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Contextualizing FDR's Campaign to Recognize the Soviet Union, 1932–1933: Propaganda, Famine Denial, and Ukrainian Resistance

Ray Gamache

Introduction

The historiography of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's (FDR's) recognition of the Soviet Union in November 1933 has largely focused on Great Depression issues that required economic measures to alleviate unemployment and failing businesses by increasing trade. Additionally, US recognition of the Soviet Union allayed foreign policy concerns about military threats posed by Japanese incursions into Manchukuo (known at the time as Manchuria) as well as the rise of Adolph Hitler's National Socialist Party in Germany. That these became twin elements of the dominant narrative is evidenced in scholarship across the epistemological and ideological spectrum and in a US government version published by what used to be the Office of the Historian. Because recognition occurred in the midst of mass starvation despite a worldwide surplus of wheat, FDR's first major policy change has occupied a focal point in critical evaluations of his initial year as president as well as in scholarship about the Holodomor. In order to change the official US policy of non-recognition, FDR had to overcome considerable opposition stemming from anticommunist fears that the Soviet Union was actively engaged in fomenting revolution within the United States. At this critical juncture FDR sincerely believed that if he could engage the Soviets to open up their markets, economic recovery for American workers would overcome the deleterious effects of Soviet propaganda and communist ideology. Famine denial thus became a necessary thematic trope of the public relations campaign for recognition of the USSR: the public had to believe that recognition of the USSR would

enhance US economic interests and secure peace. Despite an international array of newspaper reports, eyewitness accounts, personal pleas, and State Department reports that millions of Ukrainians were starving, FDR neither acknowledged the Famine nor criticized the measures employed by the Soviet Union against a sovereign people. Defense of FDR's policy decision is articulated in arguments that focus on a mixture of US self-interest and realpolitik. As Keith Pomakoy wrote,

> Rather than saber rattling or offering a protest of dubious value, America decided to ignore the crisis and make the best deal possible. Roosevelt traded the moral high ground because of his desires to overcome the Great Depression and end Soviet propaganda in the United States.[1]

This and similar arguments are rooted in the idea that FDR was merely following the accepted foreign policy of noninterference in the internal affairs of a foreign nation, and any suggestion that FDR abandoned starving Ukrainians or abdicated moral responsibility to confront Stalin's genocidal assault are dismissed as naïve, irresponsible, or idealistic.

The purpose of this paper is to contextualize the media's role in creating a discourse of Famine denial that was used to engender and maintain public support for recognition. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) of journalistic texts provides an opportunity to interrogate how contexts within and beyond the immediate political milieu shaped the narratives and representations of recognition. In order to limit the scope of that analysis, recent scholarship has emphasized the importance of a time sequence that should "clearly explain the implications of previous discursive positions on subsequent ones."[2] As van Dijk cautioned, the fundamental problem is to put constraints on a contextual or situational study by acknowledging how the immediacy of the situation impacts the larger societal context.[3] This paper addresses those problems by focusing on the immediate time period when FDR began his campaign in July 1932 until official recognition in November 1933, and how recognition changed the nature of Ukrainian resistance over time. Representations of FDR's recognition of the Soviet Union have been appropriated

1. Keith Pomakoy, *Helping Humanity: American Policy and Genocide Rescue* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2011), 104.

2. Anabela Carvalho, "Media(ted) Discourse and Society," *Journalism Studies* 9, no. 2, (2016): 163, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616700701848162.

3. Teun van Dijk, "Critical Context Studies" (lecture, CDA Conference, Valencia, May 2004), http://www.discursos.org/unpublished%20articles/Critical%20context%20studies.htm.

to carry ideological messages that empower US triumphalism while diminishing critiques of FDR's relations with the Soviets.[4] That the Holodomor, one of the twentieth century's most catastrophic events in which four million Ukrainians starved to death,[5] can be characterized as "a barely acknowledged sideshow, a status that the tragedy has yet to shed fully"[6] reveals how representations of recognition were constructed, whose interests were served by such a narrative, and what sort of cultural work the narrative was intended to accomplish. This paper challenges accepted interpretations of recognition by analyzing how specific journalistic texts articulate a very different narrative in which mass starvation was anything but a sideshow. Certain facts warrant interrogation—namely, that FDR knew nothing about the Famine, and that he could not have made humanitarian relief a condition for recognition—and must be considered in light of primary source records, a discursive chain bringing together recognition, mass starvation despite a surplus of wheat, and the persistent strains of Ukrainian resistance.

"A Visitation of the Lord"

CDA provides a framework that allows researchers to articulate intricate historical relationships between meaning and power.[7] Discourse can be defined as "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world),"[8] and media discourse interacts with other dimensions (e.g., economic, political) to constitute a perception of that world. Media discourse is constitutive in the sense that it sustains and reproduces the social status quo, and in another sense that it contributes to transforming it. Because of its constitutive aspect, news stories are shaped by sources, eyewitness accounts, and factual data in the attempt to give meaning to issues of public concern. They are also shaped by the institutional practices of journalists interacting with

4. Ellen Schrecker, "Introduction: Cold War Triumphalism and the Real Cold War," in *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History after the Fall of Communism*, ed. Ellen Schrecker (New York: The New Press, 2004), 1–2.

5. Omelian Rudnytskyi, Nataliia Levchuk, Oleh Wolowyna, Pavlo Shevchuk, and Alla Kovbasiuk, "Demography of a Man-Made Famine in Ukraine, 1932–1933," *Canadian Studies in Population* 42, no. 1–2 (2015): 53–80.

6. Pomakoy, *Helping Humanity*, 106.

7. Susan Birrell, "Approaching Mt. Everest: On Intertextuality and the Past as Narrative," *Journal of Sport History* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 9.

8. Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: Sage, 2002), 1.

sources, relationships that necessarily designate positions for people to occupy as subjects and agents. Perhaps that helps to explain why journalists covering the same events came to distinctly different conclusions as to whether an event in which millions of people starved to death constituted a famine. Such depictions were even more confounding when considering that "a colossal glut of wheat"[9] seriously devalued prices at the time. For the first time in recorded history, there was more wheat than people could consume. And the extent to which that should or should not have had any bearing on the decision to recognize the Soviet Union in November 1933 can be traced back to the news stories written by those who favored recognition and those opposed to it. Very divergent views culminated in one of journalism's most sordid incidents. On 31 March 1933, Walter Duranty, correspondent of the *New York Times* in Moscow, denigrated another journalist, Gareth Jones, for his reporting of the famine; in today's parlance, Duranty accused Jones of spreading fake news. This incident serves as an illustration of a critical discourse moment, which is a period "that involve(s) specific happenings, which may challenge the 'established' discursive positions."[10]

This paper employs intertextuality to focus on the meaning of issues presented and the power relations that ultimately shaped FDR's recognition of the Soviet Union. Of particular importance to the recognition narrative is the effort of the Ukrainian diaspora, concentrated in Europe, the United States, and Canada, to oppose recognition of the Soviet Union and ask that humanitarian relief be provided to Ukraine. Significantly, Ukrainian resistance to FDR's recognition of the Soviet Union changed focus to the Famine as an assault on Ukrainian identity after recognition was announced in November 1933. At that time, Ukrainian resistance faced an onslaught of pro-Russian propaganda, which fueled the brutal street battles between Ukrainian-American protestors and American Communist Party thugs. Ukrainian identity was also shaped in part by how the Holodomor came to be represented in media discourse. Those representations reveal how people are constituted as groups through a process by which some possibilities of identification are put forward as relevant while others are ignored or marginalized.[11] Group formation thus functions in the struggle over how a particular narrative about society is ascribed meaning and takes shape as collective

9. Ferdinand Kuhn Jr., "31 Nations Confer on Glut of Wheat," *New York Times*, 22 August 1933, 1.
10. Carvalho, "Media(ted) Discourse," 166.
11. Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis*, 44–45.

memory. Recognition of the Famine slowly supplanted resistance to recognition of the Soviet Union as a focus of news stories.

As people engaged in the discursive struggle of ascribing meaning to an event like the Holodomor, it was no longer outside discourse. Meaning "execute by starvation,"[12] the word Holodomor is used to refer to the 1932–1933 famine; taking its root in the Ukrainian language, it stands apart from similar terms used to describe the phenomenon, including but not limited to "man-made famine,"[13] "Stalin's Famine,"[14] "terror famine,"[15] and "the Great Ukrainian Famine."[16] How one processes the phenomenon is a construction of the discourse to which one subscribes. For example, contextualized within the worldwide surplus of wheat in 1933, the idea of famine could not be reconciled with the definition of a natural disaster, or an act of God, but could more easily be framed as a manifestation of political mismanagement, or a deliberate affront to morality and the sanctity of life. Given the plurality of views concerned with divergent agendas, the meaning of the Holodomor has been and continues to be contested by ethnic, social, and political groups, each with its own discursive communicative repertoires for dealing with the event and for shaping the collective memory of it.

Intertextuality is grounded in assumptions about the past—namely, that "the past is never settled; representations constructed to capture the past are inherently partial and vested with special interests; narratives of one era leech meaning into the events of another; and different eras use the stories of the past differently."[17] The policy leading to FDR's recognition of the Soviet Union necessarily takes its genesis from 1917–1918, when the United States went from recognizing the reign of Tsar Nicholas II to recognition of the Provisional Government of Alexander Kerensky in 1917, to nonrecognition of the Bolshevik All-Union Communist Party led by V. I. Lenin a year later. As Edward M. Bennett argues, nonrecognition marked a significant deviation in the application

12. Roman Serbyn, "What Was the Holodomor and Why Did It Happen? Conceptualizing the Ukrainian Genocide" (presentation, Taking Measures of the Holodomor Conference, New York, 5 November 2013), 1.

13. "The Five Year Plan," *New York Times*, 1 January 1933, E4.

14. Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Waiting for Hitler, 1929–1941* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 127.

15. Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

16. Anna Bolubash, "The Great Ukrainian Famine of 1932–33 as an Instrument of Soviet Nationalities Policy," *Ukrainian Review* 16, no. 4 (1978): 11–23.

17. Birrell, "Approaching Mt. Everest," 4.

of US policy.[18] While the legally constituted government of a state has been acknowledged as a government de jure, a government de facto is considered the entity in functional control of a nation.[19] Eager to follow the de facto principle, the US government advanced its own security by encouraging nation building and self-determination expressed in the theory of natural rights. President Woodrow Wilson's nonrecognition constituted a "substantive change in the basic perspective of American foreign policy."[20] Nonrecognition of Soviet Russia entangled the United States in the internal affairs of that country, manifested in the US deploying an expeditionary force into Russia, enforcing a blockade that exacerbated the suffering of innocent peoples, and funneling money to White forces that most believed had little chance of seizing power from the Bolsheviks.[21]

The narrative of nonrecognition from 1918 to 1933 is part of a discursive chain whose meanings must be understood in terms of ideological as well as ethical and moral dimensions. After Wilson left office, the Republican administrations of Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover were adamant in refusing to legitimate the Soviet government in exchange for economic prosperity, and often couched their protests in moralistic tones. For example, Coolidge, in his first address to Congress in 1923 as president, discussed the idea of recognition.

> Our Government does not propose, however, to enter into relations with another regime which refuses to recognize the sanctity of international obligations. I do not propose to barter away for the privilege of trade any of the cherished rights of humanity. I do not propose to make merchandise of any American principles.…But while the favor of America is not for sale, I am willing to make very large concessions for the purpose of rescuing the people of Russia.…Whenever there appear works mete for repentance; our country ought to be the first to go to the economic and moral rescue of Russia.[22]

This moral grounding gradually gave way to economic priorities and changing public perceptions about Soviet intentions. American

18. Edward M. Bennett, *Recognition of Russia: An American Foreign Policy Dilemma* (Waltham, Mass.: Blaisdell, 1970), 16–29.
19. Ibid., 2.
20. Ibid., 7.
21. Beatrice Farnsworth, *William C. Bullitt and the Soviet Union* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 3–29.
22. Calvin Coolidge, "State of the Union," 6 December 1923, http://stateoftheunion.onetwothree.net/texts/19231206.html.

engineers returned to the Soviet Union in 1927, led in part by a trade union delegation. Even before the Great Depression left American workers desperately in need of employment, the seeds for this migration had been sown in the mid-twenties when Henry Ford sent a party to investigate whether or not it was feasible to build a factory in the USSR. In May 1929, only months before the stock market crashed, Ford signed a forty-million-dollar contract with the Soviet Supreme Council of National Economy for a Model A plant that Ford was ready to discontinue in the US.[23] Construction began in August 1930 and was completed by November 1931, one of the 521 factories designed by Detroit architect Albert Kahn and a staff of twenty-five architects and engineers headquartered in Moscow. In 1931 more than ten thousand American workers emigrated to the Soviet Union, and thousands more purchased one-way tickets with their tourist visas, believing they'd find jobs once they arrived. This wave of emigration over a period of eight months marked the first time in American history that more people left the country than arrived.[24] In addition to workers, many educators, social workers, economists, engineers, and writers traveled to the Soviet Union to experience the novelty of its state-planned economy. As Lewis Feuer notes, "there was constructed in the American intellectual consciousness (or shall we say the American intellectual unconsciousness) a status for the Soviet Union as the conscience-model of social experiment."[25] Feuer concludes that the sense of technological and sociological community helped to override ideological differences, but created blind spots to repressive conditions and paranoia-inspired bureaucracy.

Representations of FDR's recognition of the Soviet Union are punctuated with assertions that the president, his administration, and the American public knew very little about actual conditions of mass starvation between November 1932 and June 1933. That argument is based on the premise that Soviet censorship, limited access to travel in famine-stricken areas, journalist apathy, compassion fatigue, and self-involvement caused by the Great Depression somehow kept politicians and private citizens from decisive information that might have given pause to the change in recognition policy.[26] Journalists in support of recognition reported starkly different versions of the Famine, yet

23. Lewis S. Feuer, "American Travelers to the Soviet Union 1917–1932: The Formation of a New Deal Ideology," *American Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1962): 119–49.

24. Tim Tzouliadis, *The Forsaken: An American Tragedy in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 6–8.

25. Feuer, "American Travelers," 146.

26. M. Wayne Morris, *Stalin's Famine and Roosevelt's Recognition of Russia* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1994), 81–84.

decisive information was readily available from widely published reliable eyewitness reporting of mass starvation and confirmed by the troves of dispatches forwarded to Washington, D.C., from consulates in Eastern Europe documenting dire living conditions and mass starvation in areas of the Soviet Union. The discourse found within those texts offers a version of events in which the world's surplus of wheat served as an important component of how to negotiate recognition and famine. FDR's recognition of the Soviet Union was characterized in the press as the means to end "the present abnormal relations"[27] between the two nations in the name of peace, prosperity, and security, enacted by political leaders, legitimated by groups with vested interests, and mobilized to counter a Ukrainian perspective that resisted US recognition of the Soviet Union and protested for recognition of the Holodomor. By withholding moral condemnation, FDR unwittingly emboldened Stalin, who executed his genocidal assault on Ukraine's "nationalist deviation"[28] before purging all "enemies of the people" in the Great Terror of 1937–1938, and then executing a significant part of the officer corps of the Red Army.

As an example of the dilemma confronting US interests, this letter to the editor of the *New York Times* articulates several conflicting discursive dimensions. In "Distributing Surplus Food," William Sage articulated the ambiguities the United States faced in 1933.

> I quite agree with you that it would be a good thing to send our burdensome surplus of wheat to the starving Russians who are desperately in need of food.…I do not agree with you that the label such as you suggest to be put upon the parcels of wheat—"From the United States, living under a regime of Capitalist Exploitation, &c."—if read by people at home who criticize our existing economic system, would in any way change their views on the subject. They would first inquire whether the famine in Russia is a visitation of the Lord on the "wicked Soviets," and whether our great surplus of grain is the result of our beneficent capitalistic system or a visitation of the Lord to debase farm prices.[29]

Sage's letter succinctly conjoined starving peasants, surplus wheat, and a capitalist ecumenism at the very heart of the recognition narrative.

27. "Roosevelt-Kalinin Notes," *New York Times*, 21 October 1933, 1.
28. J. V. Stalin, "Report to the Seventeenth Party Congress," in *Works*, vol. 13 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), 368–69.
29. William Sage, "Distributing Excess Food," *New York Times*, 1 September 1933, 16.

The confluence of these seemingly disparate elements is by way of irony reckoned as not-so-nice visitations of the Lord—on the Soviets for disavowing religion and on the United States for a conspicuous surplus of wheat. Sage posed the pragmatic solution of providing relief to starving peasants to alleviate the glut of wheat that had ruined commodity prices in quasi-biblical terms. This letter to the editor is not an anomaly, clearly establishing that starvation conditions were a known fact to the American public. Sage noted that labels about capitalist exploitation would not change opinions at home, and he warned that American altruism alone couldn't solve its economic problems. Significantly, Sage's letter reaffirmed the idea that relief should be afforded those "desperately in need of food" by those with surplus wheat. The idea was not new, as it had appeared in newspaper reports covering wheat conferences in both 1931 and 1932. Standing in stark contrast to the argument that FDR knew nothing about famine in the Soviet Union, Sage's letter and numerous texts established not only understanding of the problem of famine but also the solution of food relief available from surplus wheat. By locating the narratives and the omissions within discursive constructs that articulate or silence them, we establish which cultural meanings are mobilized by sites of power.[30]

"Degraded Political Morality"

The discursive chain linking FDR's campaign of recognition, the wheat surplus, and the Holodomor surfaced in July 1932 when FDR met with Walter Duranty, *New York Times* (*NYT*) correspondent in Moscow, who was on the cusp of winning the Pulitzer Prize for best news correspondence.[31] FDR, governor of New York and democratic candidate for the presidency, met Duranty at the Executive Mansion in Albany to "bring to the fore the report that the Governor is contemplating, in the event of his being elected President, a new policy toward the Soviet…."[32] That new policy was predicated on recognition, although FDR's advisers attempted to soft-pedal the idea, suggesting the US would "profit more by something less than recognition and would have greater

30. Birrell, "Approaching Mt. Everest," 3.

31. For information on the campaign to revoke Duranty's 1932 Pulitzer Prize, see Lubomyr Luciuk, ed., *Not Worthy: Walter Duranty's Pulitzer Prize and the New York Times* (Kingston, Ontario: The Kashtan Press, 2004).

32. "Roosevelt Confers on Russian Policy, Consults Walter Duranty in Regard to Suggestions That Our Policy Should Change," *New York Times*, 26 July 1932, 1.

'bargaining power' both with the Soviet and with the other countries in the international economic picture."[33] FDR questioned Duranty about gold production and whether or not the Soviets would pay back trade concessions that might accompany formal recognition.[34] Interestingly, FDR portrayed himself in the role of reporter. "I turned the tables. I asked all the questions this time. It was fascinating!"[35] That FDR relied on Duranty as his primary source regarding Russian gold payments was unsurprising. Duranty had reported from the Soviet Union for more than a decade and had ingratiated himself to the Soviets. FDR doubtlessly knew about Duranty's pro-Soviet reporting; the *NYT* not only gave Duranty's stories prominence, but also echoed his more blatant propagandizing in editorials.

