# Holodomor: The Politics of Memory and Political Infighting in Contemporary Ukraine

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## Introduction

### The Politics of Memory in a Divided Country

In the past five years, the issue of the Holodomor, that is, the man-made Famine of 1932–33, has occupied a much more prominent position in Ukrainian politics and society than it was ever accorded during the 1990s, let alone in the previous decades when the issue was effectively silenced by the Soviet authorities, and any references to Holodomor were criminalized. For example, twelve years after independence and fifteen years since Gorbachov's *glasnost*, only 75 percent of respondents in a 2003 national survey confirmed their awareness of the event, while 13 percent confessed that they knew nothing about the Famine, and 12 percent declined to express their opinion.[1] Three years later, in September 2006, as many as 94 percent of respondents confirmed their awareness of the event, even though a substantial number of them (12 percent) considered that the Famine was mainly caused by natural phenomena.[2] The main divide, however, shifted from a rather crude ideological controversy over Holodomor recognition versus Holodomor denial towards a more sophisticated controversy over interpretations of the Holodomor as either genocide against Ukrainian people or a Stalinist crime against humanity, which targeted both Ukrainian and Russian, Kazakh and other Soviet peasants.

In both cases, however, the controversy reflected and continues to reflect the divided character of the Ukrainian polity, two different visions of the Ukrainian past and future, two different historical narratives and, as a matter of fact, two different national identities.[3] Ukraine is still a battlefield, where two different national projects compete for dominance, drawing their discursive and symbolic resources from various aspects of colonial and anti-colonial legacies.

The main hypothesis underlying my paper is that the official politics of memory in Ukraine have been as ambiguous and inconsistent as the politics of officialdom in general, both domestically and internationally. This ambiguity stems from the hybrid nature of the post-Soviet regime that emerged from the compromise between the former ideological rivals ("national democrats" and "sovereign communists"), but also reflects the hybrid and highly ambivalent nature of Ukrainian postcolonial and post-totalitarian society. Since 1991, official politics, including the politics of memory, had been masterminded in such a way so as to not only exploit the societal ambivalence inherited from the past, but also to preserve and effectively intensify it for the future. The practical manifestations of such a policy under Kuchma are considered in the first part of my paper, where I discuss the vacillation of Ukrainian authorities over the Holodomor issue.

In the second part, I present some observations about the politics of memory of the "post-Orange" governments. Here, I come to the conclusion that the Party of Regions cannot simply continue the manipulative practices of its crypto-Soviet predecessors, nor can the "Orange" parties rid themselves of post-Soviet inconsistencies and ambiguity, determined by the internal divisions and general ambivalence of Ukrainian society. A slight hope is expressed, however, that the new politics of memory, albeit still lacking consistency and integrity, is gradually coalescing in Ukraine to serve the interests of the nation rather than those corporate interests of any particular group.

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1. *Den',* 21 October 2003, p. 1. The survey was conducted by the Kyiv Institute of Sociology and the Sociology Department of the University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

2. "Not enough information," *The Day Weekly Digest*, 21 November 2006.

3. The issue is discussed in more detail in Mykola Riabchuk, "Ambiguous 'Borderland': Ukrainian Identity on the Crossroads of West and East"; http://www.omp.org.pl/riabchuk.htm. See also Mykola Riabchuk, "Ukraine: One State, Two Countries?" *Tr@nsit online,* no. 23 (2002); www.iwm.at/t-23txt8.htm; Roman Szporluk, "Why Ukrainians Are Ukrainians"; and Tetiana Zhurzhenko, "The Myth of Two Ukraines," ibid.

## Part I: Political Compromise and Ambiguous "State-Building"

Independent Ukraine came into being in 1991 as a result of the political compromise brokered by two very different, essentially opposite forces, which pragmatically joined their efforts to emancipate their country from the crumbling Soviet Empire. On one side, the so-called "national-democrats"—a broad opposition movement that came together during perestroika under the slogans of civic and national emancipation; on the other side, the so-called "sovereign communists"—an opportunistic group of local nomenklatura that also evolved during perestroika within Gorbachev's camp of Soviet reformers, under the official slogans of democratization and decentralization.

