

## Depicting the Famine in Soviet Ukrainian Literature : A Comparative Perspective

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Between 1931 and 1934, a famine claimed 5 million lives across the Soviet Union, 3.9 million of them in Soviet Ukraine.<sup>1</sup> A decade and a half later, another 1-1.5 million people died as famine struck the economically devastated postwar Soviet Union in 1947.<sup>2</sup> These famines, which primarily affected the Soviet Union's rural population, were a taboo topic in the USSR until the Gorbachev era. This does not mean, however, that Soviet writers, some of whom were famine survivors, did not attempt to describe Soviet famines in literature in the years after Joseph Stalin's death. Nikita Khrushchev's Secret Speech condemning Stalin's "cult of personality" to the Twentieth Party Congress triggered a broad reevaluation of the Stalin era that went far beyond the issues that Khrushchev initially discussed in his speech. Although Nikita Khrushchev never mentioned the 1933 or 1947 famines in his address to the Twentieth Party Congress, his speech emboldened Soviet intellectuals to revisit these painful episodes from the Stalin era. The impetus to bring the reality of the famines to light would seem to be the greatest in Soviet Ukraine, which bore the bulk of the casualties. Indeed, despite Soviet censorship, some Soviet Ukrainian writers did manage to raise the issue of the famine in the post-Stalin period. This paper analyzes both archival and published sources to examine three moments when Soviet Ukrainian writers, all of whom were firmly ensconced in the literary "establishment," sought to bring the famine to light during the period between the death of Stalin and *glasnost*. In 1956, the Stalin-

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (New York: Doubleday, 2017), xxvi.

era poet Andrii Malyshko raised the issue of the famine at a stormy discussion of the Twentieth Party Congress at the Ukrainian Writers' Union in 1956. In 1959, the Stalin Prize-winning Ukrainian prose writer Oles' Honchar managed to get a brief description of the experience of the famine from the perspective of the rural population included in his war novel *Man and Arms*. Finally, in the 1970s, the writer Mykhailo Stel'makh spent several years fighting to include discussion of the famine in his novel *Four Fords*. This paper compares the relatively modest degree of success that Ukrainian writers had getting depictions of famine into print with efforts by the Moldovan writer Ion Druță and the Russian writer Mikhail Alekseev to discuss the 1947 and 1933 famines, respectively, in their literary works. This comparative perspective reveals that Soviet cultural policy and control was stricter in Soviet Ukraine than elsewhere in the USSR.

The efforts of Soviet Ukrainian writers to get accounts of the 1933 famine past Soviet censorship has received relatively little attention. Literary works dealing with the famine by Soviet dissidents that were published in the West are more well-known. These include Soviet Jewish writer Vasilii Grossman's novels *Life and Fate* and *Everything Flows* and Soviet dissident Lev Kopelev's account of his own participation in grain requisitioning in Ukraine in his memoir.<sup>3</sup> Works of fiction produced by Ukrainian writers in the diaspora, such as famine survivor Vasyl' Barka's 1962 work *The Yellow Prince (Zhovtyi kniaz')*, have also received some scholarly attention.<sup>4</sup> A few scholars have analyzed the content of Soviet Ukrainian literature that touches on the famine. Ukrainian diaspora scholar Ol'ha Samiilenko analyzed two novels by Soviet Ukrainian

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<sup>2</sup> M. Ellman, "The 1947 Soviet Famine and the Entitlement Approach to Famines," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 24, no. 5 (2000): 603–30.

<sup>3</sup> Vasily Grossman, *Life and Fate*, trans. Robert Chandler (New York: New York Review Books Classics, 2006), 561-562; Vasily Grossman, *Everything Flows*, trans. Robert Chandler, Elizabeth Chandler, and Anna Aslanyan (New York: New York Review Books Classics, 2009); Lev Kopelev, *The Education of a True Believer*, trans. Gary Kern (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 224-286.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Jean-Pierre Cap, "The Holodomor in Historical and Literary Context: The Yellow Prince by Vasyl Barka," *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 64, no. 1–2 (Spring-Winter 2008): 119–32; Daria Mattingly, "No Novel for

authors, Ivan Stadniuk's *People are Not Angels* (*Liudy ne angely*, 1961) and Petr Lanovenko's *Immortal Bread* (*Nevmyruchii khlib*, 1981) in comparison with Alekseev's 1982 novel *Brawlers* (*Drachuny*). Samiilenko argues that, unlike *Brawlers*, both Ukrainian novels are in line with official Soviet explanations of the famine, blaming the famine on nature and human error instead of Soviet authorities.<sup>5</sup> Daria Mattingly has analyzed the portrayal of the perpetrators of the famine, including Soviet officials and local activists who confiscated grain, in works of Ukrainian literature ranging from socialist realist novels of the 1930s (where the perpetrators are generally the protagonists and the horrors of the famine elided), Honchar's *Man and Arms* and Stel'makh's *Four Fords*, *samvydav* and *tamvydav* works, and works produced in the diaspora and post-Soviet Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> In addition to analyzing the content of Soviet Ukrainian literary works dealing with the famine, this paper places them within the context of their production, publication and reception, thereby adding to our understanding of how writers managed to break the silence around this rarely-discussed topic. The comparison with similar works by Ion Druță and Mikhail Alekseev helps us to understand how the situation of Soviet Ukrainian authors differed from that of Moldovan and Russian authors, respectively.

Andrii Malyshko and the Twentieth Party Congress:  
The Famine as Stalinist Crime, 1956

The shock waves produced by Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the Twentieth Party Congress were felt across the Soviet Union. The discussion of the results of the Twentieth Party Congress held at the Ukrainian Writers' Union in Kyiv on March 13-14, 1956, ranged far beyond the topics mentioned by Khrushchev in his speech. Considering that both the 1930s purges and

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Ordinary Men? Representation of the Rank-and-File Perpetrators of the Holodomor in Ukrainian Novels," *Euxeinos: Governance and Culture in the Black Sea Region* 9, no. 27 (2019): 27-32.