A damning appraisal of Duranty's reporting on the Soviets' Five-Year Plan by Professor M. V. Bernatskii, former Russian finance minister, had appeared in early March 1932 in the French newspaper *La Renaissance*, translated from Russian by a clerk in the Eastern European Division for the Office of Economic Adviser. Bernatskii excoriated Duranty's assessment of the Soviet financial condition. "Thus through the medium of an American correspondent [Duranty] the favorite bolshevik method is employed—the wish is father to the thought."[36] In Bernatskii's view, Duranty's data lacked basis in reality. Unable to explain how the Soviet program changed a deficit into an excess, Duranty presented Soviet planned figures. Bernatskii was unimpressed:

> Such are the comical calculations by which the American correspondent attempts to prove the solvency of the Soviets. The weakness of his arguments corresponds to the financial weakness of the principal. History will surely record the "impartial" epistles of Duranty as an example of the degraded political morality of our times.[37]

Duranty's pro-Soviet reporting had occasioned the *NYT* to conduct an internal investigation in 1930 that lasted several months and which ended with a recommendation by the acting managing editor that he

33. Ibid.

34. S. J. Taylor, *Stalin's Apologist: Walter Duranty—The New York Times's Man in Moscow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 184.

35. "Roosevelt Confers," 1.

36. Robert D. Murphy, "Professor M. Bernatzky Criticizes Western Aid Lent the Soviets," memorandum, 25 May 1932, State Department Records - Russia, 861.51/2521, p. 908, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., https://www.fold3.com/image/32510870.

37. Ibid., p. 909, https://www.fold3.com/image/32510873.

be replaced.[38] The degraded morality in which human suffering was dismissed as secondary to Soviet advancement was articulated in the reporting of Duranty and Louis Fischer, correspondent for *The Nation* who had advocated for recognition in his 1931 book, *Why Recognize Russia?*

Discourse sympathetic to the Soviet Union was woven into the fabric of Duranty's and Fischer's reporting, especially in terms of Soviet attempts to collectivize agriculture and complete the Five-Year Plan. In autumn 1932 both journalists begrudgingly admitted that Soviet agriculture was struggling after consecutive bad harvests. In a series lauded by the *NYT* for its "unprecedented detail and vigor"[39] Duranty admitted that "the nation is short of food and the effects of that shortage are becoming ever graver and more evident."[40] In subsequent articles, Duranty laid blame on the resistance to collectivization and on the subsequent Soviet response. "The food shortage must be regarded as a result of peasant resistance to rural socialization, or, more accurately, as a result of the measures taken to overcome that resistance."[41] Fischer also discussed heavy-handed Soviet measures employed to satisfy grain quotas. "The practice of taking every last ton of cereals out of the village in order to meet the state's needs is destructive of the government's best interests, and will have to stop if agriculture is to progress."[42] For Duranty and Fischer, the Soviet state's needs justified any means, including mass starvation, to achieve a desired end. In their reporting, drastic requisition measures resulted in "food shortages" and mass starvation became "deaths from malnutrition."[43] Duranty and Fischer were not alone in their roseate appraisals of the Soviet harvest for 1932. Periodicals like the *New Republic* and the *Daily Worker* glowingly trumpeted the Soviet attempts to socialize agriculture through mechanization.

The first reports that conditions had rapidly deteriorated in the Soviet countryside came from agricultural experts like Andrew Cairns of the Empire Marketing Board, who in 1932 traveled widely throughout the Soviet Union from May until August; Otto Schiller, German attaché in Moscow; Professor Bruce Hopper of Harvard University; Profes-

38. Taylor, *Stalin's Apologist*, 159.
39. "Soviet Food Scarcity," *New York Times*, 25 November 1932, 14.
40. Walter Duranty, "All Russia Suffers Shortage of Food; Supplies Dwindling," *New York Times*, 25 November 1932, 1.
41. Walter Duranty, "Food Shortage Laid to Soviet Peasants," *New York Times*, 26 November 1932, 9.
42. Louis Fischer, "Private Profits in Russia," *The Nation*, 24 August 1932, 159.
43. Walter Duranty, "Soviet Not Alarmed Over Food Shortage," *New York Times*, 6 November 1932, 6.

sor Samuel N. Harper of the University of Chicago; and Jules Menken, reporter for the *Economist*. Cairns's extensive report was highly regarded in official circles, and given wide circulation, including the British Ministry of Agriculture, The Board of Trade, the Department of Overseas Trade, Export Credits, the Dominions Office, and the Treasury.[44] The report was made available at the Ottawa Economic Conference later that year, as well as the World Wheat Conference in London the following June. For their part, Menken, Hopper, Harper, and others were interviewed either by journalists or diplomats from the British Foreign Office and/or the US Department of State. According to a memorandum from the Foreign Office, Menken was summoned by the Soviet Ambassador to Great Britain for his articles published in the *Economist*, "on the ground that they were not up to the *Economist's* usual 'objective' standard and painted too black a picture."[45] Other journalists experienced similar measures. In September 1932, the Soviet Politburo resolved to expel Rhea G. Clyman, a Canadian correspondent for the *Daily Express* and *Toronto Telegram*, for an article about uprisings and hunger riots, "whose goal was to resentfully discredit the USSR in the eyes of public opinion."[46] Clyman's series of articles documenting the conditions in Ukraine and the Don region of the North Caucasus was published in both newspapers in May 1933.

Because of the conflicting stories emanating from the Soviet Union in late 1932, FDR faced questions about recognition of the Soviet Union, specifically from the Reverend Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., vice president of Georgetown University. In a speech to a group of lawyers, Walsh assailed political and business leaders for being guided by commercial interests and not patriotic considerations. He criticized FDR for not having informed himself on key questions related to the Soviet Union. The drive for recognition, Walsh said, was due to the critical state of Soviet finances, the breakdown of the Five-Year Plan, internal dissensions in the Communist Party, and "the critical food situation in Russia."[47] That dire food situation, documented in news reports and State Department correspondence, was deteriorating for millions. Even

44. Tony Kuz, "Dr. Andrew Cairns," in *The Soviet Famine 1932–33: An Eye-Witness Account of Conditions in the Spring and Summer of 1932 by Andrew Cairns*, ed. Tony Kuz (Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1989), vi.

45. Marco Carynnyk, Lubomyr Y. Luciuk, and Bohdan S. Kordan, eds., *The Foreign Office and the Famine: British Documents on Ukraine and the Great Famine of 1932–1933* (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1988), 71.

46. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial´no-politicheskoi istorii (hereafter RGASPI), fond 17, Tsentral´nyi komitet KPSS (TsK KPSS), file 901, sheet 6.

47. "Demands Roosevelt Give Soviet Stand," *New York Times*, 15 October 1933, 9.

though he desired better relations with the Soviet Union, FDR deflected questions as if he were undecided about the Soviets' ability to satisfy his concerns. That those concerns did not focus on the forced starvation of innocent people remains a vexing question for FDR scholars. To appease those who objected to the Soviet Union's avowed atheism, FDR made religious freedom for Americans in the Soviet Union a cornerstone of recognition negotiations. Not to acknowledge the food situation, however, was the dead reckoning FDR took to keep the Famine from undermining his foreign policy goals.

After FDR won the election, Duranty conveyed the Soviets' reception to the victory as "calm slightly tinged with gratification and hope."[48] The Soviets were hopeful FDR would be more accommodating than Herbert Hoover, whom the Soviets believed had a vendetta against them.[49] Hoover had developed a mining operation in Siberia between 1908 and 1914 along with 160 American technicians who eventually were deported during the Russian Revolution. The Soviets found Hoover's management style abrasive, hierarchical, and paternalistic.[50] Compounding their distrust was Hoover's oversight of the American Relief Administration, which brought food relief to starving people in 1921–1922, despite protestations by the Soviets that relief was nothing more than a capitalist conspiracy to undermine their rule.[51] By comparison, Duranty reported, FDR "appears in an almost roseate light in Russia, although it cannot be denied that events of the past eighteen months have tended to discount the moral value of American recognition in the Soviet view."[52] Duranty blamed US stagnation on its moral failures as much as economic problems. Loss of Soviet trade only exacerbated difficulties facing American businesses.

The "Most Colossal Glut"

Discourse in newspaper reporting interwove recognition of the Soviet Union with the wheat surplus and mass starvation almost immediately after FDR assumed office in early March. FDR wanted to address falling

48. Walter Duranty, "Russians Hopeful of a 'New Deal,'" *New York Times*, 10 November 1932, 12.
49. Ibid.
50. Feuer, "American Travelers," 137.
51. See Bertrand M. Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002).
52. Duranty, "Russians Hopeful," 12.

commodity prices, and selling commodities to the Soviets was considered the best way for the US government to engage them in discussions that would ultimately lead to diplomatic recognition. Fischer had suggested in 1931 that wheat could "afford the occasion for diplomatic contacts between the Soviet and American governments.…A world wheat conference might calm many anti-Bolshevik 'dumping' agitators and make for better public feeling toward Russia."[53] When delegates from ten exporting countries convened in London for a conference in May 1931, the main topic focused on the surplus of wheat, marking the first time that overproduction and falling prices were addressed. Although an agreement was deemed unlikely, discussions about what to do with surplus wheat ranged from reducing sown acreage to selling campaigns to redistributing the surplus. As one delegate expressed it, consultations were plodding and often difficult. "Here and there some idealistic but inexpert layman bobs up with the approval of Senator [William E.] Borah's notion that if there is too much wheat in one part of the world and starving people in another, part of the grain should be taken to those who are hungry."[54] A plan to convene the four largest exporters was suggested with a view to stabilize prices by lowering the surplus rather than forcing farmers into bankruptcy.[55] Such a conference appealed to FDR, whose advisers were attempting to weave the Soviets into the problem of farm relief. Henry Morgenthau Jr., recorded in his diary that FDR was obsessed with commodity prices, especially the price of wheat in early spring 1933.[56] It's difficult to imagine that FDR, who had experience with Near East Relief during the Armenian Genocide, would have been oblivious to ongoing efforts related to surplus wheat.