Both the national democrats and the sovereign communists (who, all of a sudden, embraced democracy and the free market) desperately needed each other at that historical moment. The Ukrainian national democrats were too weak to take power alone: by all accounts, they enjoyed the support of about one-third of Ukraine's population, while the Sovietophile majority still perceived them as dangerous "nationalists" rather than moderate "democrats." In the meantime, the sovereign communists enjoyed greater, albeit mostly passive public support, merely as a "lesser" or, perhaps, "better known of two evils." Unlike the national democrats, they lacked any coherent national ideology, any "grand narrative" to legitimize themselves, both domestically and internationally, as a new regime that embodies and implements the people's right to self-determination.

Thus, Ukrainian democrats provided the ruling nomenklatura with all the slogans and programs, symbols and narratives needed for state-nation building. This does not mean that the post-Soviet rulers embraced all this "nationalistic" stuff wholeheartedly. Rather, they accepted it opportunistically as something to be further bargained, negotiated and re-interpreted. On virtually all key points, they left some room for maneuvering. While the Ukrainian national narrative, in its moderate form, was accepted officially and adopted in textbooks (e.g., celebration of holidays, commemorations, memorial sites, etc.), the post-Soviet elite has cautiously distanced itself from full identification with these new symbols and, at the same time, refrained from fully disassociating themselves from the old symbols of the colonial/totalitarian past. Semantic uncertainty facilitated political ambiguity: the lack of a clear commitment signified that nothing was predetermined, everything was subject to reconsideration, and it was up to the ruling elite to decide whether to continue the pending project or to retreat to its opposite. This protected their self-assigned status as the main power brokers who sent different messages to different groups, thus manipulating them for their own personal, political gain.

The story of the Great Famine as appropriated ambiguously by the Ukrainian post-Soviet authorities provides a graphic example of their "pragmatic", i.e., instrumental, manipulative and opportunistic policies.

In the first years of Ukraine's independence, the post-Soviet elite apparently was made uncomfortable by the official commemoration of the upcoming sixtieth anniversary of the Great Famine. Even though they had made some concessions to their national-democratic allies (unbiased coverage of the Famine-Genocide was included in historical textbooks, a commemorative stamp was issued in 1993, and some minor monuments to the victims of the Famine were erected in Kyiv and elsewhere), in most cases, however, commemorations were pushed ahead by civic/national democratic activists, while the post-Communist officials either kept low profiles or, in some regions, openly resisted. The evidence shows that the post-Soviet authorities declined to allocate any substantial resources and to actively participate in national commemorative events.

Ten years later, the situation appears to have changed. In 2003, on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the tragedy, the Ukrainian parliament endorsed an official statement to the Ukrainian people, in which the man-made Famine was condemned as a crime against humanity; the Ukrainian government initiated adoption of a similar document in the United Nations; the Ukrainian president signed a decree that established the day of annual commemoration of victims of the Great Famine on November 22 and envisaged other commemorative events in which both local and national officials would participate.

In his commemorative speech delivered that day, President Kuchma emphatically underscored the importance of Ukraine's independent statehood (*l ėtat, c'est moi)* as the only reliable guardian of Ukrainians' freedom and, implicitly, their future survival:

> Millions of innocent victims call out to us, reminding us of the price of our freedom and independence, and affirm that only Ukrainian statehood can guarantee free development of the Ukrainian people. […] We are obliged to convey to the international community the bitter truth about the Holodomor, unprecedented in world history, so that the community of free nations can properly appreciate the dimensions of this tragedy, and the sinister plans and criminal deeds of those who masterminded and organized it.[4]

In addition, Kuchma clearly outlined the need to raise the Holodomor issue at international fora, in order to condemn the perpetrators of genocide and, im-

4. Quoted in *Rodina*, no. 1 (2007): 63.

plicityly, elicit sympathy for the victimized nation and its beleaguered president. The latter assumption seems more than likely, if one takes into account Kuchma's domestic and international troubles after Tapegate and the Kolchuga affair. Hence, the appeal to the "community of free nations," to which Ukraine (and its president) presumably belong, as well as the discursive distancing from unspecified (but presumably Soviet) criminals and the symbolic (however sham) separation from the Soviet legacy of lawlessness.

