

Silenced Archive of the Holodomor: The Ukrainian Civil Committee for Saving Ukraine, Transnational Humanitarianism, and Networks of National Compassion

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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Résumé de l'article

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The New School for Social Research

Abstract: It is a commonly held contention among scholars that the Great Ukrainian Famine of 1932–33—denied by the Soviet authorities while it was happening—received no relief in the form of organized international humanitarian aid. Thus, accounts of the famine rarely (if ever) feature a humanitarian narrative. By analyzing the activity of the Ukrainian Civil Committee for Saving Ukraine (Ukraïns'kyi Hromads'kyi Komitet Riatunku Ukraïny), this article challenges such views, as it situates interwar famine-related humanitarianism within the context of small-scale ethnic aid committees working in the interests of the starving across Europe. The records of the Ukrainian Committee stored at the National Library of Poland, as a group, constitute the “silenced archive of the Holodomor”—namely, scattered evidence of the famine that has been affected by displacement and erasure. Analyzing these largely understudied materials, this article argues that the official denial of the famine triggered the deployment of a transnational humanitarian narrative based on what the author calls “national compassion”—a moral duty and obligation uniting Ukrainians across borders. The article, moreover, points to the importance of situated knowledge, information networks, and documentation as tools in countering acts of violence and the power of repressive regimes.

Keywords: Holodomor, famine, transnational humanitarianism, national compassion, silenced archive, Ukrainian Civil Committee for Saving Ukraine.

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I. INTRODUCTION

“Ukrainian People! Greater Ukraine—your womb and the richest of lands in Europe—is now writhing in starving torments and is suffering through unimaginable national oppression”¹ (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 1). With this appeal, the Ukrainian Civil Committee for Saving Ukraine (Ukraïns'kyi Hromads'kyi Komitet Riatunku Ukraïny; Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet Ratunku Ukraïny; shortened, Ukrainian Committee) announced its inception on 25 July 1933 in Lviv.² Initiated by Ukrainian members of the Polish parliament (Sejm) together with leaders of the political party Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance (Ukraïns'ke Natsional'no-Demokratyčne Ob'iednannia, or UNDO), the Ukrainian Committee became an essential aid organization battling for international recognition of the considerable famine unfolding in Soviet Ukraine—a famine known today as the Holodomor (1932–33). The Ukrainian Committee, supported by most cultural-educational societies in Lviv, also played a vital role in developing and strengthening networks of compassion among Ukrainians living in Galicia and abroad. Its multi-layered activism, which was focused on countering official denials of the famine, challenges contemporary assumptions about the meaning of humanitarian aid and about the circulation of knowledge on the famine in the transnational context.

The struggles of the Ukrainian Committee to promote international recognition of the famine have been discussed by several authors (Conquest; Kuśnierz; Serbyn; Shkandrij). The most-recent scholarship on the topic stresses in particular the political constraints of interwar humanitarianism and its dependency on international politics (Papuha, *Zakhidna Ukraïna*; Czech and Hnatiuk). Despite the ambivalence of many international institutions, a number of relief committees were established throughout Europe and North America to help the starving. The Ukrainian Committee, as I show below, played a pivotal role in mobilizing and strengthening these transnational networks. Through its public advocacy campaign, it managed to create “a situated, relational” humanitarian narrative (Olliff 659) that stressed the transnational connections of Ukrainians.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all translations to the English of archival documents in this article are my own.

² This appeal, under the title “Byimo u velykyi dzvin na trivohu!” (“Let Us Strike the Great Bell to Raise the Alarm!”), was later reprinted in *Dilo (Deed [Lviv])*, 14 August 1933 (see Levyts'kyi et al.).

Contemporary knowledge of humanitarian responses to the famine of 1932–33 is very limited. Already in 1958, Milena Rudnyts'ka, a leader of the Ukrainian Committee, reflected that the major issue underlying “the silencing of the Great Famine” (*movchannia Velykoho Holodu* [Rudnyts'ka, no. 134]) was related not to the documentation of various relief activities but to the collection of the mass of material that had been scattered across sites and fields of knowledge production—from different newspapers and bulletins, for example, among various organizations, archives, and countries. Perhaps the best illustration of this trend is represented by the archive of the Ukrainian Committee itself and its complicated path to discovery and recognition. In the turmoil of World War II, the bureaucratic records of the Ukrainian Committee (a part of the archives of the Shevchenko Scientific Society [Naukove Товариство імені Шевченка, or NTSh]) were taken from Lviv by the retreating German army and abandoned in western Poland. They were hidden by Polish librarians for more than forty years and could only be assessed and described at the beginning of the 1990s. It took another ten years to create microfilms and to open these resources to the broader public. Other documents of the Ukrainian Committee can be accessed elsewhere, most notably on the site *Elektronnyi arkhiv ukrains'koho vyzvol'noho rukhu* (*Electronic Archive of the Ukrainian Liberation Movement*) and in the League of Nations archives in Geneva.³ To this day, it is unknown what happened to the documents of other European relief committees; they may have been destroyed or are still awaiting discovery.

This article explores the scattered, fragmented, and erased nature of the material records related to the Ukrainian Committee and proposes to designate these records as a silenced archive of the Holodomor. The difficulty in accessing and studying these materials comes not from their invisibility but from their displaced character. By examining the primary documentary records of the Ukrainian Committee stored in the National Library of Poland (Biblioteka Narodowa), I demonstrate the importance of the meticulous work of Committee members in distributing knowledge on the famine at the local, regional, and transnational levels. This article argues that official denial of the famine by the Soviet government triggered the deployment of a humanitarian narrative that would offer evidence about the developing disaster and generate empathy for starving peasants while at the same time delegitimizing Bolshevik rule. According to this narrative, the famine in Soviet Ukraine was a political catastrophe and part of an extended pattern of violence against the Ukrainian nation. This specific form of transnational humanitarian narrative, that is, the “moral imperative to act” on behalf of

³ I.e., avr.org.ua/ and archives.ungeneva.org/lontad.

those who suffer (Laqueur 204), was based on what I call “national compassion”—a sense of moral duty and obligation uniting Ukrainians across borders.

This article commences with a discussion of the political and cultural landscape of famine-related humanitarianism in Europe. It points to the Russian (Povolzhie) famine of 1921–22 as a watershed event in the history of famine relief in the European context. The famine of 1932–33 in Ukraine, on the contrary, was denied by the Soviet government, which consequently did not accept any international aid. This section further introduces the Ukrainian Committee as one of many smaller committees that kept working in spite of, and in reaction to, the Soviet denial. The article then proceeds to discuss the history of the relocation of the Ukrainian Committee archive, and it proposes to analyze these records within the framework of what I term “the silenced archive of the Holodomor.” The paper goes on to systematically describe the public advocacy campaign of the Ukrainian Committee. It points to the struggles of its members to create transnational networks of national compassion connecting Ukrainians living in Galicia with European émigré communities and the North American diaspora.