The wheat surplus and recognition surfaced in newspaper reporting about the London Economic and Monetary Conference. Representatives, "faced with the most colossal glut of wheat in the world's history,"[57] discussed the problems of surplus wheat and deflated prices; many hoped international cooperation might appeal to both political and agricultural experts. The US delegation took to the conference the insulation of the Agricultural Act, in which government subsidies allowed

53. Louis Fischer, *Why Recognize Russia? The Arguments For and Against the Recognition of the Soviet Government by the United States* (New York: Cape & Smith, 1931), 289–90.

54. Charles A. Selden, "Wheat Conference Opens Tomorrow," *New York Times*, 17 May 1931, 55.

55. "Wheat Conference Urged," *New York Times*, 25 November 1932, 27.

56. Robert E. Bowers, "American Diplomacy, the 1933 Wheat Conference, and Recognition of the Soviet Union," *Agricultural History* 40, no. 1 (1966): 39–52.

57. Kuhn Jr., "31 Nations Confer on Glut of Wheat," 1.

American farmers to undersell other exporters absent a cooperative agreement; it also provided the possibility of a quota system through a provision for crop control.[58] This threat of "subsidized exporting," or dumping, was criticized in a *NYT* editorial, which questioned the practical value of the plan: "Our subsidized exports would almost certainly be barred from important European markets and find their way into China and other Oriental countries which can buy wheat only if the American Government in effect buys it for them."[59]

While delegates spent their time discussing production limits and an equitable quota system, Morgenthau met Maxim Litvinov, commissar of foreign affairs, to discuss Soviet cooperation on a wheat agreement. When Litvinov gave assent to the principle of an agreement, speculation as to whether this constituted US recognition surfaced almost immediately. Litvinov, however, carefully stipulated "that there could be no trade agreement without formal recognition of the Soviet government."[60] The bait of a billion-dollar Soviet market aligned with Litvinov's public position, and was echoed by companies doing business in the United States, particularly the Amtorg Trading Corporation and the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce. Incorporated by a group of American businesses that included US Steel, Westinghouse, Chase National Bank, and International Harvester, among others, the ARCC had fully supported recognition of the Provisional Government of Alexander Kerensky. As early as 1917 the ARCC published "Industrial America," a handbook of commercial information that contained a selected classified directory of American firms interested in the Russian market. Designed "to bring about a closer trade relationship between the two countries," the book was printed in Russian and distributed to approximately five thousand reliable Russian business firms.[61] Only when the Bolsheviks toppled Kerensky's government and signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany did the ARCC take an anti-Bolshevik position and campaign actively against recognition. With the need for its services greatly diminished by the US nonrecognition policy of three Republican administrations, the ARCC disbanded for a period of time until it was reestablished in 1926. Through an alliance between the All-Russian Textile Syndicate, Chase National Bank, and the law firm of Simpson, Thatcher & Bartlett, the reconstituted organization sought to recoup losses for those properties appropriated by the Soviets

58. Bowers, "American Diplomacy," 45–46.
59. "Dumping Wheat," *New York Times*, 17 August 1933, 16.
60. Bowers, "American Diplomacy," 50.
61. "For Trade with Russia," *New York Times*, 18 February 1917, 28.

by selling American machinery and manufactured goods at a higher profit margin.[62] By 1927, American engineers began to play significant roles in the Soviet Union, spearheaded by people such as Colonel Hugh Cooper, who supervised design of the Dnieper Hydroelectric Station; J. D. Campbell, an agricultural engineer who helped the Soviets create vast state farms and machine tractor stations (MTS) at a critical juncture as they attempted to collectivize agriculture. Both provided FDR with critical information that bolstered the case for recognition. Finally, the ARCC published yearbooks in 1928, 1931, and 1936, and it opened a Moscow office and sent a paid representative to the Soviet Union to facilitate assistance to American business interests, with Charles H. Smith serving the first two years and Spencer Williams from 1929 to 1940.[63] Significantly, the ARCC sent a committee to Washington to contest the findings of the Fish Commission, which purported that the Amtorg Trading Corporation was directing subversive activities to overthrow the US government. Another committee headed up by Cooper convinced members of Hoover's cabinet that Section 307 of the Hawley-Smoot Tariff Act, which allowed the Treasury Department to ban Soviet pulpwood because of alleged use of convict labor, was hurting American business interests, and had the ban lifted.

The Soviets' growing economic independence purportedly served as leverage for recognition.[64] Soviet propaganda highlighted the potential of Soviet markets in light of Great Depression realities. For example, Litvinov's deputy commissar of foreign affairs, Nikolai N. Krestinskii, reasoned: "The loss of Soviet markets, the significance of which for some areas of American industry is tremendous in the period of crisis, will be an incentive to American business and political circles to review their traditional position of nonrecognition of the U.S.S.R."[65] Increased trade with the Soviets was predicated on long-term credits, which enabled greater purchasing power and opened US markets to Soviet exports. What was most needed to increase business between the two countries was "good will and a realistic understanding of the problems."[66] FDR supplied both good will and a desire to overcome any problems; Duranty supplied FDR with newspaper reports that helped overcome one major

62. James K. Libbey, "The American-Russian Chamber of Commerce," *Diplomatic History* 9, no. 3 (1985): 233–48.
63. Ibid., 240.
64. Ibid., 243.
65. Ibid.
66. Peter A. Bogdanov, "A Statement on Soviet-American Trade," Amtorg Trading Corporation, October 1931, 15.

problem, mass starvation caused by the Soviets, by denying that it was happening.

Lipstick and Bread

That conditions in the Soviet Union had drastically deteriorated by the autumn of 1932 became a contentious point in the West as several journalists—Clyman, Menken, Duranty, and Lyons—were expelled, warned, or pressured about their reporting of famine conditions. The discourse of mass starvation in the Soviet Union was distinctly politicized from the very first newspaper reports. In January 1933, Ralph W. Barnes, correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*, filed a three-part series about conditions in Ukraine, based on a journey taken in mid-December. Barnes spoke with peasants as well as loyal Communist Party workers about deteriorating conditions. "If the government fails to solve the bread problem in the Ukraine this winter there will be a nightmare in the villages."[67] In addition to newspaper reports, dispatches were being forwarded by State Department and various embassy officials to Washington, D.C., based on information from private individuals who had visited the Soviet Union. For example, Dr. Calvin Hoover, economics professor at Duke University, provided a detailed account of his nine-day journey to the US embassy in Berlin. Hoover's memorandum included eyewitness reports, corroborated by Western journalists. "There is a very bad shortage of food in the North Caucasus and in the Ukraine.…In the Ukraine the situation is almost as bad as in the North Caucasus but apparently represents a later stage of development."[68] Although unpublished in the Soviet press, secret police [OGPU] reports of famine both in towns and the countryside were directed to Moscow. Complicating matters, the Politburo was forced to abandon its earlier decree not to issue grain from central funds for seed. Between 11 February and 3 March, the Politburo issued almost a million tons of grain as seed to North Caucasus, Ukraine, the Lower Volga, the Urals, and Kazakhstan. That decree was published in *Pravda*, the only occasion during the height of the Famine when the distribution of seed grain from central funds to the countryside was openly published in the

67. Ralph W. Barnes, "Grain Shortage in the Ukraine Results from Admitted Failure of the Soviet Agricultural Plan," *New York Herald Tribune*, 15 January 1933, 11.

68. Dr. Calvin Hoover, "Memorandum," Embassy of the United States of America, State Department Records - Russia, 861.5017 Living Conditions/595, p. 274, https://www.fold3.com/image/1/68313227.

Soviet press.[69] Only after Soviet archives were opened did historians learn about the efforts taken to hide the truth about mass starvation. For example, in early February 1933, the Ukrainian Politburo passed a secret resolution instructing regional party committees and soviet executive committees to take prompt measures to localize cases of starvation.[70]

Barnes and William Stoneman of the *Chicago Daily News* visited the Kuban region around Rostov-on-Don in February 1933 after hearing reports that entire villages were exiled to the north, their homes reoccupied by Red Army veterans.[71] Peasants with whom they spoke confirmed three hundred people had been exiled the day before, and there was no bread. "We haven't had any wheat bread for three months and now we don't have any corn bread either. Two, sometimes three, times a week they come and surround our village and ransack every house. And they leave nothing behind them. Once they made three raids in two days."[72] Those who attempted to leave and find food in cities were forcibly returned; Stalin signed a secret decree on 22 January 1933, instructing the OGPU "to arrest 'peasants' fleeing north from Ukraine and the North Caucasus and, after the filtration of counterrevolutionary elements, return the remainder to their places of residence."[73] What awaited those returned peasants was certain starvation, despite a surplus of wheat that glutted the world market, including more than three and one-third million metric tons the Soviets exported in 1932 and 1933.[74]

A campaign of disinformation orchestrated by the Soviets and disseminated by Western journalists like Duranty, Fischer, and Anna Louise Strong erupted in March 1933, only days after FDR was inaugurated as president. Duranty cabled a story in early March that seventy members from the Commissariat of Agriculture and Collectivized Farms had "confessed to deliberate sabotage to limit harvests and create famine.… They destroyed tractors and farm machinery, burned tractor stations,

69. R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (London: Palgrave, 2004), 153–62.

70. Ibid., 206.

71. Barbara Mahoney, *Dispatches and Dictators: Ralph Barnes for the "Herald Tribune"* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2002), 88.

72. William H. Stoneman, "Kuban Peasants Rage against Cruelty of Official Raiders," *Chicago Daily News*, 29 March 1933, 2.