<sup>5</sup> Ol'ha Samiilenko, "Velykyi holod u tvorakh radians'kykh pys'mennykiv," *Suchasnist'*, no. 6 (1989): 23-35.

the late Stalinist ideological campaigns had targeted supposed “bourgeois nationalists” among the Ukrainian writers, it is not surprising that the question of Ukrainian national culture was at the top of the agenda for many Ukrainian writers in the wake of Khrushchev’s condemnation of Stalin. In the writers’ discussion—which was not transcribed at the express request of the Ukrainian playwright Oleksandr Korniiichuk—the writers repeatedly condemned the purges, mentioning by name many Ukrainian intellectuals who had been executed as “bourgeois nationalists.”<sup>7</sup> The Stalin Prize-winning poet Andrii Malyshko also touched on the purges and the neglect of Ukrainian culture under Stalin. Like many of the other writers, Malyshko criticized the jailing and execution of Ukrainian writers, recounting an episode during the purges in which the then-secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party Lazar’ Kaganovich forced him and Korniiichuk to denounce “bourgeois nationalists” among the writers in the middle of the night. Yet the most controversial moment of the discussion by far occurred when Malyshko criticized the Party leadership for failing to discuss the 1933 famine in Ukraine at the Congress. He described the past of the Ukrainian people as “terrifying” starting in the 1930s, when “there was no bread-salt and they put people in jail and tortured them.” Malyshko was the only writer who brought up the subject of the famine during the discussion, directly stating that it was specially organized by Stalin and killed 9 million people.<sup>8</sup> After Malyshko’s speech, several writers and critics, including Oles’ Honchar, attempted to return the meeting to “creative issues.” In a report from the secretary of the Kyiv city Communist Party M. Synytsia to the first secretary of the Ukrainian Central Com-

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<sup>6</sup> Mattingly, “No Novel for Ordinary Men?”

<sup>7</sup> A summary of the discussion can be found in Tsentral’nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads’kykh ob’iednan’ Ukraïny (TsDAHOU) 1/24/4255 (March 26, 1956): 59-63, in V. Iu. Vasil’ev, ed., *Politicheskoe rukovodstvo Ukrainy, 1938-1989*, Seriiia “Dokumenty sovetskoi istorii” (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2006), 201-203. Another short summary can be found in a report on the reaction to the Twentieth Party Congress in Ukraine in TsDAHOU 1/24/4255 (March 31, 1956): 98-104.

<sup>8</sup> TsDAHOU 1/24/4255 (March 26, 1956) in *Politicheskoe rukovodstvo Ukrainy*, 201-202. Malyshko’s mention of a figure of 9 million people is referenced in a later meeting of the Party cell of the Union of Writers of Ukraine in Derzhavnyi arkhiv Kyïvs’koï oblasti (DAKO) P-28/7/1 (April 18, 1956): 93.

mittee, I. Kirichenko, Malyshko's speech was criticized as "the most incorrect" of all the writers' speeches.<sup>9</sup>

There was little in Malyshko's past to suggest that he would become the Ukrainian writer who raised the issue of the famine most forcefully during the initial phase of the Thaw. Born into a family of shoemakers in the town of Obukhiv in Kyiv *guberniia* in 1912, Malyshko studied at the literature faculty of the Kyiv Institute of Popular Education (*Kyivs'kyi instytut narodnoi osvity*) from 1930 to 1932. He taught literature in the town of Ovruch in Zhytomyr *oblast'* in 1933 before serving in the Red Army from 1934 to 1935.<sup>10</sup> Malyshko entered literature in the mid-1930s, after the founding of the Ukrainian Union of Writers put an end to the freewheeling literary organizations and debates that defined Ukrainian literary life in the 1920s.<sup>11</sup> He published his first collection of poetry and joined the Soviet Writers' Union in 1936. Like Pavlo Ty-chyna, Maksym Ryl's'kyi, and Mykola Bazhan, Malyshko proved to be one of the Ukrainian writers who was "able to accept controls," as George Luckyj put it.<sup>12</sup> As the Stalin era wore on, Malyshko settled into the role of "court poet;" shortly after the 1944 reconquest of Western Ukraine during the Second World War in he was enlisted to lead a pilgrimage to the writer Ivan Franko's tomb in an effort to replace nationalist commemorative traditions with more acceptably Soviet ones.<sup>13</sup> His high status within the Soviet Ukrainian cultural establishment was confirmed by two Stalin Prizes: one in 1947 for his poem *Prometheus (Prometei)* and collection *Lyrics (Liryka)*, and a second in 1951 for his collection *Beyond the Blue Sea (Za synim morem)*.

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<sup>9</sup> TsDAHOU 1/24/4255 (March 26, 1956) in *Politicheskoe rukovodstvo Ukrainy*, 201-202.

<sup>10</sup> Halyna Petrivna Herasymova, "Malyshko Andrii Samiilovych," in *Entsyklopediia istorii Ukrainy [Elektronnyi resurs]*, ed. V. A. Smolii (Kyiv: V-vo "Naukova dumka," 2009), [http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=Malyshko\\_A\\_S](http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=Malyshko_A_S).

<sup>11</sup> George Stephen Nestor Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934*, Studies of the Harriman Institute (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine*, 242.

<sup>13</sup> Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 52.

Malyshko's outburst about the famine elicited condemnation from Party officials. On April 18, the members of the the Party cell of the Ukrainian Union of Writers met to continue the conversation about the Twentieth Party Congress and to censure Malyshko for his statements. The writer Iurii Smolych started off the discussion by stating that Malyshko had made valid points during his controversial speech about the neglect of the Ukrainian language and the decline of Ukrainian-language schools. He said that it was a shame that these points were included in a speech that included many "false statistics." "For example, when the figure is given of 9 million dead during the time of collectivization, then we, Communists, much say directly that this is not just a mistake, but a great political error, and having been uttered from the wide tribune of a non-Party meeting, this already sounds like an statement unbecoming a member of the Party."<sup>14</sup> Other members of the Party cell, like the poet Mykola Bazhan, agreed that Malyshko's speech showed "political immaturity."<sup>15</sup> In a speech at the end of the meeting, Malyshko recanted, stating that the other writers' speeches had shown him that his speech was incorrect from a political standpoint. Claiming he had always been a Leninist, he sought to excuse his mistake by attributing it to his great concern for the fate of his people (*narod*).<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, however, it was only after Malyshko made several more provocative public statements about other topics later in the year that he received a severe reprimand from the Party on January 18, 1957.<sup>17</sup> The Malyshko episode is an example of a Ukrainian writer—one who was considered quite loyal to the regime during the Stalin era—using Khrushchev's Secret Speech as an opportunity to raise the issue of the famine in a semi-public setting. In 1956, no other Ukrainian writers dared join Malyshko, however, indicating that discussion of the famine was still taboo among Ukrainian elites.

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<sup>14</sup> DAKO P-28/7/1 (April 18, 1956): 92-93.

<sup>15</sup> DAKO P-28/7/1 (April 18, 1956): 148.

