing on agricultural history have for the most part explained it as an unintended consequence of a disastrous, even criminally bad, agricultural policy. The forced collectivization in the preceding years had disrupted the peasant economy and led to the slaughter of millions of livestock. Against this interpretation stands the group of researchers that see this man-made famine as a deliberate policy is not to exterminate than to decimate entire populations, in particular the Ukrainian nation. This controversy also has distinct political ramifications since the current Russian leadership adheres to the first interpretation and the Ukrainian state to the second.

Harald Østgaard Lund: The Horror of Humanitarian Photography. Quisling's Photographs from the Famine in Ukraine 1922

Both Fridtjof Nansen and Vidkun Quisling made pioneering use of photography in their humanitarian relief work during the severe famine in Russia and Ukraine. During 1921 and 1922, reports and pictures from the Soviet Union became increasingly horrific. Of course, nothing can compare with the horror that the victims of the famine endured. Nevertheless, the photographs themselves have a horrific history as documentation and propaganda. From their initial purpose as an appeal for help to their illustrative use as images of Holodomor, the use of these pictures has been extremely problematic in many ways. This history pinpoints the dilemmas of humanitarian photography. It may also point to dilemmas in the mediation of the collections of the National Library in general.

Carl Emil Vogt: The famine of 1921: Fridtjof Nansen's relief work

In 1921–23 Fridtjof Nansen coordinated famine relief to Russia and the Ukraine from several European relief organisations. The operation was feeding around 400,000 people at the most. An American operation fed 11 million at the most. It is estimated that the famine of 1921–23 may have killed up to 5 million people. Famine had been a reoccurring phenomenon in the area for centuries, but this time it was particularly severe. The Soviet authorities responded reluctantly and late. They denied the famine until the summer of 1921 when foreign relief was finally allowed in. This is in great contrast to the famine in the early 1930s, which was never acknowledged by Stalin's regime and no foreign aid was allowed. The famine of 1932–33 is by many experts regarded as not only a man-made disaster, but also a conscious mass killing by the means of starvation.

I will also discuss the political context around Nansen's European relief operation. Nansen cooperated with the Soviet regime, which was much hated by liberals and conservatives in the West. This caused great debate at the time.

Hans Fredrik Dahl: Useful Idiots? Nansen & Quisling in Ukraine in the 1920s

Fridtjof Nansen and his assistant Vidkun Quisling both had first-hand knowledge of the Ukrainian famine 1921-1923 as is shown in their letters and writings collected in the archives of the National Library of Oslo. Indeed, the catastrophic famine situation in the new Bolshevik state was the very reason for The International Red Cross to set up an urgent help service headed by Nansen, and for Nansen to choose Quisling (then a young & promising army officer) as his envoy in Ukraine. The two overviewed the famine closely; Quisling as a field worker in Ukraine and Crimea in those years, Nansen as the head of enterprise (along with H. Hoover) and closely collaborating with his envoys to relieve the situation. The question of course rose: How did the rich agricultural area of Ukraine, known to be the largest grain producer, plunge into such a disaster as the catastrophic condition of starvation and poverty? Was the reason the Civil war which had shaken the country for years? Or was it clumsy governmental steps as to the shortage of nutrition? Or bad weather conditions? Quisling pondered about this in his letters to Nansen as well as in his reports of the famine situation to the League of Nations headquarter in Geneva. Clumsy politics – but why and how? Was there indeed a responsibility with the Russian government for the shortage of grain? With Bolshevik mentality in general?

To address this question, I will draw upon sources such as the Nansen-Quisling correspondence and reports; the cooperation in 1923 of the two in advocating a formal recognition of Bolshevik Russia & independent (and not so independent) Ukraine (Nansen's book on Russia 1923), and what they in general might expect from the Bolsheviks - and others materials. Nansen of the two died in 1930 but Quisling went on and in 1937 issued a strong warning against the Holodomor as Stalin's act of deliberately verging a war against the Ukrainians. Did he at that time think back on his own experience with famine some twelve years earlier? Had they in fact been Lenin's 'useful idiots' as famine workers in the 1920s?