II. HUNGER AND HUMANITARIANISM IN EUROPE

The work of the Ukrainian Committee as well as many other relief committees throughout Europe should be understood in the broader context of famine-related humanitarianism. The recognition of hunger as a social and humanitarian problem requiring public assistance is a recent phenomenon dating roughly from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries (Vernon). In this regard, the Irish Famine of 1845–52 was one of the first European famines that attracted international sympathy and compassion (Götze et al 1–6; Kinealy, *This Great Calamity*). Already in 1846, a number of private charities and relief committees were working across the world to collect funds for starving Irish peasants. Humanitarian aid, as the Irish example further demonstrates, was not free from politics. On the contrary, in many cases, the call to help the starving was closely tied to demands for Irish political independence and a broader criticism of British misrule in Ireland (Kinealy, *Charity*).

Hunger is an unsettled category that has produced its own cultural history, networks of power, and sense of governmental responsibility (Arnold; Davis). Moreover, recognizing famine as a disaster takes intellectual labour that is historically and culturally contingent (Campbell). Only relatively recently, famines have been redefined as forms of political violence

rather than as natural disasters or merely unfortunate events (Howard-Hassmann; Waal). Past famines and their enduring presence have been entangled in changing ideologies and politics (Edkins; Ó Gráda). Accordingly, famine relief is a contested field that long relied on what Norbert Götz and colleagues define as “ad hoc humanitarianism”—small-scale, voluntary associations working independently from the state (Götz et al. 4). These transnational organizations frequently operated along national lines and on the basis of a national solidarity with those who needed assistance (Dromi; Jones). As such, nationalism was a crucial tool in helping build international networks of aid where individuals could imagine their own affiliation with a greater national community (Anderson).

The international climate after World War I changed the spectrum of famine relief. The scale of war destruction, mass displacement, and widespread hunger required a more integrated approach, which brought together voluntary and state actors to provide relief on the ground in Europe. The distribution of food aid became an increasingly politicized act and a channel for postwar “diplomacy” (Sasson 521). Herbert Hoover, an American businessman appointed by President Woodrow Wilson as head of the United States Food Administration, became the most important (albeit often controversial) politician working for food relief throughout Europe. He combined business methods (in the shape of aggressive financing strategies) and strict accounting with philanthropy and the politics of food distribution (Patenaude; Weissman).

The famine of 1921–22 that developed in the Soviet Union is regarded as a formative moment in the history of both European famines and postwar international humanitarianism (Götz et al.; Robbins; Sasson; Weissman). The late imperial period as well as the first decades of Soviet rule were marked by food shortages and local famines—most notably the 1891–92 Russian famines and the 1917–20 famine in Russian Turkestan (Cameron; Campbell). The scale of the 1921–22 famine in the Volga and Ural regions in Soviet Russia was particularly massive, especially because the Bolshevik authorities significantly delayed acknowledging the disaster. Once they had admitted the catastrophe, they opened the Soviet borders to various international aid organizations and foreign governments. The American Relief Administration (ARA), the International Committee for Russian Relief, the League of Nations, and the International Red Cross became the most-important international actors engaged in famine relief. Their first task was to release field expenditures to famine-afflicted regions and to document the disaster together with the Moscow-based Central Commission for Aid to the Starving

(Tsentrāl'naia Komissiia Pomoshchi Golodaiushchim, or TsK Pomgol).⁴ The famine thus triggered the emergence of a coordinated international system built on imperial ideologies and practices. It was shown in the work of foreign journalists who travelled across the country with officers of the ARA. While describing the misery of the starving, they heavily criticized the Soviet economy and Bolshevik politics and thus contributed to anti-Communist propaganda in the West (Bassow 46). Overall, the famine of 1921–22 marked the beginning of a new era of influential players, larger organizations, and transnational coordination in the history of famine-related humanitarianism in Europe.

The situation during the period of the first five-year plan in the USSR (1928–33) was different. The famines that developed across the country in the Kuban and Volga regions, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine were triggered by the collectivization of agriculture, which resulted in peasant resistance and state-organized violence.⁵ By fall 1932, almost eighty percent of steppe Ukraine was collectivized, and high procurement plans, which in many cases led to the confiscation of entire supplies of foodstuffs, led to severe malnutrition, starvation, and mass death (Applebaum 190–94; Conquest 228–38; Kulchytsky 101–03). Simultaneously, the Soviet authorities launched an attack on the Ukrainian language and culture, blaming Ukrainian leaders for the situation in Soviet Ukraine. As a result, the famine in Ukraine led to the loss of some 4.5 million lives, with 3.9 million direct and 0.6 million indirect losses (Rudnytskyi et al. 69). Neither the famine in Ukraine nor the famines related to all-Soviet collectivization were acknowledged. On the contrary, the state invested significant resources in sustaining denial thereof on local and international scales.⁶ Foreign aid organizations were not permitted to reach the country, and consequently, international expertise was unavailable to local administrations. In February 1933, the Soviet government closed the border to foreign journalists. In order for them to venture beyond Moscow, they needed to provide the Foreign Office with precise itineraries for their

⁴ During the famine, numerous local chapters of the Red Cross were also formed to help the starving. The Soviet authorities further used them in their internal politics of aid (Applebaum 62–64).

⁵ On the comparative approach to Soviet famines in the context of collectivization, see especially Cameron; Kulchytsky; Snyder; Graziosi and Sysyn; and Viola. Regarding the relation between famines and broader imperial policies, see Klid.

⁶ One of the most critical roles in the maintenance of the official Soviet denial of the famine was played by the international press, and especially Western correspondents working in Moscow. See the extensive discussions of this phenomenon in Applebaum, Cipko, Gamache, and Kuśnierz. On the diplomatic perception of the famine outside the Soviet Union, see Fonzi.

planned travels. During the harsh months of the famine, obtaining such permission was almost impossible (Muggeridge 254–60). As a result, only a limited number of photographs of the starving could be made and smuggled outside the Soviet Union. The absence of images showing the suffering of peasants was yet another factor that hindered the emergence of empathy and compassion comparable to the feelings generated by the 1921–22 famine.⁷