<sup>16</sup> DAKO P-28/7/1 (April 18, 1956): 153-155.

Oles' Honchar's *Man and Arms*:  
The Famine as Obstacle on the Road to Socialism, 1960

Malysenko's statement about the famine surely impacted the writers who heard it, but his speech, of course, did not appear in print—indeed, the meeting during which it occurred was not even transcribed. In 1960, Oles' Honchar actually managed to include a description of the famine from the perspective of a survivor in his novel *Man and Arms*, which went on to win the 1962 Shevchenko Prize. Honchar was himself a famine survivor, a fact about his life that he did not discuss, even with family members.<sup>18</sup> In 1933, Honchar was in his final year in school. As he wrote in his diary in 1989,

Before my eyes, our class melted away. Yesterday that one did not come, today someone else is missing. And by what miracle did I survive? Perhaps because a nurse [*fel'dsherka*] sent from the city was renting from my grandmother and shared with us her rations, and they dried these grams [of bread] into rusks [*sukhary*]<sup>19</sup>—for me... [...] I don't remember that I suffered from hunger, I was even surprised when one of the boys noticed—you have swollen feet! I was surprised—they were indeed swollen. It was alarming. All the days passed, as if in a yellow dream, all the time as if in some yellow ocean, and you just wanted to sleep, sleep. I came from school, it was hot outside, and I went to the stove, I was cold.<sup>19</sup>

As Honchar began to make his first steps onto the literary stage in the mid-1930s, he wrote a novella, “Stokozove Field,” that discussed “the entire tragedy of 1933” in depth. In a move that revealed his political naïveté, Honchar sent the novella to the Ukrainian writer Petro Panch for feedback. Panch praised the work highly but told Honchar that no one would ever publish it.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Simone Attilio Bellezza, *The Shore of Expectations: A Cultural Study of the Shchodennyky* (Edmonton ; Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2019), 7-8.

<sup>18</sup> I. V. Syroïd, “Oles' Honchar pro holodomor 1932-1933 rokiv (na materialakh shchodennykiv ta khudozhnikh tvoriv),” *Humanitarnyi visnyk*, Istorychni nauky, 17, no. 3 (2011): 85. Online version: [http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Gvi\\_2011\\_17\\_3\\_14](http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Gvi_2011_17_3_14).

<sup>19</sup> Oles' Honchar, *Shchodennyky: u tr'okh tomakh*, ed. V. D. Honchar, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Kyïv: Veselka, 2002), 247.

<sup>20</sup> Honchar, *Shchodennyky*, vol. 3, 62-63.

The work ultimately appeared, altered beyond recognition, in the journal *Molodyi bil'shovyk* (*Young Bolshevik*) in 1941.<sup>21</sup>

Honchar's true literary breakthrough occurred in the late 1940s, after the war, when he published a three-volume novel, *Standard-Bearers* (*Praporonostsi*), based on his experiences as a soldier during the Second World War. The novel, which won two Stalin Prizes for its portrayal of Ukrainian soldiers' participation in the liberation of Europe, immediately catapulted Honchar to the upper ranks of the Soviet Ukrainian literary establishment. During the initial phase of the Thaw, Honchar was cautious. He did not join the older generation in condemning Stalinism at the writers' discussion of the Twentieth Party Congress. However, he made it clear in subsequent meetings that he agreed with Malyshko's criticism of the impact of the purges on Ukrainian culture.<sup>22</sup> Honchar was not a literary rebel, but he was also a member of a new generation of Ukrainian writers, ones for whom the war, and not the purges, was their defining life experience. In 1959, Honchar became the head of the Ukrainian Writers' Union, an event which "marked the first step of including younger generations of writers in the new cultural *nomenklatura*."<sup>23</sup>

In 1960, Honchar published *Man and Arms* (*Liudyna i zbroia*), a work that reflected Khrushchev's attempt to de-Stalinize the memory of the war, in the Ukrainian literary journal *Vitchyzna* (*Homeland*).<sup>24</sup> The post-Stalinist nature of the novel is immediately evident from its setting: the early stages of World War II. In his speech to the Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev had criticized Stalin's leadership in the Second World War. This opened the door for works that discussed Soviet failures in the disastrous early years of the war, such as Konstantin Si-

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<sup>21</sup> Honchar, *Shchodennyky*, vol. 3, 544.

<sup>22</sup> Bellezza, *The Shore of Expectations*, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Bellezza, *The Shore of Expectations*, 23.

<sup>24</sup> Oles' Honchar, "Liudyna i zbroia: Roman," *Vitchyzna*, no. 1 (1960): 3–95; Oles' Honchar, "Liudyna i zbroia: Roman," *Vitchyzna*, no. 2 (1960): 8–102.



monov's 1959 novel *The Living and the Dead*.<sup>25</sup> “*The Standard-Bearers* is a story of the final stages of the war, when the sun of victory was shining through the blood and smoke,” Honchar explained in 1961. “But I still had to write, some time or another, of the most tragic period; I had to tell the story of how it all began.”<sup>26</sup> The novel also contained criticism of the Stalinist purges: the main character Bohdan Kolosovs'kyi's father is a Red Army officer who has been unjustly exiled to Siberia as an “enemy of the people.”<sup>27</sup> When Bohdan and his friends find themselves encircled by the Germans, a common fate for Soviet soldiers during the first months of the war, they remain loyal even behind enemy lines, a repudiation of the suspicious Stalin-era attitudes towards Soviet soldiers who were taken captive by the Germans.

The discussion of the 1933 famine in *Man and Arms* is part of the overall anti-Stalinist thrust of the novel. In the novel, the young soldier Miron Dukhnovich is chatting with artilleryman named Reshetniak and chewing on a piece of bread when Reshetniak says, “That bread's all right; now back in thirty-three, I ate nothing but weeds the whole spring through.” When Dukhnovich presses him for more information, the artilleryman launches into a monologue about the famine.

I'm the only one in the family who survived the famine. My body was swollen; I had dropsy on my feet, but somehow I pulled through. It was a hard spring, really hard. Wherever you went there was havoc: broken windows, stench in the houses. Nobody seemed to care about me then. I locked myself up in the house with every single latch there was. I was simply scared! What of, I don't know. I was just a kid. When the grain fields started to ripen, I'd take a pillow case and scissors and go into a field. The rye stood high then and the crop promised to be no worse than this summer's. I'd get into the thickest part of the field so I wouldn't be seen by a mounted watchman and cut a pillow easeful of stalks on the sly. A lot of people did the same thing; the watchmen nabbed them and called them '*kurkul* barbers'

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<sup>25</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, “Speech to 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U.,” Nikita Khrushchev Reference Archive (Marxists.org), n.d., <https://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24.htm>. On *The Living and the Dead*, see Polly Jones, “Between Myth and Memory: War, Terror and Stalin in Soviet Popular Memory,” in *Myth, Memory, Trauma: The Stalinist Past as Soviet Culture, 1953-69* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 173–211.

