



0. Holodomor - Roots of a Man-Made Disaster - Story
Preface

1. Holodomor - Roots of a Man-Made Disaster

2. Resurgence of Ukrainian Nationalism
3. Stalin Cracks Down on Ukraine
4. Ukrainians Lose Their Farms
5. Ukrainians Lose Their Crops
6. Ukrainians Starve
7. Ukrainians Die from Hunger
8. Soviets Cover-up Ukrainian Starvation
9. Russia Acknowledges the Holodomor

Ukraine has long been the "bread basket of Europe." Since ancient times, people in other countries have purchased grain from Ukraine. This image depicts a wheatfield in Ukraine.

A man-made disaster occurred in the Ukraine between 1932-33. It involved the taking of grain, grown by the Ukrainian people, and using that grain to fund Joseph Stalin's plans to industrialize the Soviet Union.

Ukrainians refer to this engineered famine as Holodomor, meaning "death by forced starvation" or "death inflicted by hunger."

Although the story of this "famine"—which was really not a famine at all—is largely lost to history, it is now emerging from the shadows. Let's investigate some of the events leading to Holodomor.

In March of 1917, the Tsarist empire is swept aside. Ukrainians reclaim their independence after 200 years of Russian dominance.

Ukraine's land is rich and fertile. People in Ukraine, however, recognize that freedom has its price and are looking forward to running their own affairs. They are also prepared to defend their own borders so they can have their own nation.

But Lenin—the Bolshevik leader—has other plans. He engineers a second revolution in Russia and wants, among other things, to reclaim former Tsarist territories (not allow those former Tsarist areas to become free and independent states).

Members of the Red Army, the White Army and others descend on Ukraine where the damage is (among other things) measured in loss of food. Whether invading armies are friendly or hostile, the price Ukrainians pay is always in food.

Ukrainians spend four years resisting the Soviets' moves to retake their land and run their country. It is an effort they will ultimately lose. Ukraine will become a Soviet Republic, one of fifteen in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (the USSR).

By 1921, Russia has retaken a large part of eastern Ukraine. The western part of the country is carved-up between other nations: Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia.

Now controlling much of Ukraine, the Soviets ship out more and more grain, to feed the people in Russia (particularly in Moscow). People in Ukraine—the growers and providers of Europe's "breadbasket"—die, but this is just a foreshadowing of a catastrophe still some years away.

When a drought causes serious problems, in the early 1920s, the Ukrainian breadbasket is crippled by an actual famine. People die, but still this famine, and its impact, is a mere foreshadowing of what is to come.

Then ... Lenin and his Bolsheviks try a different approach. After consolidating Bolshevik positions in Russia, Lenin moves outside that country.

Needing to end the continued resistance to Bolshevik policies, in places like Ukraine, Lenin makes some policy changes. By eliminating grain quotas, which the farmers must provide to the government, Lenin allows Ukrainian farmers to trade their goods on the open market.

The immediate impact of this policy change is positive since 80% of Ukrainians are farmers. Allowing the people to trade on the open market quickly improves the country's economy (and the people's ability to earn an income).

Lenin also allows Ukraine's national and patriotic resurgence to continue.

When Lenin dies in 1924, his successor—Joseph Stalin—takes a dim view of this Ukrainian nationalism and patriotism. In fact, he's alarmed by it.

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Media Stream



Lenin, Vladimir - Bolshevik Revolution

From *Lenin: Revolutionary*.

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