Still, data on the scale of malnutrition and starvation and the unimaginable death tolls kept coming from famine-hit areas, and particularly from Ukraine. Wherever possible, peasants were escaping their villages; refugees were storming the western borders of the Soviet Union, and starving individuals were writing letters to relatives abroad begging for help. Moreover, the field trips of journalists, such as Rhea Clyman, Gareth Jones, Ralph W. Barnes, and Malcolm Muggeridge, who travelled privately across Ukraine, provided eyewitness accounts of the horrors experienced by the peasants (Balan; Gamache). From February 1933, their articles were published in the most-important Western newspapers and reprinted across Central Europe, including in Galicia.⁸ As recent scholarship on the topic demonstrates, information about the famine was also circulated widely through diplomatic channels (Fonzi; Kuromiya; Papuha, *Chomu*). Yet, these eyewitness reports could not cut through the then-dominant general admiration for the Soviet project of modernization (David-Fox; Engerman; Hollander). For many, it remained unthinkable that such a vast famine could have developed in the Soviet Union; still others accepted the famine as a preliminary (if not necessary) stage in the “civilizational progress” to which the Bolsheviks aspired. With time, what came to be called “the Holodomor” became one of the most hotly debated topics in Soviet history, dividing the academic community over questions of evidence and interpretation, politics and ideology, and history and memory.⁹

⁷ A selection of photographs related to the Holodomor can be accessed through the Holodomor Research and Education Consortium (HREC) website (see “HREC Online Holodomor Photo Directory”).

⁸ Some of the most-important reports were published in the pages of American press, including in *The New York Times*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *New-York Evening Post*, and *Chicago Daily News*. In Britain, the situation was covered by *Daily Express* (London), *The Manchester Guardian*, and *The Observer* (London); in France, by *Le Matin* (*The Morning* [Paris]); in Switzerland, by *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (*The New Zürich Times*); and in Poland, by the *Kurier Warszawski* (*Warsaw Courier*) and the Galician-Ukrainian *Dilo*.

⁹ For the most recent and comprehensive summary of these various debates on the Holodomor within broader struggles over the meaning of Stalinism, see Edele. For a Ukrainian-focused overview of the extensive scholarship on the Holodomor, see especially Andriewsky and Grynevych.

Within this political climate of official denial, international admiration for Soviet modernization, and confusion streaming from international media reports, several small committees started to operate throughout Central Europe to provide relief for the starving. At first, small associations were set up to help refugees escaping Soviet Ukraine. Later, they were joined by other organizations that had broader aims and more explicitly political goals. Their activity demonstrates that interwar famine relief efforts were situational and relational acts of caring for those who were suffering (Olliff). In order to create a humanitarian narrative, as Thomas Laqueur argues, “habits of feeling” for the suffering of others need to be combined with theories of causation (Laqueur 204). Accordingly, the famine of 1932–33 became a shared experience for Ukrainians of diverse backgrounds who became united within transnational compassion networks.

The Ukrainian Committee played a pivotal role in instituting these transnational solidarity networks and national “habits of feeling.” Launched by prominent Galician Ukrainian leaders, it quickly took charge of bringing together Ukrainians across borders for countering the Soviet denial of the famine. The Ukrainian Committee acted in close collaboration with the UNDO. Founded in 1925, the UNDO’s main political goal was to unify the Ukrainian lands and demand for Ukrainians the right to self-determination. The UNDO’s work involved creating and sustaining the associational life of the Ukrainian community in Poland through the support of organized societies such as Prosvita, co-operatives, credit unions, and economic institutions (Kravets’; Papuha, *Zakhidna Ukraïna*; Shkandrij). Vasyl’ Mudryi, Rudnyts’ka, Zynovii [Zenovii] Pelens’kyi, and Dmytro Levyts’kyi—the most-important Ukrainian political and cultural leaders in Galicia—became the founding group of activists. The establishment of the Ukrainian Committee was thus deeply embedded within the existing networks and political activism of Ukrainians in Galicia.

In the founding document of the Ukrainian Committee, thirty-five local socio-cultural associations expressed their support for its establishment. Among them were educational associations, the NTSh, the Union of Ukrainian Women (Soiuz Ukraïnok [also known as the Ukrainian Women’s League]) in Lviv, various sports associations, and economic organizations—all with direct ties to the UNDO. This first announcement published by the Ukrainian Committee called for national unity among all Ukrainians against “the Communist dictators in Moscow . . . who caused the starvation [*dovely do holodu*] of . . . our brothers living on the Dnipro, in the Kuban [region], and on the Don” (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 1; see also Levyts’kyi et al.). The widespread deaths from starvation and numerous cases of cannibalism were

a result of the failed political economy led by Moscow, the voluminous export of grain from Soviet Ukraine, and the mass terror imposed on the civilians.

The Ukrainian Committee, soon after its inception, became the most active European committee in the circulation of knowledge about the famine.¹⁰ Moreover, thanks to *Dilo* (*Deed* [Lviv]), reports on the activities of Committee members were published widely throughout Europe and reached North America.¹¹ On 29 August 1933, Pelens'kyi received a letter from the Ukrainian Self-Reliance League of Canada (USRL) in Winnipeg, asking for details about the Committee's work (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 1099). The USRL expressed interest in helping the starving but asked for more information regarding relief plans. As the letter states, USRL members were trying to send food aid to Ukraine via the International Red Cross in Geneva as early as fall 1932. However, the Soviet Red Cross, acting on behalf of the Soviet government, responded that "no assistance is needed because there is no starvation in Ukraine" (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 1100). Thus, USRL members were unsure of the capacity of the Lviv Ukrainian Committee in the plan to distribute aid. Pelens'kyi responded two weeks later:

We agree that the Bolsheviks have silenced the famine from the world. . . . We are doubtful that we can send food to Greater Ukraine. Our goal, rather, is to distribute information and to put pressure on the Bolsheviks to accept international relief in Ukraine. We also agree that Ukrainians in Canada should play a vital role in distributing information. That is why we think that a Ukrainian Civil Committee should also be established in Canada. Our national obligation is to unite all of those who understand the importance of the situation. (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 1101)

The dissemination of information was therefore a key task of the Ukrainian Committee in countering the Soviet denial of the famine while at the same time generating national compassion and helping the starving. "Hundreds of thousands of our brothers have already died there from starvation over the past winter and spring, . . ." Mudryi wrote in his book

¹⁰ It should be stressed that Ukrainian relief committees were not the only ethnic or religious associations aiming to help the starving. As I will show later in this article, similar committees were established by Germans, Jews, Czechs, Latvians, Estonians, and Mennonites, among others. (The author thanks the anonymous reviewers for this comment.)

¹¹ *Dilo* was one of the oldest and most-important newspapers in Lviv. One should note that Mudryi was a direct link between *Dilo* and the Ukrainian Committee, as he was editor-in-chief of the former and president of the latter. Thus, the newspaper played a pivotal role in the spreading of information about the work of the Ukrainian Committee.