73. RGASPI, fond 558, list 11, file 45, sheets 108–9.

74. Quoted in James E. Mace, "The Politics of Famine: American Government and Press Response to the Ukrainian Famine, 1932–1933, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 3, no. 1 (1988): 79.

sowed weeds, stole grain and killed cattle to accomplish their ends."[75] These confessions, doubtlessly extracted with torture, led to a rapid trial and execution for many. By focusing attention on the purported threat posed by saboteurs, remnants of the kulak class, and foreign interlopers to sabotage the harvest and "create famine," the Soviet Union employed a propaganda technique that the Nazis would also use—accuse the victims of the very crimes being perpetrated upon them. These accusations deflected attention from the Politburo's merciless means of extracting every bit of food substance from Ukrainian villages and preventing people from trying to find sustenance.

When six British engineers from the Metropolitan-Vickers firm were arrested in mid-March 1933 and subsequently tried and convicted of espionage, relations between Great Britain and the Soviet Union momentarily collapsed. In typical fashion, Duranty blamed the engineers' conviction of espionage on "the absence of a first class British criminal barrister to advise the prisoners from day to day."[76] Despite feigning objectivity, Duranty lauded the prosecutor's final summation: "With vigor and eloquence the prosecutor denounced British attempts to picture the trial as a frame-up based on the testimony of terrorized witnesses."[77] Duranty presented Soviet propaganda as unvarnished truth. As one biographer noted, Duranty was incapable "of seeing any event in a light other than that dictated by the pattern he himself had created over the years."[78] Duranty's agenda was clearly aligned with assisting FDR to secure recognition of the Soviet Union, even if that meant denying the mass starvation of millions while questioning the integrity of countrymen standing trial for crimes they never committed.

At the same time as the Metropolitan-Vickers trial was being conducted in Moscow, Gareth Jones, an independent Welsh journalist and foreign relations adviser to former Prime Minister David Lloyd George and American public relations specialist Ivy Lee, held a news conference in Berlin on March 29 detailing his forty-mile walking tour through famine-stricken areas along the border of the Russian and Ukrainian republics. Jones boldly announced to reporters from the *Chicago Daily News* and *New York Evening Post* that he had seen terrible famine in which millions were starving to death.

75. "70 Seized in Russia in Agriculture 'Plot,'" *New York Times*, 5 March 1933, 20.
76. Walter Duranty, "Soviet Sentences 2 Britons to Jail; 3 to Be Expelled," *New York Times*, 19 April 1933, 1.
77. Walter Duranty, "Britons' Expulsion after Soviet Trial Held to Be Likely," *New York Times*, 17 April 1933, 1.
78. Taylor, *Stalin's Apologist*, 337.

> In the train a Communist denied to me that there was a famine. I flung a crust of bread which I had been eating from my own supply into a spittoon. A peasant fellow-passenger fished it out and ravenously ate it. I threw an orange peel into the spittoon and the peasant again grabbed it and devoured it. The Communist subsided. I stayed overnight in a village where there used to be 200 oxen and where there are now six. The peasants were eating the cattle fodder and had only a month's supply left. They told me that many had already died of hunger. Two soldiers came to arrest a thief. They warned me against travel by night as there were too many "starving" desperate men.[79]

The passage bears the hallmarks of Jones's keen sense of dramatic engagement. Challenging a Communist Party member's denial of the Famine exemplified his fearless nature in confronting authority. Jones also understood the political implications of mass starvation, and he correctly interpreted the arrest of the British engineers as "a symbol of panic in consequence of conditions worse than in 1921.…The trial… is merely a pendant to the recent shooting of thirty-five prominent workers in agriculture, including the Vice-Commissar of the Ministry of Agriculture, and is an attempt to check the popular wrath at the famine which haunts every district of the Soviet Union."[80] This last point is often pointed to by Soviet apologists to counter claims that Ukraine was the nexus of famine. However, Jones knew that the catastrophe was not limited to the Soviet countryside, for even in Kharkiv, then the capital of the Ukrainian SSR, he observed thousands queuing for bread, abandoned building projects, and the presence of OGPU. He also described the Soviet attack on Ukrainian nationalism. In a notebook, Jones wrote:

> Increased power of the GPU. Women with fur coats—probably wives of GPU. We passed the GPU prison—a lot of peasants and Ukrainian nationalists sitting there. GPU certainly much stronger than it was and has complete power.…New Ukrainian policy. In the last few weeks there has been a beginning of Russification.…Moscovites have been placed in leading positions in Kharkoff and now Russian is to be taught in the schools.[81]

79. Hubert R. Knickerbocker, "Famine Grips Russia, Millions Dying, Idle on Rise, Says Briton," *New York Evening Post*, 29 March 1933, 1.
80. Knickerbocker, "Famine," 1.
81. Gareth Jones, *Tell Them We Are Starving: The 1933 Diaries of Gareth Jones* (Kingston, Ontario: Kashtan Press, 2015), 190–91.

Significantly, Jones noted the removal of Mykola Skrypnyk as commissar of education in Ukraine. Skrypnyk was accused of over-Ukrainization and put on trial in July, in the midst of which he committed suicide. This attack on Ukrainian national aspirations and cultural identity, what Stalin called Ukraine's "deviation towards nationalism,"[82] became the basis for Jones's newspaper article titled "OGPU's Reign of Terror in Russia." Jones pointed to Soviet secret police official Genrikh Iagoda as the person responsible for renewing terror against the Ukrainian intelligentsia, members of the Ukrainian Communist Party, clergy, peasants, and nationalists. Jones clearly recognized that Stalin not only subjugated the peasants through forced collectivization, but had also severely crippled Ukrainian intellectual and political leadership.[83]

"Masters of Euphemism"

Subsequent events left a stain on journalism's institutional integrity that has remained for more than eighty-five years. The Soviet ambassador to Great Britain, Ivan Maiskii, complained about Jones's press conference in Berlin to Lloyd George. Additionally, Konstantin Umanskii, head of the Foreign Press Department (FPD), purportedly ordered a story denying the Famine, which Duranty provided and the *NYT* published. Duranty and Jones represent polarities of 1932–1933 Famine reporting. Though both were Cambridge educated, any similarity ends there. Fluent in Russian, German, French, and Welsh, Jones was a twenty-seven-year-old reporter who had traveled to and reported on the Soviet Union for *The Times* on two separate occasions in 1930 and 1931.[84]

In January 1933, Jones leveraged his political connections to acquire a diplomatic visa from Maiskii, who instructed officials in the FPD to give Jones "special care, give him sufficient attention, and put him in touch with those people and institutions whose assistance he will need."[85] A. F. Neiman, Umanskii's deputy in the FPD, responded that every attempt should be made to accommodate Jones, clearly known for

82. Stalin, "Report to the Seventeenth Party Congress," 368–69.
83. George O. Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy, Urban Growth, and Identity Change in the Ukrainian SSR 1923–1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 173.
84. See Margaret S. Colley, *More Than a Grain of Truth: The Biography of Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones* (Nottinghamshire: Nigel Linsam Colley, 2005).
85. Letter from Ambassador Ivan Maiskii to Comrade Neiman, Press Department of NKID, 25 January 1933, Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter AVP RF), f. 056, op. 18, pap. 38, d. 9, l. 27, cited in Teresa Cherfas, "Reporting Stalin's Famine: Jones and Muggeridge—A Case Study in Forgetting and Rediscovery," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 14, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 775–804.

his connection with *The Times* "which has, on several occasions, taken articles from him of an 'editorial nature'" and a more recent *Manchester Guardian* article, which put the FPD "on guard that his sympathies have changed. It is, of course, our job to persuade him otherwise, but I know Jones a little and am afraid that his impressions will not generally yield to our influence."[86] Indeed, Jones, an inveterate teetotaler raised as a devout Presbyterian, would not yield.[87] In fact, Jones directly asked Litvinov about the fate of the Metropolitan-Vickers engineers, among many sensitive foreign policy issues. Litvinov confided that the engineers would soon be released. In another interview Jones confronted a Communist Party official about the Famine, eliciting strong denials. When the Soviets realized what Jones had done—boarded a slow train for Kharkiv, detrained in Belgorod, and walked seventy kilometers "in order to get acquainted with our countryside"[88]—the Soviets were galled, issuing a FPD decree, "Restrictions on the Freedom of Movement by Foreign Correspondents," which banned foreign journalists from traveling beyond Moscow.[89] Jones later covered Litvinov's presentation at the London Economic Conference in June, noting that the Soviet Foreign Minister was guarded. "The bright picture he [Litvinov] painted of the Soviet Union was based on Soviet statistics, which are unreliable, and was intended to serve as propaganda rather than a real contribution to the Conference."[90]

In twenty-one articles written for three newspapers in Great Britain, Jones exposed a famine of devastating proportions; his reporting was based on eyewitness testimony from the people most impacted. Repeatedly, Jones was told, "'Hleba nietu' (There is no bread),"[91] and "'Vse pukhli' (All are swollen)."[92] Jones used these refrains to document the suffering of people who told him "They are killing us."[93]

When he returned to Moscow after his walking tour, Jones inter-

86. Letter from A. F. Neiman to I. M. Maiskii in London, 4 February 1933, AVP RF, f. 056, op. 18, pap. 38, d. 9, l. 45.
87. Colley, *More Than a Grain of Truth*, 6–7.
88. Letter from S. I. Brodovskii to K. Umanskii, 29 March 1933, AVP RF, f. 056, op. 18, pap. 38, d. 9, l. 95.
89. Statement of the Resolution of the NKID Collegium, 2 April 1933, AVP RF, f. 056, op. 18, pap. 39, d. 15, l. 28.
90. Gareth Jones, "Britain's Policy before the World Economic Conference," *Western Mail*, 10 June 1933, 11.
91. Gareth Jones, "'Bread! We Are Dying,'" *Daily Express*, 4 April 1933, 1–2.
92. Gareth Jones, "Nine to a Room in Slums of Russia," *Daily Express*, 6 April 1933, 11.
93. Ibid.

viewed Duranty and confronted him about conditions. In his notebook, Jones commented, "I don't trust Duranty. He still believes in collectivization. Said, 'Save face'. Third Inter[national] down & out. *Quiet*."[94] Jones's intuition about Duranty proved accurate, and when Duranty disparaged him personally in a *NYT* story denying the Famine, Jones rebutted Duranty's false assertions in a letter to the editor. Jones tactfully explained that the Soviet Foreign Office had attempted to conceal the mass starvation by censoring foreign journalists, turning them into "masters of euphemism and understatement."[95] Jones explained that foreign journalists were being forced to "give 'famine' the polite name of 'food shortage' and 'starving to death' is softened to read as 'widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition.'"[96] Jones ended his letter by congratulating the Soviet Foreign Office "on its skill in concealing the true situation in the U.S.S.R."[97] Jones was not alone in castigating Duranty's denial of the starvation in Ukraine. One reader noted that the Soviet government was "repeating the deeds of 1921, when the famine situation was not known until it was too late to help those five millions in the Ukraine, who died of starvation on account of false information."[98] In that case, the Soviets had failed to bring famine conditions in Ukraine to the attention of the American Relief Administration. In 1933, Ukrainians starved while a worldwide wheat surplus wasted away.