Kuchma's personal problems may have catalyzed the shift in official policy in regard to the Holodomor, but they alone would not have sufficed if certain changes in public opinion had not occurred during the preceding decade. Roughly speaking, both society and the ruling elite had become less "Soviet" and, therefore, less biased in regard to certain historical facts and developments. A national survey, carried out in fall 2003, revealed that 40 percent of respondents believed the Famine of 1932–33 was "genocide carried out by the Bolshevik authorities against the Ukrainian people." Twenty-five percent of respondents placed the blame on the Bolsheviks, albeit with the reservation that the man-made Famine resulted from their policy against all peasants, not only the Ukrainian peasantry. Only 10 percent supported the traditional Soviet view (still defended by the Communist Party of Ukraine) that the Famine was not masterminded by the authorities, but instead was the result of natural calamities. However, 13 percent confessed that they knew nothing about the Famine; and 12 percent declined to give their opinion.[5]

The manner, however, in which the Ukrainian authorities carried out official commemorations, as well as some peculiarities of both the domestic and international situation at the time, lead me to believe that they probably had many more personal reasons to embark on the project than merely reestablishing historical truth and justice or meeting public expectations.

First, the official commemorations had obviously been "export-oriented." The Ukrainian officials had been much more active and visible in New York and Paris and in the capital city of Kyiv than in the regions, primarily those that were the most affected by the Famine. In the regions, the local authorities, by and large, declined to participate in commemorative events and, in some cases, openly sabotaged NGO initiatives.[6] One should note that the central government had sufficient authoritarian levers at the time (2003) to achieve, if necessary, the full obedience of the local bosses. The same could also be said about national TV, which was firmly controlled (and censored) at the time by the president's staff. All of them, however, conducted business as usual, making no changes in their programming of primarily entertainment broadcasts even on the Commemoration Day of November 22, for the most part addressing the issue only in news programs in a typical manner, that is, praising the solicitous government for taking new steps in the right direction, but making no attempt to investigate or discuss this serious issue.[7]

Second, in all the official documents not a single word was said about the Communist nature of the Famine-Genocide. Among the thousand words in the statement of the Ukrainian parliament, one may find angry references to the "Stalinist totalitarian regime," "the devilish plan of the Stalinist regime," "criminal nature of the regime," "premeditated terrorist act of the Stalinist political system," and even "high-level authorities of the USSR," but nothing is said about the Communist origins and Communist nature of that regime, that system, and that leadership.[8] It would appear that Stalinism was a supernatural phenomenon, a historical aberration that had little, if anything, to do with the essence of Soviet Communism.

And third, a lukewarm commemoration of victims of Soviet totalitarianism and a rather formal and superficial condemnation of the Communist ("totalitarian," as it is referred to euphemistically) crimes went hand-in-hand with a much more coherent and eager celebration of Communist/totalitarian leaders (e.g., Volodymyr Shcherbyts′kyi), organizations (e.g., Komsomol) and symbolic events (e.g., the so-called "re-unification" of western Ukrainian lands with Soviet Ukraine, i.e., implementation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement).

All these facts suggest that the Ukrainian post-Communist rulers tried to appropriate the symbolic value of the Famine and to capitalize on it both domestically and internationally. Domestically, they aspired to complete the project of their "succession of power," which entailed preservation, by all possible means, of the dominance of the post-Soviet nomenklatura-cum-oligarchy. Internationally, they intended to whitewash the image of the regime badly tarnished by various scandals, by switching public attention to different matters and exposing, on this occasion the "human face" of the post-Soviet clique.