Lykholittia Ukraïny (*Hard Times in Ukraine*). But the coming winter and spring would bring even higher levels of starvation. According to Mudryi, the Soviet government was contradicting itself by officially denying the famine and banning Western correspondents from visiting the famine-stricken areas—at the same time, the government was claiming that the famine in Ukraine would not be a particular misfortune for the country. “[T]his means,” Mudryi concludes, “that they want this famine for Ukraine. Otherwise, why would they deny it!?” (Mudryi 3–4).

Lykholittia Ukraïny, published in October 1933, was one of the first attempts to counter the Soviet denial of the famine and to interpret the developing catastrophe as a type of political violence. This book also played a crucial role in informing Ukrainians throughout Galicia about the famine, and about the Soviet system in general. The famine in Ukraine, Mudryi argues, demonstrated the failure of the Bolshevik economy and was a direct result of Moscow’s terror against Ukrainians. This book is therefore a history of the causes of the famine linked to the view of the USSR as an imposed political system and a mechanism of economic oppression that led to the destruction of the Ukrainian nation. The terror of the famine and the misery of the starving peasants were thus a final stage in the history of the subjugation and violence experienced by, and levelled against, Ukrainians. “[W]e cannot observe all of this calmly. We need to do everything that we can to organize aid for our enslaved brothers, and we need to counter these bloody Muscovite experiments against the Ukrainian people. This is our great national imperative” (Mudryi 68).

III. THE SILENCED ARCHIVE OF THE HOLODOMOR

The importance of the Ukrainian Committee documents cannot be conceptualized without considering their complicated path to public access and recognition. These materials are not mere factual representations of the past but are a form of the trans-European “heritage of hunger” (Corporaal and Zwarte 30) embedded in the dynamics of power, historical interpretation, and cultural remembrance. This demonstrates that archives are not just rational embodiments of state power but are sites of epistemological uncertainty (Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*). Embedded in power relations, bureaucratic papers are created, sequestered, and rearranged in order to serve and reproduce state machinery (Stoler, “Colonial Archives” 98). In the Soviet case, perhaps more than in any other, bureaucratic papers are also objects oriented toward producing social and political effects (Kotkin) that mark forms of privileged knowledge and shape

the writing of history. Until the late 1980s, the inaccessibility of the long-closed Communist Party and government archives limited the scope of historical inquiry. However, the file fever of the early 1990s did not always help uncover truths about the Communist regime. Thus, many events, especially of the Stalinist period, remain hotly debated in academia (Edele).

Ann Laura Stoler, in a call to decolonize archives, points to bureaucratic papers as sites of political anxiety (Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain* 20). And so, the writing of history is deeply embedded in complex relations between power and narrative rooted in fact creation, assembly, retrieval, and significance (Trouillot). Yet again, the Soviet and broader East Central European context illuminates the importance of the material aspect of papers (and archives) as means of repression. Throughout the twentieth century, the destruction and fabrication of documents were critical tools in hiding cases of political violence, mass atrocity, and power struggles within totalitarian regimes (Etkind et al.; Boriak). In the sphere of transitional justice, such atrocity files frequently gain a double meaning that drives historical redress and shapes the reckoning with a repressive past (Caswell; Weld).

Knowledge is power. Perhaps this is why library archives, manuscripts, associational records, and city archives were among the most valuable objects caught up in the turmoil of World War II. Lviv (Lemberg/Lwów) was an especially important place: Austrian records were kept alongside records of the most-vital repositories for the Polish and Ukrainian national communities, including the Ossolineum National Institute (Ossolineum) and the NTS. The latter held the most-important records of the associational life of the Ukrainian community, including those of the Ukrainian Civil Committee for Saving Ukraine, the UNDO, and the Ukrainian Parliamentary Representation. During the first Soviet occupation of Lviv (1939–41), the holdings of both institutions were immediately included in the newly opened branch of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union. Similarly, one of the first political moves of the German occupiers was to incorporate these holdings into the newly established Staatsbibliothek (Tkachuk 250).

In 1943, some Polish librarians working in Lviv started to consider the possibility of moving valuable documents out of the city (Matwijów). The German soldiers had already taken some documents from Kyiv to Germany. Thus, there was a strong possibility that many valuable objects would be taken from Lviv as well. In November 1943, the General Directorate of Archives in Berlin issued an official decision regarding Lviv's archives, ordering that they be moved from the city as soon as possible and transferred further West.¹² The plan included taking the most-vital and valuable

¹² It should be mentioned that German historians and conservators often

documents from the Staatsbibliothek—filling five train cars. Two months later, librarians and archivists started to pack the archives, which departed Lviv for Poland on 4 February 1944.

What the Nazis framed as a planned “evacuation of documents” was in practice chaotic and ill-prepared. According to the resolution of Hans Frank, the governor general of the occupied Polish territories, only German-language documents were to be taken from Lviv. However, many records of the Ossolineum and the NTSh were included in the carriage and left the city before the arrival of the Soviet army. The anti-Bolshevik tone of many of these documents could be utilized by Nazi propagandists in the future. Still, it was unclear where such a vast quantity of documents, books, manuscripts, archival boxes, and museum objects were supposed to be stored. In the end, they were dispersed among various libraries and monasteries in Poland (to locations including Kraków, Tyniec, and Jasna Góra).

However, the NTSh collection travelled even further. German soldiers retreating from the moving front took the documents further west, only to ultimately abandon them in the small German town of Adelin (later renamed Zagrodno), in southwestern Poland. In 1945, 181 appropriated archival boxes were discovered by Polish librarians. Documents were scattered about an abandoned German farm; books lay in stables; manuscripts had been thrown around the courtyard. Librarians from the National Library of Poland secretly transferred the materials to Warsaw and Wrocław. As remembered by Bogdan Horodyski, one of the librarians who initially described the holdings, the collection included 56 boxes labelled by the Lviv University library, 40 boxes marked as having come from the Ossolineum, and 8 taken from the NTSh (Matwijów 41–42). Librarians, fearing that some of the materials could be confiscated by the Soviet authorities, destroyed, or moved back to Lviv, hid most of the boxes in the attic of the Krasieński Palace in Warsaw. They were left there, untouched and uncatalogued, for the next forty years. These archives included records of the Ukrainian Committee (Misiło).

In 1982, the records of the NTSh were discovered by Eugeniusz Misiło, a Polish historian interested in Ukrainian history and culture.¹³ Many of the materials stored in the attic of the Krasieński Palace seemed extremely valuable and required immediate conservation. However, the directors of the National Library refused to make them available, rightly fearful that the government authorities might confiscate them. Only in 1989 the first archival

orchestrated the looting of artworks and documents to the Reich that sidestepped official channels (Grimsted; Schwarz).