In contrast to the enigmatic Jones, Duranty was a forty-seven-year-old correspondent at the height of his fame, a Pulitzer Prize winner considered the most important Western journalist stationed in the Soviet Union. Following the Russian Revolution and throughout the Civil War, Duranty had been vehemently anti-Bolshevik.[99] However, once entrenched in Moscow, Duranty's reporting slowly began to mirror party propaganda, and by the Shakhty show trial of 1928, his reporting had grown increasingly complacent.[100] Two days after Jones's Berlin

94. Gareth Jones, *Tell Them We Are Starving*, 203.

95. Gareth Jones, "Mr. Jones Replies: Former Secretary of Lloyd George Tells of Observations in Russia," *New York Times*, 13 May 1933, 12.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.

98. Katherine E. Schutock, "Hunger in the Ukraine: Private Correspondence Indicates Serious Conditions," *New York Times*, 6 April 1933, 16.

99. For an analysis of Duranty's coverage of the Russian Revolution and Civil War, see Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz, "A Test of the News," *New Republic*, 4 August 1920, 1–48.

100. Alfred W. Kliefoth, a member of the US Embassy in Berlin, summarized a meeting with Duranty. The final sentence of the memorandum reads: "In conclusion, Duranty pointed out that 'in agreement with NEW YORK TIMES and the Soviet authorities,' his dispatches always reflect the official position of the Soviet regime and not his own."

press briefing, Duranty's rebuttal was published in the *NYT*. Duranty derided Jones's claims as "a big scare story…with 'thousands already dead and millions menaced by death and starvation.' Its author is Gareth Jones."[101] In denigrating Jones by name and denying the Famine, Duranty served Soviet purposes by impugning Jones's judgment. "Mr. Jones is a man of keen and active mind…but the writer [Duranty] thought Mr. Jones's judgment was somewhat hasty.…I suggested that that [forty-mile walk] was a rather inadequate cross-section of a big country but nothing could shake his conviction of impending doom."[102]

Duranty decried Jones's "hasty study" in favor of "more trustworthy information" acquired by "making inquiries in Soviet commissariats… and from my personal connections, Russian and foreign."[103] Duranty dismissed the enormity of the disaster in classic doublespeak: "There is no actual starvation or deaths from starvation, but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition."[104] By reverting to stereotypes about Soviet indifference to casualties sustained in socializing agriculture, Duranty rationalized Soviet terror as something "animated by fanatical conviction.…You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs."[105]

Duranty was rewarded for holding the Communist Party line by being the first Western correspondent escorted into what had been famine-stricken areas that were now flush with crop, leading him to declare in August 1933 that "any report of a famine in Russia is today an exaggeration or malignant propaganda."[106] Duranty succeeded in denying that mass starvation had occurred by confounding the conditions he found in August 1933 as indicative of conditions from November 1932 through June 1933 during the height of this disaster. Duranty strategically pointed to the 1933 harvest to contradict reports of a famine that had already killed millions, acknowledging only that those who had starved "suffered the fate of the vanquished in any cruel war."[107] The deception worked despite the numerous stories published by Jones, Clyman, Muggeridge, Barnes, Stoneman, Chamberlin, and Lyons that

101. Walter Duranty, "Russians Hungry, But Not Starving," *New York Times*, 31 March 1933, 13.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. The expression was first used by Duranty in "Red Square: A Poem," published in the *New York Times* on 18 September 1932.
106. Walter Duranty, "Famine Toll Heavy in Southern Russia," *New York Times*, 24 August 1933, 1.
107. Walter Duranty, "Abundance Found in North Caucasus," *New York Times*, 14 September 1933, 14.

confirmed mass starvation. And despite considerable evidence to the contrary, scholars continue to assert that "very little was heard about it [famine]"[108] and "in the absence of strong reporting on the crisis there was little hope that broad public interest could be generated."[109] In November Duranty followed Litvinov to the United States where the Soviet foreign commissar negotiated conditions for recognition. Duranty celebrated with Litvinov at the Waldorf Astoria after an agreement had been reached. In his 1949 book, *Stalin and Co.*, Duranty finally admitted that millions had starved, but he said nothing about denying it or disparaging Jones.[110]

"Entirely off the Record"

The first one hundred days of FDR's administration coincided with the worst months of mass starvation ravaging Ukraine, the Don region of North Caucasus, and the Lower Volga. During that time, FDR and the State Department received numerous pleas from individuals and organizations for food relief, yet US officials responded with polite regret, and FDR likely never actually saw the correspondence.[111] However, at a press conference, reporters asked the president about aspects of the farm credit bill to be presented at the London World Economic Conference. In his lengthy response, FDR focused on the need for the largest wheat exporting countries to reduce surplus stocks in order to stabilize prices, and he included the Soviet Union in that group of exporting nations.[112] FDR then confirmed knowing about deteriorating food conditions in the Soviet Union. "I think you can say—I shall say this entirely off the record—but Russia is today probably, as far as we know, not in a position to do very much wheat exporting. They need

108. Morris, *Stalin's Famine and Roosevelt's Recognition of Russia*, 81.
109. Pomakoy, *Helping Humanity*, 110.
110. Walter Duranty, *Stalin and Co.: The Politburo—the Men Who Run Russia* (New York: Sloan and Associates, 1949), 78.
111. Robert F. Kelley, Chief, Division of Eastern European Affairs, responded: "In reply, you are informed that although the Department appreciates the anxiety of American citizens whose relatives in Russia are suffering from lack of food, it is of the opinion that there are no measures which this Government may appropriately take at the present time in order to facilitate relief work being carried on in Russia." Letter to P. C. Hiebert, April 1933, State Department Records - Russia, 861.48/2449 Calamities, Disasters, Refugees, p. 100, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., https://www.fold3.com/image/32500389.
112. The largest wheat exporting nations included Australia, Canada, Argentina, and the United States.

their own wheat."[113] Significantly, the statement was off the record, so FDR knew reporters would not use the information. Nonetheless, he even softened his assertion by saying Russia "is probably" and added another qualifier, "as far as we know." That "we" included his cabinet and the State Department's Eastern European Division, the hub for gathering intelligence on the Soviet Union.[114] The last statement, "They need their own wheat," certainly implied that the Soviets had insufficient internal stocks to feed their own people. Given contextual evidence, the statement strongly suggests FDR knew famine conditions plagued the Soviet Union. FDR could assert the Soviet Union needed its own wheat based on information available in the press as well as dispatches from embassies in every major European capital. For example, the American consul in Paris alerted Washington that the Soviet government was intentionally starving its citizens to death, using famine to consolidate their control.[115] FDR did not allude to the causes of starvation: drastic requisition quotas, blacklisting of entire villages, and enforced restrictions against travel. The date of this press conference, 15 March, occurred before the Jones announcement and Duranty denial about famine in the Soviet Union. Despite the State Department forwarding dispatches confirming mass starvation, FDR "sensed opposition to recognition in the Department of State and wished to avoid departmental obstructions."[116] Choosing William C. Bullitt, who had proposed recognition as early as 1919, to lead the negotiations with the Soviets guaranteed those State Department obstructions were overcome.[117] The narrative that FDR knew nothing about the famine strains credulity when contextualized against ordinary citizens who easily articulated the connection between famine, the wheat surplus, and recognition.

"Choked with a Surplus of Wheat"

When the United States and the Soviet Union signed the London Wheat Agreement in August 1933, international relief agencies pleaded in the

113. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Transcription of Press Conference #3, 15 March 1933, 12, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/collections/franklin/?p=collections/findingaid&id=508.

114. Loy W. Henderson, *A Question of Trust: The Origins of U.S.-Soviet Diplomatic Relations* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986).

115. Morris, *Stalin's Famine and Roosevelt's Recognition of Russia*, 116.

116. Farnsworth, *William C. Bullitt and the Soviet Union*, 92.

117. In 1932 Bullitt traveled to the Soviet Union, and speculation about his role in advancing recognition of the Soviet Union grew. FDR was accused of violating the Logan Act.

press and through diplomatic channels for intervention to mitigate the suffering of starving Ukrainians. Cardinal Theodor Innitzer, Archbishop of Vienna, appealed to the International Red Cross and to all nations to intercede; he cabled the State Department to request US assistance. In a *NYT* article, Innitzer cited Gareth Jones's eyewitness reporting in pleading for relief efforts. "Merely to look on such a situation would be to increase the responsibility of the whole civilized world for mass deaths in Russia. It would mean to bear the guilt of the fact that, at a time when whole sections of the world are almost choked with a surplus of wheat and food, men are starving in Russia."[118] The cardinal directly impugned those nations "choked with a surplus of wheat and food" who did nothing; they would "bear the guilt" for the cruel phenomena that accompanied famine conditions, "infanticide and cannibalism."[119] Having employed extremely evocative language, the cardinal argued for making relief a condition for recognition of the Soviet Union. Clearly, the United States would have to be included among those countries "who are today negotiating for the enlargement of economic relations with Soviet Russia in order to make those negotiations dependent on the comprehension of the necessity for help in the stricken districts of that country."[120] Even though Spain had recognized the Soviet Union in July 1933, Innitzer's call specifically challenged American officials to mandate food relief as a condition for recognition negotiations with the Soviets. That FDR ignored the cardinal's direct plea points to what scholars have called his "willful ignorance" for settling on a recognition policy without an enforceable quid pro quo.[121] FDR was doubtlessly willful in choosing not to attend to the newspaper reports, to diplomatic dispatches, and to personal pleas. Not attending to available information is not the same as being ignorant about mass starvation in Ukraine. FDR clearly let nothing forestall recognition, including suffering peasants.

