AWESOME stories

Ukrainians Lose Their Farms

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When the Soviets denied there was a famine in Ukraine, man-made or natural, a Cardinal from Austria, Theodor Innitzer—who was also the Archbishop of Vienna—began an awareness-raising campaign in the West. This image, by an unnamed photographer, is from the Innitzer Collection. It depicts a Ukrainian woman and child "being kicked out of their home."

To pay for Western technology, as he transforms the Soviet Union into an industrial powerhouse, Stalin will appropriate Ukraine's farm crops.

How will he get the grain from Europe's breadbasket? By devising and implementing his control in new autocratic ways. Thus begins the collectivization of Soviet farms, including Ukrainian farms.

By merely speaking the words—"The State owns your land, your homes, your animals, your fields, your barns, your equipment"—Stalin takes over. On the order of the Soviet leader, supported by his Politburo comrades, Ukrainian farmers will become laborers who work for the State, not for themselves.

Farmers will be just like laborers who work in factories. The State will own the land, the equipment, the seeds and everything which formerly belonged to individual farmers and their families. Gone are the days of family ownership. Gone are the days of working for oneself. Gone, even, is the family cow.

With the destruction of Ukraine's intellectuals and the church well underway, Stalin implements his plan for State domination of farmers. First he punishes the Kulaks—a Bolshevik label which describes "wealthy" farm-land owners (defined as people who own at least 24 acres or employ hired labor).

Kulaks are seen as potential leaders of a revolt. They are, according to the government, "enemies of the people." They have been enemies of the people since Lenin's time. In 1918, for example, Lenin ordered the hanging of 100 Kulaks as part of "the battle with the kulaks."

Bolsheviks, or people at their behest, walk into Kulak homes and tell entire families to leave. A typical statement is: "This isn't your home anymore."

Former farm owners are not merely evicted from their homes. Many are exiled. Others just disappear. To this day it is not known how many Kulaks died during Stalin's collectivization of farms. Some estimates have the number as high as 5 million people who were deported (and never heard from again).

One mother asks to stay in her home, just through the winter, to keep her children and older relatives safe, but the intruders throw her outside. When the mother tells her children not to leave the house, they grab hold of the benches in their home, screaming and refusing to let go.

No matter the screams and the pleading, a child survivor (now an adult) remembers: "They took us out anyway—threw us out of our home, one by one—all six of us."

By calling Kulaks "enemies of the State," Stalin and his troops operate with total impunity against these individuals—including their families. The process, frightening as it is, matters little. The State, and its mercenaries, are relentless. What matters is carrying-out Stalin's objectives and employing his methods.

A Soviet propaganda poster, from 1930, makes clear the regime's objectives by declaring: "We will annihilate Kulaks as a class."

In an effort to resist, some farmers burn their crops, kill their livestock and flee to the cities. About 1.5 million people are rounded-up by the Soviet government and are shipped-out to the remotest corners of the Soviet Union.

Survivors of this class warfare, and the long trek to Siberia, are forced to work as slave laborers, producing materials which can be exported to the West or used by the Soviet Union to further Stalin's objectives.

Years later, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn would tell the world about these infamous camps in his book, The Gulag Archipelago.

The forced-labor camps are the end of the line for many intellectuals, scientists, thinkers, religious leaders and the Kulak-farmers of Ukraine. In these remote camps, many located in extremely cold areas, no one can escape the power-and-control of the Soviet leader and his government-implemented policies.

Young Communist-Party activists are brought in to make sure that the farm-collectivization process fully takes hold in Ukraine. Their job is to make sure that the State gets what it wants. Anyone who resists their efforts is called a Kulak.

Stalin puts Pavel Postyshev—a Russian-born Bolshevik who became Second Secretary of the Ukraine's Communist party—in charge of the "grain procurement plan." This man also plays a role in terrorist actions taken against the Ukrainian people.

The deportations, to slave-labor camps, continue. Later, when they are adults, some of these young Communist-Party activists come to regret their youthful actions. (Postyshev is not one of the regretful, however. He was shot, in 1939, when he fell out of favor.)

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Ukrainians-Lose-Their-Farms-Bitter-Harvest-Story-of-the-Holodomor

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Ukrainians-Lose-Their-Farms-Bitter-Harvest-Story-of-the-Holodomor

Media Stream

Ukrainians Evicted from Their Home

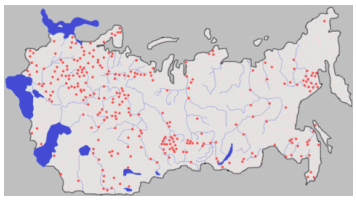
Online via Holodomor Research & Education Consortium; Photo, by an unnamed photographer, and part of the Innitzer Collection.
View this asset at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Ukrainians-Evicted-from-Their-Home

Officials Confiscate Animals from Ukrainian Families

Photo, by an unnamed photographer, depicts Soviet officials confiscating a cow that had not been turned-over, by a Ukrainian farmer, to the local collective. Maintained by the National Museum, in Kiev, the image is part of "Memorial in Commemoration of Famines' Victims in Ukraine." It is online via the Holodomor Research & Education Consortium.
View this asset at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Officials-Confiscate-Animals-from-Ukrainian-Families

Soviets Annihilate Kulaks As a Class

Poster by Moscow-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo; released in 1930. Online via the Library of Congress.
View this asset at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Soviets-Annihilate-Kulaks-As-a-Class



Map Depicting Russian Labor Camps

Map image online, courtesy Open Society Archives.
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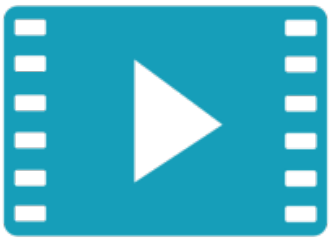
Stalin's Grain Quotas Harm Ukraine

Clip from "Harvest of Despair: The Unknown Holocust."
Produced and directed by Slavko Nowytski for the Ukrainian Famine Research Committee in Canada, with the assistance of the National Film Board of Canada.



Narration writer and story consultant, Peter Blow

Photography by Thomas Burstyn and Yuri Denysenko

Edited by Yurij Luhovy

Music by Zenoby Lawryshyn

Distributed by International Historic Films, Inc.

Released, 1984

Online, courtesy Google Video.
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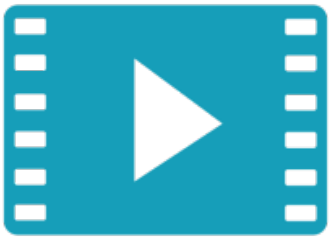

Solzhenitsyn - Video Biography

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