

1928–1931: Prelude to the Famine

1928 **Introduction of the First Five-Year Plan:** Joseph Stalin launches the First Five-Year Plan, aiming to rapidly industrialize the Soviet Union and collectivize agriculture. This plan emphasizes heavy industry and requires significant grain exports to fund industrialization.

1929 **Forced Collectivization Begins:** The Soviet government accelerates the process of collectivizing agriculture. Peasants are forced to surrender their land, livestock, and produce to collective farms (kolkhozes). This causes widespread resistance, especially in Ukraine, where many peasants destroy their own grain and livestock rather than give them up.

Dekulakization Campaign: Stalin initiates a campaign to eliminate kulaks (wealthier peasants) as a class. Thousands of kulaks are arrested, exiled, or executed, leading to chaos in the agricultural sector.

1930 **2 March:** Stalin publishes an article, "Dizzy with Success," blaming local officials for excessive zeal in collectivization and temporarily halting the process. This is a tactical retreat to calm unrest.

Fall of 1930: Collectivization resumes with renewed force, further disrupting agricultural production.

1931 **Severe Grain Requisitioning:** The Soviet government imposes severe grain requisition quotas on Ukraine, demanding unrealistic amounts of grain from the collective farms. These quotas are enforced brutally, with any failure to meet them leading to harsh punishments.

1932: Onset of the Famine

Spring 1932 **Worsening Grain Shortages:** The effects of forced collectivization, coupled with bad weather, lead to a significant drop in grain production. Despite this, the Soviet government continues to demand high grain quotas from Ukraine.

Summer 1932 **Starvation Begins:** As the grain requisition quotas are enforced, peasants begin to starve. In some areas, resistance to requisitioning is met with violence, and local authorities are replaced with more loyal Soviet officials.

7 August 1932 **Law of "Five Ears of Grain":** Stalin's government passes a decree known as the "Law of Five Ears of Grain," making it a criminal offense (punishable by death or 10 years imprisonment) to take even a small amount of grain from collective farms. This law is ruthlessly enforced in Ukraine, worsening the famine.

September 1932 **Increased Grain Quotas:** Despite the already dire situation, the Soviet government increases Ukraine's grain requisition quotas. This leaves little to no grain for the peasants themselves, sealing their fate.

1932: Onset of the Famine (cont)

October 1932 **Political Repression Intensifies:** Stalin sends his emissaries, including Vyacheslav Molotov and Lazar Kaganovich, to Ukraine to ensure grain quotas are met. They implement draconian measures, such as blockading villages and confiscating all food supplies, to force compliance.

November 1932 **Blacklisting of Villages:** Entire villages are blacklisted for failing to meet grain quotas, meaning they are cut off from receiving any goods, food, or seeds for the next planting season. This policy dooms these villages to starvation.

1933: Peak of the Famine

January 1933 **Mass Starvation:** By the beginning of 1933, starvation is widespread across Ukraine. Corpses begin to litter the streets, and reports of cannibalism emerge as people desperately try to survive.

Stalin's Directives: Stalin issues directives to prevent the mass exodus of starving peasants from Ukraine and other affected regions. Internal passports are required, and those caught fleeing are sent back to their villages or labor camps.



1933: Peak of the Famine (cont)

February 1933 **Death Toll Mounts:** The death toll continues to rise, with tens of thousands dying daily. The Soviet government maintains strict control over information, denying the existence of the famine to the outside world and within the Soviet Union.

Spring 1933 **Peak Starvation:** The famine reaches its peak in the spring. Entire villages are depopulated, with many areas in Ukraine reporting mortality rates as high as 80%.

April 1933: Ukrainian intellectuals, writers, and artists are targeted for repression and execution, as Stalin seeks to suppress Ukrainian nationalism and identity.

June 1933 **The Toll is Apparent:** By mid-1933, the full scale of the famine is undeniable, with estimates of death ranging from 3 to 7 million people. The Soviet government, however, continues to deny the famine publicly.

August 1933 **Gradual Easing:** With the new harvest approaching and international pressure mounting, the Soviet government begins to relax the most severe requisition policies. However, the damage has already been done.

Fall 1933 **Recovery Begins:** As the harvest comes in, the immediate crisis begins to ease, but the long-term impacts on Ukrainian society, demography, and culture are devastating.

Aftermath and Legacy

1934 **Denial and Suppression:** The Soviet Union continues to deny the famine, and any mention of it is forbidden. The government promotes propaganda suggesting that reports of famine are lies spread by enemies of the state.

Ukrainian Repression Continues: Repression of Ukrainian culture and nationalism intensifies, with thousands of Ukrainian leaders, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens arrested, exiled, or executed.

1940s-1950s **Holodomor Suppressed:** The memory of the Holodomor is suppressed within the Soviet Union, and any discussion of the famine is censored. Survivors are often reluctant to speak about their experiences due to fear of reprisal.

1980s **Renewed Interest and Research:** During the period of Glasnost under Mikhail Gorbachev, there is renewed interest in the Holodomor, and Soviet citizens begin to speak out about the famine. Western historians also start to examine the event more closely.

1991 **Ukraine's Independence:** Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine gains independence and begins to officially recognize the Holodomor as a national tragedy. Research and public discussion of the famine are encouraged.

Aftermath and Legacy (cont)

2006 **Recognition as Genocide:** The Ukrainian Parliament officially recognizes the Holodomor as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people. This recognition is supported by several other countries, though it remains a contentious issue internationally, with Russia rejecting the genocide label.

2010s--Present **Ongoing Commemoration and Controversy:** The Holodomor remains a central aspect of Ukrainian national identity and is commemorated annually on the fourth Saturday of November. The debate over the classification of the Holodomor as genocide continues in the international community, but it is widely accepted as one of the most horrific tragedies of the 20th century.



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