At the very same time international relief agencies were pressing governments to take action, the Wheat Agreement was signed by the United States, the Soviet Union, and nineteen other grain-growing nations on 25 August 1933. Terms of the agreement articulated an effort to "eliminate the abnormal surpluses which have been depressing the wheat market." Article 5 committed the Soviet Union to limit its wheat export based on a further agreement with the wheat exporting countries, and article 6, section 3, called for a lowering of tariffs as wheat

118. "Cardinal Asks Aid in Russian Famine," *New York Times*, 20 August 1933, 3.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid.
121. Arnold Beichman, "Roosevelt's Failure at Yalta," *Humanitas* 16, no. 1 (2003): 102.

prices went up.[122] Negotiations would drag on throughout the fall, as the Soviets would not commit to any export limitations. Unfortunately, as one agricultural expert asserted at the time, "No doubt it would be an exaggeration to say that the wheat crisis was the primary cause of the trouble which is afflicting the world today, but at any rate it proved to be the accident which brought about the downfall of a badly constructed edifice."[123] The financial consequences of overproduction quickly became apparent as first the British pound and eventually the dollar plummeted in value, precipitating a monetary crisis without precedent. As Robert E. Bowers, who provided important scholarship on the Wheat Conference, correctly surmised, "The agreement to limit production was doomed from the start. Wheat prices continued low, the Soviet Union did not become a full-fledged member of the Wheat Supervisory Body, and it was not until the war and the postwar demand for wheat drove prices up that the wheat farmer came into his own."[124]

In October, FDR exchanged letters with President Mikhail Kalinin on the day US western farmers staged protests against the National Recovery Act. For deflecting attention from dissatisfied farmers in this way, FDR was credited with having pulled off "another masterly publicity coup."[125] Although the exchange of letters did not mean recognition, the move was lauded by members of the US Congress and business leaders. Boris E. Skvirskii, Washington representative of the Soviet Union Information Bureau, said that he could finally be "called the Washington representative of the Soviet Foreign Office."[126] Duranty wrote that recognition "would put a crown on Soviet achievements.… President Roosevelt's message climaxes a year that has brought the Soviet Union back to the old place of the Czarist empire as a great world power."[127]

"An Unremitting Campaign"

US recognition of the Soviet Union became in November 1933 an especially important consideration for Ukrainian-American and Ukrainian-Canadian diasporas as well as Ukrainians living in Europe,

122. Pomakoy, *Helping Humanity*, 111.
123. Francis Delaisi, "Raising the Price of Wheat a Problem for Many Nations," *New York Times*, 6 August 1933, XX3.
124. Bowers, "American Diplomacy," 52.
125. "President Scores a Publicity Coup," *New York Times*, 21 October 1933, 2.
126. "Roosevelt's Move Wins Wide Backing," *New York Times*, 21 October 1933, 1.
127. Walter Duranty, "Moscow Glad but Calm," *New York Times*, 21 October 1933, 1.

whose discourse of resistance actively changed the meaning of recognition. A short notice in the *New York Times* reported that a delegation of the United Ukrainian Organizations of the United States—it is not clear whether or not this organization was affiliated with the Ukrainian National Association, the earliest Ukrainian American organization—attempted to present FDR with a declaration "to propose an impartial investigation of conditions in the Ukraine before recognition is accorded Soviet Russia… [and] that the proposed recognition would be the recognition of the foreign rule in the Ukraine imposed and maintained by brutal force."[128] The delegation argued the Famine was not caused by a poor harvest, drought, or other climatic aberration. Rather, mass starvation was a result of the "political and cultural conflict between Ukrainian nationalistic aspirations and Moscow's imperialistic and centralizing designs, the culmination of unremitting and ferocious persecution."[129] The distinctly Ukrainian perspective of the request was further evidenced in similar pleas from organizations such as the Ukrainian National Women's League of America, the Ukrainian National Council in Canada, and the US World War Veterans of Ukrainian Descent. This last organization's secretary, Volodimir Jurkowsky, turned over newspaper clippings and photographs taken by "two American citizens who were visiting Ukraine."[130] Clippings from *Le Matin*, *New York Daily News*, and *New York World-Telegram* chronicled the story of an American couple, identified as Mrs. Martha Stebalo and spouse, who obtained special permission to visit Ukraine only to learn upon arrival that family members had starved to death.

The Jurkowsky materials were particularly sensitive, documented in correspondence that accompanied their journey from the Postmaster General to the Democratic State Committee (DSC) to the Secretary of State. An assistant at the DSC wrote, "This letter I would not presume to answer myself because there might be dynamite in it."[131] In his letter,

128. "Ukrainian Group Will Ask Roosevelt to Order Famine Study Prior to Recognition," *New York Times*, 28 October 1933, 16.

129. Ibid.

130. Volodimir Jurkowsky, letter to James J. Farley, 18 September 1933, State Department Records - Russia, 861.48/2449 Calamities, Disasters, Refugees, pp. 186–90, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., https://www.fold3.com/image/32500770. Jurkowsky's materials included two newspaper clippings. The *Le Matin* clippings (29, 30 August) named the sources as Mrs. Martha Stebalo and her husband, who obtained permission to travel to their former home in Ukraine. When they arrived in her former village, they learned that Mrs. Stebalo's mother and brothers had starved to death.

131. JMD to "Mr. Ross," note dated 28 September 1933, State Department Records

Llewellyn G. Ross hit a similar note. "I am quite certain that your [State] Department will agree that it is a very ticklish situation to handle but I feel you are all more qualified to take care of a matter of this kind than the writer."[132] The materials ended up with Robert F. Kelley, who wrote curtly, "Your letter and its enclosures have been read with interest."[133] What was so ticklish for the State Department was having to abide denial of the Famine when it had credible eyewitness testimony of what actually had happened.

When US-USSR recognition was announced on 16 November 1933, Ukrainian-American groups organized protest marches in New York City and Chicago. Under the auspices of the Ukrainian National Association (UNA) and its daily newspaper, *Svoboda*, as well as its English-language supplement the *Ukrainian Weekly*, the cause turned from contesting US recognition of the Soviet Union to seeking US recognition of mass starvation in Ukraine. UNA newspapers reported that November was to be designated as a Month of Protest and 19 November as a "National Day of Mourning For the Millions of Ukrainian Victims of Bolshevik Ferocity."[134] In the following issue, the UNA outlined its role "to bring to America's attention…the fact that Soviet Russia is not one nation but a conglomeration [of] enslaved alien nationalities who desire to live their own lives."[135] As American citizens, numbering almost a half-million people,[136] it was incumbent for Ukrainian-Americans "to wage an unremitting campaign of protests against the Soviets for their barbarism," as their "clarion-like voice…brought vividly before the consciousness of America the fact that Ukraine, which although obscured, persecuted, denationalized, and deliberately starved, still sought freedom and independence."[137] This exemplifies how people were

- Russia, 861.48/2449 Calamities, Disasters, Refugees, p. 185, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., https://www.fold3.com/image/32500765.

132. Llewellyn G. Ross, letter to Hon. Cordell Hull, 3 October 1933, State Department Records - Russia, 861.48/2449 Calamities, Disasters, Refugees, p. 176, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., https://www.fold3.com/image/32500725.

133. Robert F. Kelley, letter to Mr. Volodimir Jurkowsky, 11 October 1933, State Department Records - Russia, 861.48/2449 Calamities, Disasters, Refugees, p. 191, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., https://www.fold3.com/image/32500800.

134. "November 19th—Day of Mourning, *Ukrainian Weekly*, 10 November 1933, 1.

135. "Our Youth and the Soviets," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 17 November 1933, 1.

136. George A. Miziuk, "Ukrainians in the U.S.," 2 December 2019, https://usa.mfa.gov.ua/en/ukraine-and-usa/ukrainians-us.

137. "Our Stand," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 24 November 1933, 1.

constituted as groups through identification with a specific discourse in which the meaning of recognition changed.

The message of resistance was drowned out in the mainstream media's support of FDR's recognition policy, which emboldened American members of the International Communist Party (ICP) to attack Ukrainian-American protesters on the streets of New York City and Chicago.[138] ICP leadership disavowed willingness to abide by the Soviet-American recognition agreement, noting that "every attempt to claim that Article 4 [on propaganda] of the Litvinov pact applies to the Communist International will meet with defeat."[139] When a Ukrainian nationalist was arrested for the murder of a Soviet consular clerk in Lviv (held by Poland at the time), the Soviets accused Polish leaders of tolerating anti-Soviet propaganda spread by Ukrainian émigrés.[140] Moreover, the Soviets adopted a narrative that aligned a Ukrainian separatist movement with German Nazis in an attempt to form a coalition against the Soviet Union.[141] For Ukrainians living in Europe, Canada, and the United States, FDR's recognition of the Soviet Union morphed into discourse in which nationalist perspectives, embittered by "deliberately perverted propaganda disseminated by certain Polish and Russian-Communist interests" brought into immediate view the need to retain a sense of national identity.[142] The challenge was how a distinctly Ukrainian sovereignty remained relevant after recognition had threatened to erase them from historical culture. Of course, Duranty led the chorus in praising Stalin's triumph in establishing political sections in the MTS, "a step that future historians cannot fail to regard as one of the major political moves in the Soviet Union's second decade."[143] Duranty unabashedly pointed out that famine stories current in Berlin, Riga, and Vienna "were making an eleventh-hour attempt to avert American recognition by picturing the Soviet Union as a land of ruin and despair."[144] Duranty rarely missed an opportunity to curry favor with the Soviets in order to enhance his own standing.