¹³ Misiło describes this discovery on his website, *Eugeniusz Misiło*.

work could begin; Halyna Svarnyk directed this effort for the first ten years.¹⁴ Misiło worked with librarians in Lviv to make the materials accessible in Ukraine as well. In addition to the holdings of the Ukrainian Civil Committee for Saving Ukraine (1933–34), the UNDO (1922–38), and the Ukrainian Parliamentary Representation (1924–38), the collection included documents from the archives of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (1914–18), the Ukrainian Galician Army (1918–20), and the Prosvita society (1892–1939) and the Dmytro Dontsov archive, among others.

However, the anxiety relating to these archives was not yet over. The NTSh documents found in Poland and those from the Ossolineum archives left in Lviv remained the subject of heated debates between the Polish and Ukrainian authorities over questions of return, exchange, and compensation. Only recently, the digital revolution in archival studies has appeared to help overcome some of these difficulties, making possible access to many of the materials at both the National Library in Warsaw and the Stefanyk Library in Lviv (Lviv National Scientific Library of Ukraine [Tkachuk]).

Our contemporary knowledge about famine-related interwar humanitarianism is thus scattered across a variety of spaces and fields of knowledge production. In order to understand the work of the Ukrainian Committee, as well as of many other relief committees operating throughout Europe, I travelled to different sites and engaged in numerous conversations with archivists, historians, and memory activists. The most-important Committee documents are still stored at the National Library in Warsaw. But a significant amount of internal committee correspondence can be accessed through *Elektronnyi arkhiv ukrains'koho vyzvol'noho rukhu* (approximately 170 files) and the League of Nations archives in Geneva.¹⁵ Moreover, during my research, I found particularly useful collections of Ukrainian émigré periodicals that I accessed in the archive of the Ukrainian Free University in Munich. Especially important is the archival collection of *Tryzub* (*Trident* [Paris]), a weekly newspaper established in 1925 in Paris and distributed in Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Poland, Romania, Germany, the United States (US), and Canada. I also found materials related to the Ukrainian Committee in the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.¹⁶

¹⁴ Svarnyk describes these holdings in her lengthy catalogue register co-published by Vydavnytstvo “Ukrains'kyi arkhiv” and NTSh in 2005.

¹⁵ The correspondence of Ukrainian Committee members can be also studied through Canadian organizations (Cipko).

¹⁶ At the Library of Congress, I accessed Mudryi’s book *Lykholittia Ukraïny*. The records mention numerous brochures and booklets prepared/published by the Ukrainian Committee—importantly, the titles *Chorna knyha holodu na Velykii Ukraïni*

These scattered records are manifestations of Ukrainian community activism countering Soviet denials of the famine across time and space. In this article, I propose to look at them as examples of what I call a “silenced archive.” The famine in Ukraine not only imposed a devastating loss of human life and a vast environmental catastrophe but also led to the deliberate destruction of documents, official records, and photographs. Community activism became a tool to fight this repressive denial and to reclaim the past and reaffirm identities in the post-famine context. In this perspective, I thus follow a broader definition of *archive* that does not necessarily refer to one institution or organization but addresses any collection of materials that is utilized to mediate the creation of a historical narrative (Halilovich). In the case of the Holodomor, this form of archive is marked by erasure and displacement (Caswell; Lowry).

IV. GALICIA AND NETWORKS OF NATIONAL COMPASSION

The Ukrainian Committee, from the moment of its founding, aspired to become a leader in the circulation of knowledge about the famine throughout Galicia, across Europe, and in North America. In August 1933, its members established close institutional relations with various ethnic organizations and religious institutions. Especially critical were the connections with Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi, the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and Cardinal Theodor Innitzer of Vienna, a prominent Central European Catholic leader who was making international appeals to help the starving. Members of the Ukrainian Committee raised their humanitarian concerns and lobbied international organizations, such as the League of Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Congress of European Nationalities (Papuha, *Chomu*; Serbyn). However, their most organic form of activism took place in Galicia, where they worked toward developing networks of compassion among fellow Ukrainians.

One of the first actions of Ukrainian Committee members was to establish a network of field offices that would circulate information about the famine at the district and village levels. On 30 August 1933, Committee members distributed an announcement calling for the creation of a committee in every district town in Galicia (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet

(*The Black Book of Hunger in Greater Ukraine*), designed as an extension of Mudryi's book, and *Riatunkova aktsiia dlia Velykoï Ukraïny* (*Rescue Action for Greater Ukraine* [see Zhuk]), which covers in detail the work of the Committee up to the end of October 1933.

45–50). In the letter, which was signed by Rudnyts'ka and Pelens'kyi, the Ukrainian Committee called for all Ukrainians living in lands under Polish control to unite by spreading knowledge about the famine through public protests.¹⁷ The district committees, each comprising seven to nine people, were to be supervised by the committee in Lviv. The goals of the district committees were to organize local meetings and church services, publish brochures, send letters, arrange press conferences, and keep in touch with Ukrainian deputies to Polish parliament.

The idea to self-organize through the formation of district committees found fertile ground. Just a week later, the first district committee was constituted in the town of Bibrka, around thirty kilometres southeast of Lviv (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 375). Similar arrangements were soon made in Berezhany, Buchach, Zhovkva, Dobromyl, Lutsk, Zbarazh, Sniatyn, Bolekhiv, Kalush, Pidhaitsi, Stryi, Ternopil, Horodenka, Sokal, Sambir, Terebovlia, Stanyslaviv (today Ivano-Frankivsk), and Rava-Ruska (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 369–465). By mid-September 1933, almost every district town had a committee dedicated to helping the starving. In many cases, Greek Catholic priests and churches were the most-critical driving forces behind the self-organization of local activists. Also influential were teachers, lawyers, and community activists.

The leaders of the Ukrainian Committee, in calling on all Ukrainians to unite, had in mind a more extended action than simple self-organization on local ground. In early September, they announced the need to launch a day of mourning and protest to raise public awareness about the famine and to openly denounce the Bolshevik regime. Together with the Greek Catholic hierarchies, they set 29 October as the day for mass action across Galicia. However, despite the requests sent by Ukrainian Parliamentary Representation and UNDO members, the Polish Ministry of the Interior refused to grant permission for holding public events. The potential political outcome of such coordinated gatherings in all district towns posed a clear challenge for the Polish authorities. The power of nationalism, as Rogers Brubaker argues, manifests itself in events and their ability to create cohesive

¹⁷ One should note that the famine in Ukraine was not the first case of such intense transnational solidarity in response to environmental calamity. In 1913, Ukrainian newspapers in the US contained many reports about flooding and heavy rains in Galicia that threatened food shortages in “our miserable land” (“nash bidnyi krai”). Interestingly, Russian nationalists and the Russian Orthodox Church in the Russian Empire at the same time organized an entire campaign to help the starving Russians of “Galician Rus” (“Galitskaia Rus”; the author thanks the anonymous reviewer for this important comment).

groups (Brubaker 13–22). Still, UNDO members decided to carry out the action and transferred it entirely to churches and local Ukrainian community buildings.¹⁸

The information was immediately circulated among district committees via telegram and *Dilo*. “The only way to improve the situation of peasants in Soviet Ukraine,” the appeal stated, “is to fight against Bolshevism as a socio-political system, take Ukrainian lands from Russia, and establish an independent Ukrainian state” (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 20). It was essential that during the Day of Mourning and Protest, special resolutions should pass linking the cause of the famine to “the colonial regime of the Moscow Bolsheviks on Ukrainian lands as well as their failed agricultural economy” (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 21). On this day, special lectures were to be delivered by representatives from Lviv or by local community leaders. And these lectures were to be based on Mudryi’s book, which had been widely distributed throughout Galicia.