In 1993, the "genealogical" connection between the post-Communist rulers and their Communist predecessors was probably too close and obvious, so that an extensive exposure of Communist crimes would be self-

5. *Den′,* 21 October 2003, p. 1. The survey was conducted by the Kyiv Institute of Sociology and the Sociology Department of the University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

6. See, for example, Ihor Stoliarov, "Bez zhodnykh aktsentiv," *L'vivska gazeta,* 12 September 2003; Roman Krutsyk, "Pravda ochi rizhe?" *Ukraïna moloda,* 12 November 2003; "Tserkva obrazylasia na Ianukovycha za holodomor," *Ukraïns'ka pravda,* 25 November 2003.

7. Volodymyr Kulyk, "Televiziynyi tsynizm i ukraïns′ka hromadskist′," *Krytyka,* vol. 7, no. 12 (December 2003): 22.

8. The document was published in *Holos Ukraïny,* 16 May 2003, 3.

defeating. They might simply lose the political initiative to the national-democrats who, as allies, could not be excluded from the commemorations and who therefore had a good chance to take the lead and benefit symbolically from the event.

In 2003, the post-Communists had nothing to lose, because the national democrats by this time had been unequivocally in opposition. Now, the post-Communists could win—by taking initiative from their former allies-cum-rivals and, at the same time, excluding them from commemorations—at least in the mainstream media on which the authorities kept a firm grip.

The opportunistic nature of the post-Soviet elite was revealed, in this case, most graphically. In May 2003, the parliamentary statement that condemned the man-made Famine as a crime against Ukrainian people was supported by only 226 MPs—the minimum vote needed to pass the bill in the 450-seat parliament. While the Communists voted against the measure and the national democrats voted in favor, the majority of the pro-government factions abstained. Clearly, they had received a signal that abstaining was permissible, perhaps even desirable, because the president at this time had an obedient majority in parliament and could mobilize up to 250 votes if necessary—even without the national democrats. In this instance, however, mobilization was not required. On the contrary, the post-Communist rulers wished to demonstrate that they did not fully associate themselves with the "nationalistic" cause nor had they completely broken with the Communist legacy. It was merely a reminder that they held a golden share and were keeping everybody on the hook.

Such a purely instrumental approach to historic events emerged naturally from the post-Communist strategy of holding the "centrist" niche and marginalizing their rivals as dangerous radicals, stupid fanatics or infantile romantics out of touch with reality. Discursively they strived to monopolize the role of supreme all-national arbiter who would decide how much of the Communist legacy should be abandoned and how much of the anti-Communist legacy should be "rehabilitated."

## Part II: "Post-Orange" Developments

Three years after the spectacular Orange Revolution that engendered so much hope and delivered so much disappointment, we may aver soberly that it was neither a great success in the sense of a radical break with the Soviet past, its political culture and institutional arrangements, nor was it a great failure in the sense of a resurgence of old oligarchic practices and corrupt schemes. It did not push the country dramatically ahead, towards "Europe" and European practices (meaning primarily rule of law, not just democracy). But it definitely precluded the country's decline and slipping towards post-Soviet authoritarianism. The revolution, in fact, re-established the evolutionary development of Ukraine, derailed at the end of the 1990s by the authoritarian practices of Leonid Kuchma.

Within three years of his tenure, President Yushchenko, despite his many mistakes and notorious indecisiveness and incoherence, has proved rather clearly that his politics of memory would not be tailored opportunistically, but rather are based on moral principles and an unequivocal commitment to historical truth and justice. Such a policy clearly contradicted the conservative strategy pursued by his predecessors under the slogans of "stability," "consent" and, ultimately, "succession of power."