Following World War II, Dr. Raphael Lemkin first associated the

138. "5 Hurt As 500 Reds Fight Parade Here," *New York Times*, 19 November 1933, 1. See also "100 Hurt in Communist-Ukrainian Riot as Reds Attack Paraders in Chicago," *New York Times*, 18 December 1933, 1.
139. Henderson, *A Question of Trust*, 257.
140. "Lwow Incident Closed," *New York Times*, 26 October 1933, 10.
141. "Soviet Links Reich in Ukrainian Plot," *New York Times*, 3 December 1933, 26.
142. "Exposing False Propaganda," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 22 December 1933, 1.
143. Walter Duranty, "Free Trade in Food Allowed in Russia," *New York Times*, 17 December 1933, 32.
144. Ibid.

Holodomor with genocide. Having published *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* in 1944, Lemkin not only coined the term genocide by combining the Greek word "genos," meaning race or nation, with the Latin word for killing, "cide," but also contributed to the United Nations (UN) *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. Arguing that the Ukrainian Famine was an act of genocide, Lemkin cited article 2, section C of the *Convention*, "that the deliberate creation of conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of a nation is genocide."[145] Although disappointed that the UN had only begun to investigate Ukrainian claims, Lemkin urged Ukrainian readers to fight relentlessly. "It is not true that the communist leaders are not dependent on public opinion.…Communism can operate only in such climate of public opinion.…We must use every opportunity to keep the eyes of the world on Soviet genocide."[146]

In November 1953, Lemkin addressed a crowd of fifteen thousand people who had paraded down Fifth Avenue to Washington Square in New York City, site of a Ukrainian protest march in 1933. In his speech, Lemkin explained that Soviet genocide was a four-pronged attack against Ukrainian sovereignty—its intelligentsia, religion, peasant farmers, and fragmentation of the Ukrainian peoples.[147] He warned that the plan employed by the Soviet Union was being repeated regardless of the "indescribable suffering for millions of people.…This is not simply a case of mass murder. It is a case of genocide, of the destruction, not of individuals only, but of a culture and a nation."[148] It would be easy to frame Lemkin's genocide argument within Cold War ideology, but that narrow context elides much of Lemkin's more encompassing theory about how genocide was committed against Ukraine's people.

By 1983, the struggle to gain recognition for the Holodomor was evidenced in narratives that framed the Holocaust as a direct point of contrast. As stated in the *Ukrainian Weekly*, documentation of the Holocaust "would forever fix the horrors in the minds of men, remind them of the virulence of evil in a nominally civilized world and, it was hoped, preclude a recurrence."[149] Holocaust perpetrators had been brought to justice at Nuremberg; however, for Ukrainians, justice for the horrors of 1932–1933 had not been brought to bear. "So why, 50 years

145. Raphael Lemkin, "Investigation of Soviet Genocide by U.N.," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 7 March 1953, 2.
146. Ibid.
147. Raphael Lemkin, *Soviet Genocide in the Ukraine* (Kingston, Ontario: Kashtan Press, 2014).
148. Ibid., 8.
149. "Lest We Forget," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 20 March 1983, 3.

later, is the famine still so little known? How has this horrible atrocity, the murder of 7 million people, escaped the attention of mankind, its conscience and its justice?…The Ukrainian tragedy is unknown and unavenged."[150] Answers to those questions were explored in a special section of the *Ukrainian Weekly*, which included eyewitness accounts and analytical pieces by scholars Robert Conquest, Dana Dalrymple, and James Mace.

By legitimating Ukrainian historiography of the Holodomor, scholars necessarily focused attention on FDR's recognition of the Soviet Union within the context of mass starvation concurrent with discussions about what to do with the world's surplus wheat. That no relief efforts were tendered became an important fulcrum for interpretation. The idea that FDR could do nothing to save the starving peasants is reflected in many arguments. For example, Keith Pomakoy asserts that the president could not materially change what happened. "America's decision to withhold moral condemnation, instead offering recognition, reflected realpolitik at its finest. America, in theory if not in fact, increased its domestic security by limiting Soviet propaganda and increasing trade."[151] When viewed against the fact that Communist Party propaganda continued unabated and US-Soviet trade languished, FDR's decision to recognize without offering moral condemnation and without raising the issue of relief was a weak gambit that collapsed once the Gentlemen's Agreement was abandoned. As M. Wayne Morris notes, diplomacy may have been doomed, "but the moral imperative should have forced State Department officials to have made an effort.…Recognition probably would not have been possible if the American public had known the truth about the famine in 1933."[152] In response to this last point, it should be noted that soon after recognition occurred, Hamilton Fish Jr., introduced a resolution in the US House of Representatives, "registering the facts of the famine…taking cognizance of such invasions of human rights… and admit[ting the need for] American relief."[153] Duranty, Fischer, and pro-recognition journalists created the mythology that eyewitness stories about millions of dying peasants was propaganda, a big scare story. That mythology was dramatized by diplomats like Édouard Herriot, and by celebrities like George Bernard Shaw, who openly claimed there had never been a famine. Famine denial became the necessary trope to insulate FDR's recognition of the Soviet Union from criticism. That

150. Ibid.
151. Pomakoy, *Helping Humanity*, 115.
152. Morris, *Stalin's Famine and Roosevelt's Recognition of Russia*, 158, 162–63.
153. Cited in ibid., 160.

mythology persisted despite FDR's admission in 1940 that the Soviet Union "as a matter of practical fact, as everybody knows, who has got the courage to face the fact…is run by a dictatorship, a dictatorship as any other dictatorship in the world."[154] Even harsh criticism from FDR could not sway interpretations to include Ukrainian peasants, a tendency to forget the victims that has stubbornly persisted. Famine-denial eventually morphed into genocide-denial, as Roman Serbyn argues: "Today's famine-genocide deniers are the spiritual heirs of the first famine negators, Stalin and those who helped him carry out the most heinous of crimes against the Ukrainian nation or to deny its existence."[155] How we ascribe meaning to past events represents an important component of historical inquiry, one that calls for interpretations challenging established, tacit assumptions. Most importantly, an event like the Holodomor "upholds the importance of discourse and narrative in shaping communication over time."[156]

"Noble Motives"

Evidence analyzed supports the argument that FDR, in speaking with reporters off the record, likely knew something about the mass starvation in the Soviet Union, yet did nothing to mitigate the suffering by calling attention to the victims' plight, despite the largest surplus of wheat ever. While it is doubtful that the Soviet Union would have allowed relief organizations access into the famine-stricken areas, FDR chose not to raise the issue or set relief as a condition for recognition. In avoiding the issue, FDR's diplomatic recognition by the US government legitimated Stalin's use of famine to subdue the peasantry and crush Ukrainian national aspirations. Ultimately, FDR's recognition of the Soviet Union has been appropriated to carry ideological meanings that empower views of US triumphalism and values associated with a global capitalist order while dismissing or obscuring those that cast the United States in an unfavorable light.[157]

This paper does not consider the entirety of FDR's presidency in that first year, nor does it critique FDR's conduct of foreign policy beyond

154. Frank S. Adams, "Youth Told Stand," *New York Times*, 11 February 1940, 43.
155. Roman Serbyn, "The Last Stand of the Famine-Genocide Deniers," *Ukrainian Canadian*, February 1989, 7.
156. Barbie Zelizer, *Covering the Body: The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 4.
157. Schrecker, "Introduction: Cold War Triumphalism," 18.

recognition. Yet much can be said about FDR's governing style and his manipulation of the press. Confronted with a humanitarian crisis that needed assertive action, FDR refused to emerge from the hard shell of isolationism and the scarred tissue of failed World War I diplomacy. It has been argued that FDR believed recognition of the Soviet Union was a necessary step in the recovery of the United States. This view bolsters representations of US economic and military dominance that took root in FDR's administration. Indubitably, that uncritical view of American domination overshadows victims' suffering and short-circuits any sense that the past could have taken a distinctly different turn.

After nearly ninety years, the Holodomor struggles for recognition, as meanings ascribed to famine/starvation are mired in theological, philosophical, and political principles. Significantly, as Susan Neiman argues, attempting to divide evils into greater and lesser "is not just pointless but impermissible. To call something evil is to say that it defies justification, and balance. Evils should not be compared, but they should be distinguished."[158] Conditions that existed in 1932–1933 should not confuse us today. Evil actions require no evil intent. Propaganda was used to camouflage moral objections and "to convince people that the criminal actions in which they participated were guided by acceptable, even noble motives."[159]

Propaganda assaults by the current Russian state continue to cast doubt on the historiography of the Holodomor: According to those modern-day deniers, the Holodomor never happened and only Nazi sympathizers would claim that it did. Vladimir Putin's cronies at the *Sputnik News* adopted Stalinist language, calling the Famine "one of the 20th century's most famous myths and vitriolic pieces of anti-Soviet Propaganda."[160] Then Putin annexed Crimea and waged war in eastern Ukraine, which he claimed was Russian territory inhabited by Russians. Recognition of the Holodomor and its discursive meanings is a necessary step in understanding the difference between famine and mass starvation, between a visitation of the Lord and murder.

158. Susan Nieman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 286.
159. Ibid., 275.
160. Anne Applebaum, "The Power of Ukraine's Famine," *Globe and Mail*, 24 March 2018, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-the-power-of-ukraines-famine/.