The organization of the Day of Mourning and Protest was closely coordinated between Lviv and the district offices. A series of telegrams sent between Lviv and district towns (such as Kut, Ternopil, Zolochiv, Terebovlia, Buchach, Berezhany, Dolyna, Lutsk, Rivne, Stryi, Kosiv, Stanyslaviv, and Drohobych) attest to a tight collaboration in the staging of local events as well as to the massive mobilization of political leaders and educators in Lviv who were willing to travel to remote locations on 29 October to give lectures (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 465–1071). In most places, local churches were the leading organizers of events. In addition, in cases where no one could come from Lviv, local priests delivered lectures on the famine. For example, in Berezhany and neighbouring villages, two prayer ceremonies were held together with an address by priest Ievsevi Bachyns’kyi, the head of the district committee. In Kolomyia, a lecture titled “Iak chervona Moskva ponevolyla Ukraïnu” (“How Red Moscow Enslaved Ukraine”) was delivered by the head of the local People’s Home, while in Volodymyr in Volhynia, the Day of Mourning and Protest was carried out by the local chapter of the Union of Ukrainian Women.

One of the most extensive commemorations was in the district of Buchach, about 130 kilometres southeast of Lviv. In Buchach, a town on the Zbruch River approximately 80 kilometres from the border with Soviet Ukraine, the famine was not just a piece of distant news but a real catastrophe

¹⁸ It should be mentioned that the Greek Catholic press—for example, *Nova zoria* (*New Star* [Lviv])—represented a more anti-Polish narrative, criticizing the Polish government for being overly passive in aiding the starving (Papuha, *Zakhidna Ukraïna* 18–20).

that was felt daily owing to an influx of refugees from Soviet Ukraine and by way of family histories. This is why in the Buchach district, commemorative events were held both in the main town and in every village in the district (forty-five villages altogether). Specially designed posters hung in public spaces, and a *panakhyda* (a funeral service in memory of the deceased) was performed simultaneously in every church in the district (figure 1 shows a poster advertising such an event). According to the organizers, more than 6,140 people participated in these commemorations in order to express “compassion for our brothers [*spivchuvannia dlia brativ*] in Ukraine” (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 425).

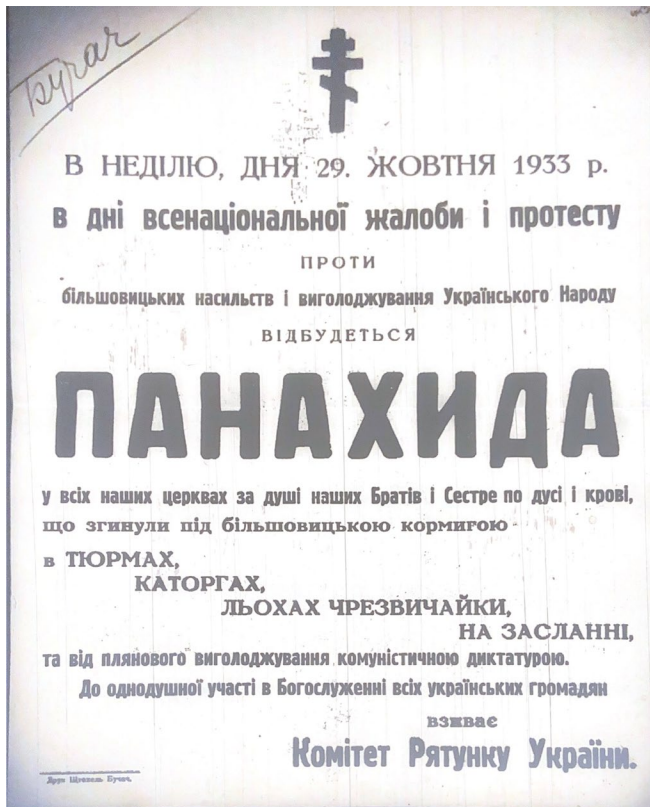


FIGURE 1. | A notification poster about the Day of Mourning and Protest in Buchach (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 423).

V. THE UKRAINIAN COMMITTEE AND TRANSNATIONAL HUMANITARIANISM

The Day of Mourning and Protest was not limited in scale. Commemorations took place beyond the Ukrainian lands under Polish control. In fact, a wave of commemorations was reported across Central and Western Europe on 29 October. In Hamburg and Berlin, Ukrainians were joined by the German association Brüder in Not (Brethren in Need). And lectures, concerts, and church services were organized across Belgium, France, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania.¹⁹

Aside from Lviv, two other cities were important centres for countering the Soviet denial of the famine. The first was Prague, where Ol'herd-Ipolyt Bochkovs'kyi, a Ukrainian sociologist and community leader, formed the Aid Committee for the Starving in Ukraine (Komitet Dopomohy Holodnym na Ukraïni).²⁰ This organization played a crucial role in the dissemination of knowledge about the famine throughout Czechoslovakia and in relaying Western European news to Galician leaders. An instance of the latter involved the public wrath brought on by the denial of the famine by French prime minister Édouard Herriot following his tour of famine-ridden areas at the invitation of the Soviet government. Based on his visits to Kyiv and Kharkiv, he praised the development of Soviet agriculture and denied the famine. As he reported in the *New York Herald Tribune*, "I saw famine ten years ago when the American mission was sent to the Ukraine but today saw it nowhere" ("Report"). According to Herriot, the famine, was simply "Hitlerite propaganda" against the Soviet government.²¹ Bochkovs'kyi challenged Herriot in private letters and official statements. He also worked together with the Ukrainian Committee to launch a more institutional response on the part of Ukrainian lawyers and politicians (Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 141).