<sup>26</sup> Honchar, qtd. in Oles Honchar, *Man and Arms: A Novel*, trans. Anatole Bilenko (Kiev: Dnipro Publishers, 1985), <http://sites.utoronto.ca/elul/English/Honchar/Honchar-Man-and-Arms.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Honchar, *Man and Arms*, 25-26, 33.

but they weren't *kurkuls* at all — they were simply hungry people. Back home, I lit the stove, raked the ashes right onto the floor — cleanliness just didn't matter then! — put the ears on the hearthstone, dried them, ground them into meal and baked myself scones. The ears were still green, so the scones came out green too and were bitter to the taste, but once you ate your fill, it kept you going.<sup>28</sup>

This short but powerful passage makes several things clear: first, the famine was a mass phenomenon that killed not only the Reshetniak's family, but many others as well. The reference to a "stench in the houses" suggests that in many households there was no one left alive to bury the bodies. Second, low-level representatives of the state, the "mounted watchmen," were concerned more with preserving the wheat crop rather than giving aid to the starving. Third, these low-level state authorities were not only indifferent to the fate of the starving, but actually applied the politically poisonous term *kurkul* (*kulak* in Russian, meaning rich peasant), to peasants who were stealing simply to survive. As Daria Mattingly argues, "While Honchar does not explain who these field guards were or how the famine was organized, his very mention of its perpetrators mistaking the victims for enemies is significant in the cultural memory of the Holodomor, especially given the novel's reach to a wide readership."<sup>29</sup> Honchar does not address the questions of the causes of and responsibility for the famine, but makes it clear that the mass starvation of peasants was of little concern to Soviet authorities on the ground. The very vagueness of the passage allows readers to answer the question of responsibility however they choose.

Importantly, Honchar shows famine victims like the artilleryman to be loyal Soviet citizens. Dukhnovich tells Reshetniak that his experiences did not "seem to keep you from being a good soldier," to which the artilleryman replies, "I see it this way, buddy: our country is dear not only to the ones who eat cake all their lives." Despite what he has suffered at the hands of the Soviet state, Reshetniak is keen to defeat the Germans, telling Dukhnovich, "I want to shoot so

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<sup>28</sup> Honchar, *Man and Arms*, 119.

that every single bullet hits its mark and every shell smashes a Nazi skull.”<sup>30</sup> Throughout the novel, the victims of Stalinism are shown to be just as committed (if not more so) to the defense of the Soviet homeland as those who have not suffered repressions. Honchar’s invocation of the famine thus does not delegitimize the Soviet cause so much as save it from the Stalinists.

The overwhelmingly positive reviews of *Man and Arms* in the Ukrainian and all-Union press avoided any mention of Reshetniak’s monologue about the famine. The review of the novel that appeared in the Soviet Writers’ Union newspaper *Literaturnaia gazeta* (*Literary Gazette*) after the novel’s translation and publication in the journal *Moskva* (*Moscow*) did not reference the anti-Stalinist aspect of the novel at all, simply praising the novel for its depiction of the characters’ readiness to commit great deeds.<sup>31</sup> The reviews in *Pravda Ukrainy* (*Truth of Ukraine*), the Ukrainian SSR’s Russian-language newspaper, and *Dnipro*, its youth-oriented literary journal, both made positive remarks about the anti-Stalinist aspects of the novel, including its setting in the year 1941 and its positive portrayal of purge victims and Soviet POWs.<sup>32</sup> The critic Iosip Kysel’ov, writing in *Dnipro*, went so far as to say that the novel could only have appeared “during the time of the decisive liquidation of the remnants and legacies of the cult of personality.”<sup>33</sup> Still, neither mentioned Honchar’s reference to the famine. An essay on *Man and Arms* that appeared in *Dnipro* under the rubric “Readers on Their Favorite Artists” came close. The author, a student at Dnipropetrovsk State University, emphasized the patriotic themes of the novel, quoting Reshetniak’s line that “our country is dear not only to the ones who eat cake all their lives.” The author concluded that “people who have overcome incredible hardships” are able to “rise above

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<sup>29</sup> Daria Mattingly, “No Novel for Ordinary Men? Representation of the Rank-and-File Perpetrators of the Holodomor in Ukrainian Novels,” *Euxeinos: Governance and Culture in the Black Sea Region* 9, no. 27 (2019): 19.

<sup>30</sup> Honchar, *Man and Arms*, 121.

<sup>31</sup> A. Leites, “Dushevnaia gotovnost’ k podvigu,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, November 1, 1960.

<sup>32</sup> Sv. Ivanov, “S talantom mastera i vzgliadom iunoshi,” *Pravda Ukrainy*, April 10, 1960; Iosip Kysel’ov, “Fakty i smysl podii,” *Dnipro*, no. 5 (1961): 143–151.

<sup>33</sup> Kysel’ov, “Fakty i smysl podii,” 145.

petty misfortunes” in order to “build socialism.” With Reshetniak’s words, Honchar “said what tens of thousands of our people were thinking,” he added.<sup>34</sup> Given that Reshetniak’s statement about patriotism immediately followed his description of surviving the famine, the Dnipropetrovsk student seems to be showing his support for Honchar’s argument that surviving the famine made Soviet citizens more determined to achieve their dream of building socialism.

The novel received support from Party organs in Ukraine as well. In June of 1961, at the annual meeting of the Party cell of the Ukrainian Union of Writers during which the annual report was delivered, *Man and Arms* received a very favorable mention: “O. Honchar’s novel *Man and Arms* has received a lofty and just evaluation among a wide circle of readers and in the press. This work took a place of honor not only in Soviet, but in world literature, especially among those books that defend peace on earth and reveal the beauty and greatness of the person of the new socialist day.”<sup>35</sup> When the Shevchenko Prize Committee convened in February of 1962 to award the highest award in Ukrainian literature, Honchar won for *Man and Arms* with the approval of the hardline Central Committee ideological secretary Andrii Skaba.<sup>36</sup>

It is, of course, difficult to discern the reasons for the nonexistence of a controversy. The fact that all those who lauded the novel avoided direct reference to the episode describing the famine indicates that the subject was still highly taboo. It seems likely that Honchar’s stature as a Stalin Prize winner, his position as head of the Writers’ Union, and his status as a veteran all contributed to his ability to get a description of the famine into print with minimal controversy. It surely helped tremendously that the reference to the famine was embedded in a work that glorified Soviet soldiers and spoke directly to issues that Khrushchev had raised in his Secret Speech: the purges of Red Army officers on the eve of the war and Stalin’s mishandling of the war. Re-

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<sup>34</sup> Oleh Vernyhora, “Biitsi pravdy i miru,” *Dnipro*, no. 10 (1960): 157–58.