Yushchenko certainly should be credited for the decrees that, in particular, established the Institute of National Memory (based apparently on a Polish model),[9] pushed ahead the construction of the memorial to victims of political repression and the famines of 1921-23, 1932-33, and 1946-47 at Kyiv,[10] initiated the creation of the Babyn Yar historical and cultural reserve,[11] and introduced Shevchenko Day as a national holiday.[12] The most remarkable seems to be the decree that commissioned the Cabinet of Ministers to prepare and hold events to celebrate the anniversaries of leaders of the short-lived Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR, 1918-1920) and Western Ukrainian People's Republic (ZUNR, 1918-1919), as well as Yushchenko's bold support for the Museum of Soviet Occupation in Kyiv.[13]

As to his political rivals from the Party of Regions, they seem to continue the ambiguous policy of Leonid Kuchma—at least at the national and international levels, where they distance themselves from their Communist allies and promote a "civilized," "gentrified" self-image of oligarchs "with a human face." On the regional level, however, their position looks less ambiguous and more defiant. Nevertheless, they wish to assume a national role and gain international recognition, though they remain deadlocked within their heavily Sovietized region and restrained by both their electorate and their

9. Volodymyr Pavliv, "Test na natsional′nu zrilist′," *Dzerkalo tyzhnia*, 20 August 2005, p. 5.

10. "Kyiv to build memorial to victims of political repressions and great Famines by 2007," Ukrainian News Agency, 8 August 2005.

11. "Yushchenko initiates creation of Babyn Yar historical and cultural reserve in Kyiv," Ukrainian News Agency, 26 September 2005.

12. "Yushchenko introduces National Shevchenko Day to be celebrated every year on March 9," Ukrainian News Agency, 17 May 2005.

13. For a discussion of the issue see Yurii Shapoval, "Reproducing a real tragedy or politicizing history?" *The Day Weekly Digest*, no. 18, 19 June 2007; Stanislav Kulchytsky, "Was Ukraine under Soviet Occupation?" *Ibid.*, nos. 20-21, 10 and 17 July 2007; Mykhailo Dubynians′kyi, "Sovetskaia okkupatsiia: pro et contra," *Ukraïns′ka pravda*, 10 July 2007; http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2007/7/10/61346.htm

own mentality. Kuchma's team was certainly in a much better position, since it could firmly monopolize the "centrist" niche and present its members as moderates and peace-keepers between east and west, left and right, Moscow and Washington, and so on. They held power and controlled the media, so that public initiatives could be effectively controlled and official discourse could be skillfully tailored for different regions and situations.

The Party of Regions is on the defensive; its overreliance on the Sovietophile electorate may bring them only temporary gains, as the gradual marginalization of the Communist Party shows rather graphically. Since more than two-thirds of respondents (69 percent) in a national survey believe that the Famine was caused mainly by the actions of the Soviet government,[14] the Communist position of denying the Holodomor becomes not only morally and intellectually untenable but also politically unproductive.

The Party of Regions wisely abandoned the traditional Soviet view of the Holodomor as a non-event, or mere "natural" calamity exacerbated by sabotage of class enemies. They left the Communists to defend the indefensible, and adopted instead a more pragmatic (one may say opportunistic) approach that recognizes—fully in line with prevailing public opinion—that the Famine was man-made and the Soviet authorities had really committed the crime. They emphasize, however—again, fully in line with public opinion—that the Famine was not directed against Ukraine or Ukrainians only, but also against all the peasants in both Ukraine and beyond. They simplify, in fact, the argument of their opponents from the national democratic camp who do not claim so crudely that famine was a problem exclusively of Ukraine and of Ukrainians.

Such a simplification, however, provides them with a powerful weapon against the Ukrainian ethnic "nationalists," identified rhetorically with the Orange camp, who allegedly try to ethnicize the genuinely social tragedy, to monopolize suffering and, moreover, to oppose and alienate Ukrainians against other groups, particularly Russians. This line of defense is much stronger, indeed, than the no longer tenable position of the Soviet/Communist stalwarts.

First, by recognizing the Holodomor as a Stalinist crime against humanity, the Party of Regions distances itself from the most abominable parts of the Soviet legacy, representing itself as a moderate, reasonable, responsible, "centrist" political force. It satisfies the majority of the population who hold the same view on the Holodomor, namely, that it was a Stalinist crime against peasants in both Ukraine and elsewhere, rather than genocide targeting primarily Ukrainians. And finally, it conforms to international public opinion, including predominant academic views of the Holodomor, and does not alienate altogether comrades in Russia who prefer the Communist interpretation of Holodomor events, but who are prepared to compromise.