The Czechoslovakia Aid Committee for the Starving in Ukraine also held a Day of Mourning and Protest, during which Valentyn Sadovs'kyi delivered a lecture on the causes of the famine. According to Sadovs'kyi, "the catastrophe did not result from natural conditions but was a result of the Bolshevik economy. Without changing the very economic system," he

¹⁹ These solidarity events served as fundraising opportunities as well, and individual donations were sent to the starving in Soviet Ukraine.

²⁰ Some of these letters written by Bochkovs'kyi can be accessed via the HREC website (see "Olgerd Bochkovsky").

²¹ Interestingly, as described by Robert Conquest, Herriot's interpreter Professor Seeborg was later arrested by the Bolsheviks and sentenced to five years in a Karelian camp for his connection to the Frenchman (Conquest 316).

continued, “one cannot change the life conditions” (qtd. in Z. M. 20). The committee in Prague remained very active in the public sphere, publishing announcements about the famine in the local press and distributing special brochures.²² Another important organization at that time was the Prague branch of the Union of Ukrainian Women, led by Sofiia Rusova. In a lengthy article written for *Tryzub*, Rusova and Kharytyna Kononenko underscored the importance of the dissemination of information as the only mechanism by which the situation in “Greater Ukraine” could be improved. The famine, they stressed, “does not stem from some sort of natural causes—be it lack of harvest or conditions of climate. Rather, it has been created artificially by the political conditions in which the Ukrainian people exist under the rule of Moscow Bolsheviks” (Rusova and Kononenko 36).

After Prague, Bucharest was the next most-active city in distributing information about the developing famine. The relief committee formed by Vasyl' Trepke and Dmytro Herodot (Ivashyn) played a leading role in spreading the word about the influx of refugees escaping the Soviet Union by way of the Dnister River and in calling for the inception of a special committee dedicated to assisting the refugees. On the pages of *Tryzub*, they also described dreadful events taking place on the border, such as “painful tragedies” occurring on the Dnister River, “where Bolshevik guards began to hunt those who were crossing to flee . . .”:

Not long ago, a peasant family with three children were crossing the Dnister in a boat. The Bolsheviks, spotting the fleers almost at the middle of the river, started shooting at them, . . . [killing] the mother. . . . [T]he Romanian guards . . . took the father, who was badly wounded in the leg, to the nearest hospital. When the doctor . . . told the man that . . . he would have to amputate his leg . . . the unfortunate refugee . . . stated, “It is better to be without a leg than to live under the Bolsheviks.” (Trepke and Herodot 11–12)

On the pages of the Lviv-based *Vistnyk*, the Comitetul Ukrainian—Ukrainian Civil Rescue Committee in Romania (Ukraïns'kyi Hromads'ko-Dopomohovyi Komitet v Rumunii “Comitetul Ukrainian”) reported mass waves of refugees coming from Ukraine to Romania, “all in rags, almost naked, and exhausted and starving” (Comitetul Ukrainian). The Bucharest committee played a leading role in the region in raising funds for the refugees, and it was soon joined by committees formed in Bukovyna, Bessarabia, and parts of Bulgaria.

The Ukrainian Committee in Lviv did not work directly with refugees. Nonetheless, in numerous memos sent to district committees, it stressed the

²² For more on the work of Bochkovs'kyi and the Prague Aid Committee, see Czech and Hnatiuk.

need to gather eyewitness accounts of the famine. Its members also distributed a questionnaire to be used for interviewing refugees escaping the famine. The archive gives no indication how many interviews took place or whether there was a plan to publish them.

The Ukrainian Committee was closely connected with other committees in the exchange of books, brochures, and postcards written about the famine and published locally in Lviv, Prague, Bratislava, and Berlin. Only a small number of these items are preserved in the archive. One is a postcard depicting a starved mother and child that was distributed by the Berlin-based Hilfskomitee für die Hungernden in der Ukraine (Relief Committee for the Starving in Ukraine [Ukraiński Obywatelski Komitet 262]). The committee in Germany was also active in collecting food and money that could be sent to Soviet Ukraine.²³

Local relief committees additionally had numerous opportunities to meet during international conferences, such as the Congress of European Nationalities in Bern (Papuha, *Chomu*; Serbyn). The most-important meeting of the committees, though, took place in Vienna; under the auspices of Innitzer, the interconfessional and supranational congress convened on 16–17 December 1933. From late August 1933, Innitzer had been one of the most active spiritual leaders in the circulation of information about the famine. His appeals were reprinted in major newspapers in the region, as well as in the US-based *The New York Times* and *New York Herald Tribune*. He was in close contact with the metropolitan of Galicia Sheptyts'kyi; the members of the Ukrainian Committee; and the leaders of other organizations working for Great Famine relief. One such organization was Russlandhilfe: Hilfsaktion für die Hungernden in Russland (Aid to Russia: Relief Campaign for the Starving in Russia), which was based in Vienna and worked to provide food aid to starving Jews in the Soviet Union.

Innitzer, in his first appeal (issued August 1933), warned that millions of people of every religion and nationality were dying in the Soviet Union and that many more were expected to die in the coming months. The civilized world, he noted, faced with the unbearable misery of the victims, the killing of children, and numerous cases of cannibalism, needed to react and spread compassion. Helping the starving, Innitzer urged, was the moral obligation of all of humanity, regardless of confessional and national differences. The appeal was followed by months of preparation, networking, and information gathering. The congress held in Vienna on 16–17 December 1933 was the most-significant event in the international famine-relief campaign of 1933.

²³ Some evidence can be found in the archive of the Ukrainian Free University in Munich.

During the two-day event, members of more than a dozen committees representing a variety of ethnicities and confessions debated on the mechanisms for countering the Soviet denial of the collectivization famines. The meeting included, among others, the European Church Mutual Aid Central Office (Evropeis'ka Tsentralia Tserkovnoï Vzaïemodopomohy); the International Church Union (Tserkovnyi Mizhnarodnii Soiuz); the Ukrainian Committees of Lviv, Chernivtsi, Prague, and Bucharest; the Ukrainian Supreme Emigration Council (Ukraïns'ka Holovna Emigratsiina Rada) in Paris; the London Relief Committee for the Starving in Ukraine (Komitet Dopomohy Holodnym na Ukraïni); the Warsaw Relief Committee for the Starving in Ukraine; the Russian Relief Committee for the Starving in the Soviet Union (Dopomohovyi Komitet Holodnym v Sovits'komu Soiuzi); the German Brüder in Not association; the Evangelical Union (Ievangelys't'kyi Soiuz) in Berlin; the Baltic Union for Russian Relief (Baltyis'kyi Soiuz Dopomohy Rosiï) in Riga and Tartu; the Jewish Relief for Russia (Zhydivs'ka Dopomoha Rosiï) in Vienna; and the International Relief Committee for Mennonites (Komitet Svitovoi Dopomohy Menonitam [—yi 18]).