<sup>35</sup> DAKO P-28/8/1 (June 3, 1961): 167.

casting the humiliating defeats of 1941 as opportunities for Ukrainian heroism, Honchar managed to acknowledge the tragedy of Stalinism while heralding the eventual Soviet victory. Honchar's novel likewise portrayed the famine as a terrible tragedy that nevertheless did not halt the forward movement of the progressive Soviet people. *Man and Arms* was the right novel for the times, and the novel's description of the famine was allowed to pass without protest from the authorities.

Mykhailo Stel'makh's *Four Fords*:  
The Famine as the Product of Stalinist Local Authorities, 1979

Both Malyshko's outburst at the writers' discussion of the Twentieth Party Congress and Honchar's *Man and Arms* were products of the Thaw in Ukraine. The next major literary work on the famine in Ukrainian literature appeared during a much less auspicious time, the period of so-called "stagnation." From 1963 to 1972, the Ukrainian Party chief had been Petro Shelest, who was relatively tolerant towards the moderate wing of nationally-minded Ukrainian writers—people like Oles' Honchar. In 1972, Shelest's cultural policy was repudiated when he was fired amid accusations of nationalism. His replacement Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi, a member of Brezhnev's political network, initiated an immediate crackdown on the Ukrainian cultural intelligentsia. The Ukrainian ideological secretary Valentyn Malanchuk quickly became notorious among intellectuals for his zealous persecution of those he considered nationalists. In these inauspicious conditions, the novelist Mykhailo Stel'makh attempted to include episodes about the 1933 famine in his epic novel about the interwar period, *Four Fords (Chotyry brody)*.

Born to a family of poor peasants in a village in the Vinnytsia region in 1912, Mykhailo Stel'makh dedicated his literary career to the portrayal of the Soviet transformation of the Ukrainian village. Stel'makh entered the literary world as a poet in the 1930s. After serving as an

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<sup>36</sup> Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv-muzei literatury i mystetstva (TsDAMLM) 979/1/11 (February 22, 1962): 4.

artilleryman in the Second World War and working at the Institute of Art History, Folklore, and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Stel'makh became famous in the early 1950s as the author of epic novels about the Ukrainian village in the postwar years.<sup>37</sup> Stel'makh managed to have success in both the Stalin and Khrushchev eras, winning a Stalin Prize in 1951 for *The Great Family* (*Velyka ridnia*), a novel that he later reworked into *Human Blood is Not Water* (*Krov liuds'ka — ne vodytsia*), removing the passages that praised Stalin.<sup>38</sup> In 1961 Stel'makh received a Lenin Prize for his trilogy *The Great Family*, *Human Blood is Not Water*, and *Bread and Salt* (*Khlib i sil'*). Although in public he appeared to be a thoroughly establishment figure, Stel'makh was not a reactionary. He never joined the Party, and resisted efforts by the head of the writers' Party organization, Iurii Zbanats'kyi, to recruit him.<sup>39</sup> Serving on the Lenin Prize Committee in 1964, he spoke out in favor of the nomination of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.<sup>40</sup> He harbored some sympathy for the Ukrainian cultural revival of the 1960s.<sup>41</sup> In 1966, he even attempted to intervene on behalf of a Ukrainian intellectual who had been arrested by the KGB.<sup>42</sup>

*Four Fords* was Stel'makh's attempt to tell the story of a Ukrainian village from the 1920s through the start of World War II in 1941. In the version of the novel that ultimately appeared in the journal *Dnipro* in 1979, the novel's protagonist, Danylo Bondarenko, is a loyal Communist who returns to his native village as a teacher and ultimately becomes head of the lo-

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<sup>37</sup> M. P. Tkachuk, "Mykhailo Stel'makh," in *Istoriia ukrains'koi literatury XX - poch. XXI st. U tr'okh tomakh.*, ed. V. I. Kuz'menko, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Kyïv: Akademydav, 2014), 160-161.

<sup>38</sup> George Stephen Nestor Luckyj, *Ukrainian Literature in the Twentieth Century: A Reader's Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 67-68.

<sup>39</sup> Dmytro Stel'makh, *Skelety v pys'mennyts'kykh shafakh* (Kyïv: Lybid', 2013), 39-41.

<sup>40</sup> Erin Hutchinson, "Ivan Denisovich on Trial: Soviet Writers, Russian Identity, and Solzhenitsyn's Failed Bid for the 1964 Lenin Prize," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 22, no. 1 (Winter 2021): 96-97.

<sup>41</sup> Serhy Yekelchuk, "The Early 1960s as a Cultural Space: A Microhistory of Ukraine's Generation of Cultural Rebels," *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 1 (2015): 48.

<sup>42</sup> Haluzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv Sluzhby bezpeky Ukraïny (HDA SBU) 16/1/954 (January 21, 1966): 114; HDA SBU 16/1/954 (March 19, 1966): 400-1.

cal collective farm. He and other administrators do confiscate grain from the local peasants during the time of the famine, but they also attempt to save people in the village from starvation. Bondarenko is juxtaposed with the district prosecutor Prokop Stupach, who confiscates the last of the peasants' grain during the famine. A Jew from a small town, Stupach despises the village, unlike Bondarenko, who attempts to learn from the peasantry. Stel'makh portrays Stupach as a product of Stalinism, but stops short of attributing blame for the famine to Party leaders in Moscow.<sup>43</sup> Although Stel'makh's attribution of blame for the famine to local officials hardly seems groundbreaking today, the very fact that the novel described the famine in some depth led to major difficulties during the publication process.