The Party of Regions thus identifies itself with both "scholarly truth" and "common sense," and from this quasi-centrist and presumably "scientific" position it marginalizes and discredits its Orange opponents as obsessed radicals, nationalists, and adventurers who rock the boat and sow ethnic discord for the sake of unspecified but partisan political gains. A limited but efficient set of arguments and key words is employed by the Party of Regions' statesmen in all discussions about the Holodomor. They may vary in sequence and elaboration but essentially are as follows:

> The enormous division within contemporary Ukrainian society is largely determined by the diametrically opposed points of view on many events and developments of our past. The supporters of radical views, from either one side or the other, dominate every discussion. And this does not help to reconcile the views or establish historical truth. Our society badly needs consolidation; a civilized dialogue and search for common ground based on recognition of the just aspects of each side's position would help bring this about.[15]

First, the Holodomor is presented—and rightly so—as a highly divisive issue in Ukrainian society. The recurrent key words are "split," "division," "break," even "crack" ("раскол") —and their semantic antonyms "unity," "consolidation," "compromise," "consent." The first "destructive" set is explicitly or implicitly attributed to the Orange opponents, while the latter, "moderate" and "reconciliatory," is appropriated by the Party of Regions itself.

Since the second position is, presumably, fully in line with "scientific truth," "common sense" and the national interest, it does not require any specific elaboration. Instead, the first, deviant position—of President Yushchenko and his allies—is closely examined and disproved as not only historically and legally wrong but also politically harmful. First, they suggest, it sows interethnic discord in Ukraine, and second, badly damages relations with Russia (or, euphemistically, with our "neighbors").

A conscientious desire to assume moral responsibility and restore historical justice, in and of itself, cannot be exploited for a multi-step political-ideological game that has little to do with history, but rather with the most contemporary of today's issues, and which is aimed pri-

14. "Not enough information," *The Day Weekly Digest*, 21 November 2006.

15. Vladyslav Zabars′kyi, speech in Parliament, 28 November 2006; http://www.regions.org.ua/faction_news/2006-11-28@golodomor-1932-1933-rokiv-stavsja-vnaslidok/

marily at demoralization and weakening the positions of one or another elite group within society.

> We believe that we need to form an ideological climate that would permit an honest condemnation of any mass crimes in Ukraine, committed either by Stalin's regime or its adversaries, while not allowing the topic to be misused by political forces that are interested in creating a conflict between our country and its neighbors.[16]

Two questions, however, emerge from this type of argument—regardless of whether we interpret the Holodomor as genocide or not. First, it remains unclear (and is never explained) what kind of practical benefits ("political dividends," as another speaker implies[17]) can Orange leaders gain from this "multi-step political-ideological game"—if the majority of the population does not share their view of Holodomor as genocide and seems unlikely to change this view in the foreseeable future. Would it not be more reasonable to suggest that President Yushchenko is sacrificing, in fact, certain electoral "dividends" for the sake of moral principles he believes are crucial for the whole nation?

And second, why should the president and his Orange allies be "interested" in any conflict between Ukraine and Russia (or, as another "regional" speaker put it, in "creating an atmosphere hostile to Russia and representing the Russian people as responsible for the Famine and genocide, and charging Russia as a successor to the Soviet Union, both morally and financially"[18])? In fact, neither Yushchenko nor any of the Orange leaders have ever attempted to identify Russia explicitly with the Stalinist regime that masterminded the Holodomor. Certainly such accusations could emerge on the fringes, and such claims could be made implicitly in heated anti-Soviet and anti-Communist rhetoric—but only to the extent to which today's Russia identifies itself with the Soviet legacy, with the dubious "glory" of Stalinism and Great-Russian imperialism. And since neo-Stalinism, indeed, tends to resurface in today's Russia, Russian anxiety over Ukrainian de-Sovietization has clear ideological grounds.[19]