The congress centred on the exchange of information and the presentation of activities, and it concluded with the drafting of appeals to the International Red Cross and the League of Nations. It also passed a resolution with the following declaration:

1. In response to all attempts to deny the terrible famine, . . . the Congress definitively states that millions of innocent people died last year from starvation even in the wealthiest regions of the USSR, such as in Ukraine and Northern Caucasia; . . .
2. These losses could have been avoided. At the time when this tragedy was taking place in the USSR, overseas agricultural economies were experiencing surplus grain production. . . . This surplus could have been sent [to the USSR]; . . .
3. The famine is predicted to become worse. Even a good harvest this year would only temporarily ameliorate the problem; . . .
4. The Congress calls on all citizens of the world . . . to help save these [starving] unfortunates.

(—yi 20)

The congress in Vienna was thus a critical moment in the integration of various ethnic and religious committees working to provide relief in response to collectivization famines in the Soviet Union. It gave leader-delegates vital data on organizational groundwork, the scale of activity, and published materials. And they managed yet again to send requests for intervention to the International Red Cross and the League of Nations. Their

appeals to the international community were published in the pages of the most-important newspapers in Europe and North America. However, they did not succeed in being heard above the powerful official Soviet denial of the collectivization famines. Most of the reports coming from Ukraine in fall 1933 confirmed a successful harvest and viewed any news about “food shortages” as a question of the past. In November 1933, the US officially recognized the Soviet Union and opened diplomatic relations.

Nonetheless, various committees kept reporting on the devastating situation in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Innitzer took a greater interest in Ukraine. At the beginning of 1934, he was gifted a photo album by Alexander Wienerberger, an Austrian engineer who was working in Kharkiv in 1933. These photos (sent to Austria via diplomatic mail in October 1933) are rare accessible visual evidence of the famine.²⁴ Throughout 1934, Wienerberger, supported by Innitzer, gave lectures in Austria about the famine, and in August 1934, his photos were included in the sixteen-page-long brochure *Russland wie es wirklich ist! (Russia as It Really Is!)*.²⁵ Innitzer became a major anti-Bolshevik spiritual leader in Austria and frequently referred to the famines of the 1930s to illustrate and characterize the immoral character of the regime. At the same time, though, he was turning to fascism and supporting the call for the unification of Germany and Austria (Graf-Stuhlhofer 149). The information about the collectivization famines—and the famine in Ukraine in particular—served as a useful propaganda tool for him in the dissemination of anti-Bolshevik narratives in Nazi-occupied Europe.

VI. LEGACY AND INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The work of the Ukrainian Civil Committee for Saving Ukraine extended beyond its time and geographical parameters. What was initiated in Lviv by a small group of Galician leaders in late July 1933 became a transnational movement that connected Ukrainians of often different regional, confessional, and political identifications. The networks of national compassion linked Ukrainians living in Galicia, exile communities, and the North American diaspora. Through collective rituals of mourning, they

²⁴ It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss Innitzer’s activity on information about the famine that reached its peak between 1934–38. Wienerberger’s album can be accessed via the HREC online photo directory (see Wienerberger, *Die Hungertragödie*).

²⁵ See [Wienerberger], *Russland*.

developed strong ties with the starving in Soviet Ukraine as well. Although they did not suffer from hunger directly, they deeply sympathized with the famine victims. Language of kinship was deployed to help the starving “brothers” in the “motherland.” The narrative of national compassion at that point became a political tool in the (re)emergence of Ukrainian nationalism in the transnational sphere in the 1930s. It further strengthened the associational lives of Ukrainian diasporic communities. Throughout the 1930s, for example, the Emergency Relief Committee for Starving Ukrainians, established by the Ukrainian National Women’s League of America (Soiuz Ukraïnok Ameryky), kept lobbying for famine recognition, collecting funds, sending letters to newspapers, and reaching out to politicians in North America.

Nevertheless, the most-impressive legacy of the Ukrainian Committee lay in Galicia. Wide participation in the Day of Mourning and Protest contributed to the dissemination of information about the famine among all Ukrainians. In every district town and village in Galicia, peasants, clerks, educators, priests, and community leaders gathered to mourn the deaths of their co-nationals. Commemorating the victims of starvation became a national obligation, with the famine being viewed as a national tragedy. The Day of Mourning and Protest established a memorial pattern for decades to come; diasporic Ukrainians would mourn the victims of the Holodomor at church services and *panakhyda* events, as well as through public protests. Thus, in the North American context, commemoration of the famine did not merely stem from a Cold War-era political instrumentalization of the history and memory of the famine but represented a continuation of practices established in Galicia already in 1933. Indeed, the narrative of national compassion and the moral obligation to act that had been formed early on might help explain why in the post-World War II setting, Galician Ukrainians played a prominent role in North American commemorations of the famine.

The definition of the Great Famine as a politically motivated atrocity committed against Ukrainians by the Bolshevik authorities was configured in response to the Soviet denial of this catastrophe and the broader international indifference regarding it. Ukrainian leaders across space saw the famine not as an exceptional event or a natural disaster but, rather, as a part of a broader pattern of violence against the peasants and as a forced subjugation of Ukrainians to an imposed political system. In the 1930s, such a political understanding of famine—that is, the famine as a vehicle of political violence—was novel; thus, it did not find fertile ground beyond the sphere of a small group of activists. The quest for international recognition of the famine was sacrificed to *realpolitik* considerations. But this hostile climate did not stop Ukrainian activists from pursuing a path of public

advocacy. The Ukrainian Committee played a pivotal role in soliciting help from larger institutions, such as the League of Nations and the International Red Cross. The activism of Ukrainian leaders demonstrates then that interwar humanitarianism had many dimensions, and direct, tangible support was just one of them. In the context of the spread of disinformation about the famine, disseminating truthful information and publicizing news about the starving victims were the only possible means of assistance. The case of the Ukrainian Committee, then, demonstrates the notion of informational awareness as an important device in the provision of humanitarian aid.

The activity of the Ukrainian Committee shows that famine-related humanitarianism in the interwar period was a situated and relational set of practices. In the context of the denial of the famine and lack of international engagement, knowledge and information networks spread by small committees became the only means by which any humanitarian narrative could develop. Because the Soviet government did not accept any organized aid, the committees' work was reduced to providing relief for refugees and sending individual money transfers. At the same time, information became the most crucial instrument for countering Soviet policies and challenging the Bolshevik legacy in Soviet Ukraine. The "silenced archive of the Holodomor" thus offers insight into the complex networks through which knowledge about the famine penetrated and moved within the transnational sphere. An examination of the displaced and fragmented character of the tangible materials, furthermore, sheds greater light on the relationship between power and historical erasure that haunts the legacy of the Holodomor overall.

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