The head editor of the publishing house *Radians'kyi pismennyk*, Myroslava Leshchenko, delayed the publication of *Four Fords* for four years due to its portrayal of the famine, according to Stel'makh's son Dmytro.<sup>44</sup> As Stel'makh was attempting to publish his novel, the leadership of the press, and nearly all of its editors, were replaced with people who were loyal to the hardline ideological secretary Malanchuk. The novel languished in publication limbo for years thanks to Malanchuk's appointees.<sup>45</sup> Stel'makh scored a victory when his friend Ivan Spodarenko, head editor at the newspaper *Sil's'ki visti* [*Village News*], published an excerpt of the novel. Finally, in 1979, Volodymyr Brovchenko, the head editor of the journal *Dnipro*, dared to publish the novel, albeit with significant cuts.<sup>46</sup> The question of what particular aspects of Stel'makh's portrayal of the famine elicited the disapproval of editors and censors awaits further research in the Central State Archive-Museum of Literature and Art (TsDAMLM) and the Central State Archive of Pub-

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<sup>43</sup> Daria Mattingly, "No Novel for Ordinary Men? Representation of the Rank-and-File Perpetrators of the Holodomor in Ukrainian Novels," *Euxeinos: Governance and Culture in the Black Sea Region* 9, no. 27 (2019): 19-20; Tkachuk, "Mykhailo Stel'makh," 168-172.

<sup>44</sup> Stel'makh, *Skelety v pys'mennyts'kykh shafakh*, 95.

<sup>45</sup> Dmytro Stel'makh, interview with Halyna Vdovychenko, "Zamknuty tvir u seifi — ts'oho dostatn'o dlia vbyvstva pys'mennyka," *Vysokyi zamok*, May 22, 2017, sec. Daleke i bliz'ke, <https://wz.lviv.ua/far-and-near/199903-zamknuty-tvir-u-seifi-tsoho-dostatno-dlia-vbyvstva-pysmennyka>.

lic Organizations (TsDAHO) in Kyiv. Dmytro attributes his father's failing health to his struggle to publish the novel. "This is why he got sick and died. She [the head editor] locked up the work in a safe. Sometimes this is enough to murder a writer," Dmytro told an interviewer in 2017.<sup>47</sup> In 1981, like Honchar's *Man and Arms, Four Fords* won the Shevchenko Prize for literature. Stel'makh passed away two years later.

### Writing about Famine in Russia and Moldova

Soviet Ukrainian writers were far from the only Soviet writers who attempted to get mentions of Soviet famines into print. Like Honchar, the Moldovan writer Ion Druță and the Russian writer Mikhail Alekseev were famine survivors. Like Stel'makh, both managed to include discussions of the famine in literary works published during the Brezhnev era.

The Moldovan writer Ion Druță, a survivor of the 1947 famine, managed to discuss the famine in his 1968 novel *Burden of Our Kindness (Bremia nashei dobroty, Povara bunătății noastre)*. Coming just a few years after the conclusion of a catastrophic war, the 1947 famine caused 123,000 excess deaths in the Moldovan SSR, or roughly 5% of the population of the predominantly rural republic.<sup>48</sup> Druță, who was just seventeen years old at the time, was secretary of the village soviet during the famine and played a role in organizing aid to starving fellow villagers. "Working as the secretary of a village soviet, at the age of seventeen I recorded the deaths of nearly a third of my fellow villagers," he later wrote in an open letter that circulated in *samizdat* in the 1970s. "The moral norms by which my ancestors lived and by which I try to live do not allow me to walk by the graves of my fellow villagers pretending that I do not know who, when,

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<sup>46</sup> Stel'makh, *Skelety v pys'mennyts'kykh shafakh*, 96.

<sup>47</sup> Stel'makh, "Zamknuty tvir u seifi."

<sup>48</sup> Ellman, "The 1947 Soviet Famine and the Entitlement Approach to Famines," 612-613.



and under what circumstances they were buried there.”<sup>49</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, Druță made his literary name by writing novels and plays that were set in the world of peasant traditions. His works touched a nerve in Moldova, where the memories of the famine and the trauma of collectivization and dekulakization were still fresh, as most of the territory of the republic had only been incorporated and Sovietized after the Second World War. Never on good terms with the Moldovan leadership due to positive portrayals of the traditional peasantry, Druță’s situation in the republic reached a low point in 1965 when the republican leadership accused him of nationalism, an accusation that ultimately forced him to relocate from Chișinău to Moscow in order to continue his literary career.

In his 1968 novel *Burden of Our Kindness*, Druță wrote about the postwar period in Moldova, including a discussion of the famine. In the novel, Druță went further than Honchar or Stel’makh in attributing blame to the Soviet state, accusing Soviet officials of hoarding food while peasants were starving. “Behind the warehouses of the Pamyntenskii train station,” he wrote, “For two years great mountains of corn cobs rotted under the rain, but this corn was as far from them [the peasants] as God himself.”<sup>50</sup> The novel was published first in the Moscow-based journal *Druzhba narodov*, and then quickly published in the Moldovan journal *Nistru* before anyone in the Moldovan leadership had the chance to read its explosive treatment of the famine.<sup>51</sup> Chișinău-based critics attacked the novel’s portrayal of the famine, with one writing that “Druță says openly that the state was the puppet master, that it allowed corn to sit and rot for two years while people were left without [even] seed, dying of hunger.”<sup>52</sup> The complaints of his critics in

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<sup>49</sup> Ion Druță, “Otkrytoe pis’mo redkollegii zhurnala ‘Kodry,’” in *Ora jertfirii: proză, publicistică, scrisori* (Chișinău: Ed. Cartea Moldovei, 1998), 81.

<sup>50</sup> Ion Druță, “Bremia nashei dobroty,” *Druzhba narodov*, no. 1 (1968): 23.

<sup>51</sup> Ion Druță, *Îngerul supraviețuirii: mărturii și spovedanii* (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2011), 37; Ion Druță, “Povara bunătății noastre,” *Nistru*, no. 4, 5 (1968): 3–58, 18–78.

<sup>52</sup> I. P. Racul, *Articole și studii literare* (Chișinău: Lumina, 1969), 81.

Moldova did not make a dent in Druță's popularity with the Moscow literary elite. *Druzhba narodov* nominated the novel for the 1969 USSR State Prize for literature, and the novel received high praise from the State Prize Committee members—including Oles' Honchar.<sup>53</sup> Druță was on the cusp of winning when the intervention of the Moldovan republican authorities, along with criticism from the USSR Central Committee Department of Agitation and Propaganda, forced Druță to withdraw the novel to make some “corrections” [*utochnit' otdelnye aktsenty*].<sup>54</sup> In the meantime, the Moldovan authorities ramped up their attacks on Druță's *Burden of Our Kindness*. When the State Prize Committee considered the novel again the following year, the head of the Moldovan Party, Ivan Bodiul, wrote a letter to the USSR State Prize Committee protesting the nomination of Druță's novel for the USSR State Prize.<sup>55</sup> Unable to ignore the direct request of a Party leader, the presidium of the State Prize Committee decided to withdraw *Burden of Our Kindness* from consideration, a move that elicited protests from committee members like Honchar.<sup>56</sup> While Druță was deprived of the State Prize, he nevertheless managed to get his version of the 1947 famine into print—a significant achievement, particularly in the Brezhnev era.