16. Ibid.

17. Vasily Khara, speech in Parliament, 28 November 2006; http://www.regions.org.ua/faction_news/2006-11-28@segodnja-my-rassmatrivaem-ochen-neodnoznachnyj-i-ochen-boleznennyj-vopros/

18. Ibid.

19. As some observers rightly point out, "while there appears to be a creeping rehabilitation of Stalin in Russia, Ukraine's government—and Yushchenko in particular—is showing an interest in greater exposure of Stalin's crimes, including the Holodomor." (Ivan Lozowy, "Ukraine: Parading Against Reconciliation," *Transitions Online*, 11 May 2005.) See also Nick Webster, "Why does Russia love Stalin now?" *Mirror.co.uk,* 4 February 2006; Owen Matthews, "Back to the USSR. Was Stalin so bad?" *Newsweek,* 20 August 2007; "Democracy upsets Vladimir Putin," *Telegraph*, 2 October 2007; Halya Coynash, "Ukraine: No 'managed truth,'" *Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group*, 11 July 2007.

It is up to Russia, of course, whether it chooses to commemorate its own victims of the Gulag and man-made famine—in the Kuban and elsewhere—or to celebrate Stalin as a "great statesman" and to bemoan the end of the Soviet Union as the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century." Ukrainians, however, may have their own ideas about Soviet "statesmen," as well as great twentieth-century catastrophes.

True, the Party of Regions and, more generally, Russian-speaking eastern Ukrainians may be "uncomfortable with the label of genocide because of fear that it could drive a wedge between ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Russians in Ukraine."[20] But the same could be said about the wedge between black Americans and white Americans in the U.S. No fear, however reasonable, can preclude scholars from exploring the truth and calling slavery slavery, and genocide genocide.

## Conclusion

Three years after the Orange Revolution, Ukrainian history remains an ideological battleground, and the Holodomor issue stands prominently as one of its crucial parts. Indeed, any approach is "politicized," as Dominique Arel aptly noted not long ago.[21] Not only those who condemn Soviet crimes undermine politically their Sovietophile opponents, but also those who defend Soviet views and values undermine their anti-Soviet and presumably pro-European rivals. In some cases, curiously, the Holodomor as a crime of the Soviet regime is counterbalanced rhetorically by references to real and alleged crimes of anti-Soviet guerillas (OUN-UPA) and demands to condemn both crimes within the same document.

Nevertheless, the changes in public opinion, however slow, inconsistent and contradictory, enabled not only an unprecedented level of public mobilization during the Orange Revolution, but also the unprecedented vote in Ukrainian parliament in November 2006 designating the Terror-Famine of 1932-33 as genocide against the Ukrainian people. Even though the vote passed by a small margin of seven votes, only due to the crucial support of the Socialist Party, which once again took the "Orange" side, no less important was the fact that nobody dared to vote against the measure—the opponents of the law, with one exception, merely abstained. Indeed, "that wouldn't have happened if Ukraine's intellectuals hadn't been arguing the case for the last fifteen years, thereby creating a discursive force that even sceptics couldn't resist."[22]

20. Dominique Arel, "Holodomor buried in semantics," *Kyiv Post*, 6 December 2006.

21. Ibid.

22. Alexander Motyl, "Two years after Orange Revolution.

And, one may add, if Ukrainian society had not proved itself to be an active agent interested in the matter.

Of course, the relics of Sovietism are still salient, and Ukrainian society is still at odds with itself, still divided and bitterly grappling with both colonial and totalitarian complexes and stereotypes. The ruling elite is a part of the same society, so it would be rather naïve to believe that they are completely free of the imprint of Sovietism. All their policies, including that of memory, would hardly mark a radical break with the Soviet legacy and would probably not be as consistent and comprehensive as many Ukrainophiles and Westernizers would like to believe. Some ambiguities in official policies seem unavoidable; however, they would probably not be deliberately devised and employed for manipulation under "Orange" governments, and duplicity would not be the essence of the official politics.

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Ukraine in a funk," *Open Democracy*, 22 December 2006.