Why was Druță able to publish a novel that blamed the Soviet state for the famine, while Ukrainian writers left responsibility for the famine vague (Honchar) or blamed it on individual local authorities (Stel'makh)? Key to Druță's success were his relationships with the cultural elite in Moscow. When his works proved too controversial in his native republic, Druță was able to publish them in Moscow, where the political and cultural elites were less attuned to the potentially explosive implications of his work. When the Moldovan Party complained to Moscow-

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<sup>53</sup> Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstvo (RGALI) 2916/2/415 (April 21, 1969): 72-77.

<sup>54</sup> RGALI 2916/2/515 (April 25, 1969): 116. For the criticism of the novel by Agitprop, see “Ob oshibke izdatel'stva ‘Izvestiia’ i zhurnala ‘Druzhba narodov,’” in Druță, *Ora jertfirii*, 70-72.

<sup>55</sup> AOSPRM 51/31/93 (July 2, 1970): 104-106.

<sup>56</sup> RGALI 2916/2/513 (October 13, 1970): 1-27. An excerpt of the transcript of this meeting is available online: “Stenograma ședinței secției literare a Comitetului pentru premii URSS - discutarea candidaturii lui Druță pentru

based institutions that supported Druță, they were often ignored. Unlike Ukrainian Party leaders, who could draw on their connections with powerful “alumni” of the Ukrainian Party on the Soviet Central Committee—a group that included like Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, and Nikolai Podgornyi (Mykola Pidhornyi)—the Moldovan Party leaders seem to have had difficulty exercising power in Moscow. The opinions of Party leaders in a large and economically significant republic like Ukraine were simply more difficult to ignore than the protestations of officials from tiny Moldova.

Perhaps the most detailed discussion of famine in Soviet literature appeared in 1982 with the publication of Russian writer Mikhail Alekseev’s *Brawlers* in the journal *Nash sovremennik*.<sup>57</sup> Alekseev, originally from a village in the Saratov region of southern Russia, was sixteen during the 1933 famine, which claimed the life of his mother.<sup>58</sup> After serving in the Second World War, Alekseev went on to become an author of works on rural themes, for which he won a USSR State Prize in 1976. In addition to being the head editor of the journal *Moskva*, Alekseev was a major figure in the RSFSR Writers’ Union. Politically well-connected, Alekseev was able to leverage his connections in order to publish an account of the famine he survived.<sup>59</sup> Alekseev submitted his text to the journal *Nash sovremennik*, well-known as the leading journal for Russian Village Prose writers like Valentin Rasputin and Viktor Astaf’ev. According to Sergei Vikulov, longtime head editor of *Nash sovremennik*, the original text of Alekseev’s novel stated that the famine had not been caused by drought, but rather the “zeal” of local activists who took the last of the peasants’ grain. The text included relatively graphic discussions of the famine, includ-

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înaintarea la Premiul de Stat al URSS,” Andrei Lupan, September 22, 2006, <http://www.andreilupan.com/loaditem.do?id=300100140>.

<sup>57</sup> Mikhail Alekseev, “Drachuny,” *Nash sovremennik*, no. 6-7, 9 (1981).

<sup>58</sup> Sergei Vikulov, “Chto napisano perom...,” *Nash sovremennik*, no. 11 (1996): 11.

<sup>59</sup> Yitzhak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953-1991* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 134.

ing descriptions of cannibalism, the death of Alekseev's grandfather, the deaths of children, and the burial of famine victims in mass graves. Alekseev wrote that a village of 600 homes had been reduced to just 150.<sup>60</sup> Before the novel's publication, Vikulov and Alekseev were called in for a meeting at Glavlit with P. K. Romanov, the chief censor. Romanov apparently told Alekseev that he remembered seeing starving people at the Kharkiv train station in 1933, but in his role as censor he nevertheless objected to many aspects of the novel, including the attribution of blame to Soviet authorities instead of a bad harvest. In the end, Romanov was only able to persuade Alekseev to remove some "naturalistic" descriptions of the famine (specifically, cannibalism), and a part where Alekseev indicated the widespread nature of the famine by listing many other places where it had occurred. The novel was published, apparently over the objections of the censor.<sup>61</sup> Despite Alekseev's flouting of the will of the Soviet censor, the novel did not receive condemnation in the Party press after its publication; Vikulov speculates that the authorities did not want to draw attention to the novel.<sup>62</sup> An essay on *Brawlers* by the Russian nationalist literary critic Mikhail Lobanov did provoke a major controversy, however, due to Lobanov's assertion that collectivization had caused the famine.<sup>63</sup> For stating directly what Alekseev had left vague, Lobanov only narrowly escaped losing his position at the Gorky Literary Institute.<sup>64</sup> *Brawlers* was nominated for the Lenin Prize in 1984. Once again Oles' Honchar used his position as a member of the prize committee to support literature that dealt with the famine, calling the novel "a great

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<sup>60</sup> Vikulov, "Chto napisano perom...", 11-12.

<sup>61</sup> Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istoriiRGANI 5/88/133 (May 6, 1982): 6-7; Vikulov, "Chto napisano perom...", 13.

<sup>62</sup> Vikulov, "Chto napisano perom...", 14.

<sup>63</sup> Mikhail Lobanov, "Osvobozhdenie," *Volga*, no. 10 (1982): 146-164.

<sup>64</sup> On the controversy over Lobanov's article, see Brudny, *Reinventing Russia*, 135; Viacheslav Ogryzko, "Osvobozhdenie ot nadoevshikh dogm: Mikhail Lobanov," in *Tseniteli i nisprovergateli pisatelei: Russkie kritiki i literaturovedy XX veka: Sud'by i knigi* (Moskva: Literaturnaia Rossiia, 2017), 361-362; Vikulov, "Chto napisano perom...", 15-17.

success” for Russian and Soviet literature as a whole.<sup>65</sup> Although the novel did not win, it certainly made an impact on readers, many of whom wrote to Alekseev to relate their own experiences during the famine.<sup>66</sup>

### Conclusion

The efforts of Malyshko, Honchar, and Stel'makh to break the silence around the 1933 famine in Ukraine are clear examples of “de-Stalinization from below.” Although Khrushchev never intended to raise the issue of the Ukrainian famine during de-Stalinization, these three writers nevertheless used the opportunity of the repudiation of the “cult of personality” to confront, in varying ways, the devastating impact of Stalinism on the Ukrainian village. Strikingly, all three Ukrainian writers who brought up the issue of the famine were Stalin Prize-winners and loyal members of the Ukrainian literary establishment. Malyshko and Honchar were even Party members. The fact that these writers were *not* dissidents is probably what enable them to even raise the issue of famine in the first place. Much like “only Nixon could go to China,” only Honchar—a World War II veteran, Party member, Stalin Prize-winner, and head of the Ukrainian Writers’ Union—could discuss the 1933 famine in a novel. In this regard, Honchar was quite similar to Mikhail Alekseev, who used his status as a veteran, prize-winning author, and a functionary in the Writers’ Union to defy the censor and publish *Brawlers*. The example of these Soviet writers reveals, furthermore, that even intellectuals who were considered stalwart supporters of Soviet rule wanted to have a public discussion about the famine. Indeed, for Party members like Malyshko and Honchar, this was a necessary step to cleanse Soviet socialism of the sins of Stalinism. If we expand our understanding of de-Stalinization to include issues beyond the Terror

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<sup>65</sup> RGALI 2916/4/264 (April 3, 1984): 30-31.

<sup>66</sup> “Ekho: Iz pisem Mikhailu Alekseevu,” *Literaturnoe obozrenie*, no. 11 (1988): 76–79.

and the Gulag, we see that a broad range of actors—including members of the establishment like Honchar, Alekseev, Malyshko, and Stel'makh—were involved in the process.

Comparing the cases of the Honchar and Stel'makh with Druță and Alekseev reveals the limitations that even the most well-connected Ukrainian writers faced in attempting to raise the issue of the famine. If we compare the case of Alekseev's *Brawlers* with Stel'makh's *Four Fords*, we see that things were comparatively more difficult for a Ukrainian writer, no matter his literary stature. Writers like Alekseev enjoyed a degree of leeway in what they published due to what Yitzhak Brudny has referred to as the "policy of inclusion" towards Russian nationalists in the Brezhnev era.<sup>67</sup> Censors and other literary bureaucrats in Moscow certainly sought to keep Russian journals like *Nash sovremennik* in line, but there was no real equivalent to the hardline Ukrainian ideological secretary Malanchuk for Russian writers. Unlike Alekseev, Stel'makh could not simply ignore the will of the bureaucrats that Malanchuk had installed in the publishing house *Radians'kyi pysmennyk*. Central authorities in the Brezhnev era were particularly vigilant about the potential threat of Ukrainian nationalism, so Ukrainian authors also did not have the option of appealing to Moscow over the heads of local authorities, as Druță was fond of doing.

While Soviet authorities managed to keep discussions of the famine contained within strict boundaries during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras, Ukrainian intellectuals like Honchar were becoming more and more frustrated with their inability to write "the whole truth, in full force" about the famine, as Honchar stated in his diary in 1975.<sup>68</sup> Honchar's diary provides an example of how a Ukrainian writer's original enthusiasm for the Soviet project gradually curdled into frustration and rage over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. While in *Man and Arms* Hon-

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<sup>67</sup> Brudny, *Reinventing Russia*.

<sup>68</sup> Oles' Honchar, *Shchodennyky: u tr'okh tomakh*, ed. V. D. Honchar, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Kyïv: Veselka, 2002), 237.

char had argued that famine survivors were patriotic Soviet citizens—“our country is dear not only to the ones who eat cake all their lives”—in diary entries from the 1970s and 1980s, we see an increasingly negative view of the regime in his writings that mentioned the famine. In an entry from 1974, Honchar referred to Pavel Postyshev, second-in-command in Ukraine during the famine, as “the butcher of our people.”<sup>69</sup> In 1975, Honchar wrote that the famine had not been caused by a drought or a bad harvest, but by the Soviet leadership. “What if I write about it as one must?” he asked himself. He imagined a book:

About the people who worked the land their entire lands and were forced to die, swell up, feed their children grass... A book about the innocent. That their girl-nurse hoped to save with tablets. About the factory that makes sausage for export the entire time. About the newspaper in which is it written that we will make the life of collective farmers prosperous...and not a word about the famine. And about the mustachioed tyrant, who didn't allow the ship of the International Red Cross into the port of Novorossiisk because “we don't have a famine!”

How much can one use methods of hypocrisy, treachery, constant shameless lies?

The longtime Party member wondered, “Does the ideal communist future really demand such weighty sacrifices?”<sup>70</sup> Five years later, he seemed to answer his own question, “No, those are Stalin’s eternal sins, his evil deeds, that will never be justified.” For Honchar, the famine was now crime that must be understood in national terms, as a “genocide.”<sup>71</sup> The use of the term genocide to describe the famine signals Honchar’s shift away from a national ideology that was both Soviet and Ukrainian, to one where the Soviet was opposed to the Ukrainian. In 1989, as information about the famine began to flood the public sphere in Soviet Ukraine, Honchar wrote the introduction for *Bloodless War (Bezkrivna viina)*, a book of oral histories of the famine from his native Poltava region. “Now we know what happened. There was a famine, artificially organized, there was a there was a mass Stalinist genocide, consciously directed at the destruction of the

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<sup>69</sup> Honchar, *Shchodennyky*, vol. 2, 184.

<sup>70</sup> Honchar, *Shchodennyky*, vol. 2, 237.

Ukrainian people.”<sup>72</sup> By 1989, Honchar—a Red Army veteran, Communist Party member, and Stalin Prize winner—was already involved in Rukh, the national movement that would play a key role in Ukraine’s independence from the Soviet Union. After many years of attempting to reconcile his Ukrainian identity and his past as a famine survivor with his loyalty to the Soviet cause, Honchar was simply done trying.

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<sup>71</sup> Honchar, *Shchodennyky*, vol. 3, 426.

<sup>72</sup> Oles’ Honchar, “Toi, trydtsiat’ tretii...,” in *Bezкровна виїна: розповіді про голод 1933 року, записані в селакх Козел’шчынс’кого району на Полтавщині*, by Oleksandr Mishchenko (Kyïv: T-vo “Znannia” URSR, 1990), 4.